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JUKTI TAKKO AAR GAPPO

aka *Reason, Debate and a Story* aka *Argument and a Story*

1974 119' b&w Bengali

d/p/s/m **Ritwik Ghatak** *pc* Rit Chitra *c* Baby Islam

lp Ritwik Ghatak, Tripti Mitra, Shaonli Mitra, **Bijon Bhattacharya**, Saugata Burman, Gyanesh Mukherjee, **Utpal Dutt**, Ananya Ray, Shyamal Ghosal

Ghatak's last film featured himself as the drunken and spent intellectual Neelkantha who goes on a picaresque journey through Bengal to reconcile himself with his wife. He is accompanied by Nachiketa (Burman) and Bangabala (S. Mitra), a young refugee from Bangladesh. On the way they are joined by a Sanskrit teacher, Jagannath (Bhattacharya). The episodic narrative also includes encounters with Shatrujit (Dutt) who was once a noted writer but who now writes pornography; a ranting trade union leader and Panchanan Ustad (Mukherjee) who makes masks for Chhou dancers (a sequence is devoted to showing the famous dance). Jagannath is shot by a landlord when the group stumbles upon a land-grab action. The film ends with Neelkantha meeting a group of **Naxalite** students wanted by the police: he argues politics with them and is shot in a police ambush the next morning. Filmed while Ghatak was ill and suffering from alcoholism shortly before his death, *Jukti* is an inventive and lucid though pessimistic testament film, acted with elegance and irony by the director. With an astonishing sense of freedom Ghatak weaves together different styles and images ranging from gross calendar art (the courtship of his wife) to an almost abstract dance of death; from the elaborate Chhou performance where the goddess Durga slays the demon to lyrical depictions of nature; from inserted bits of leader footage to a Baul song. The encounters with the pornographer and the Naxalites add up to a devastating critique of contemporary politics. In the end, Ghatak offers a disabused but stubborn politics of the everyday: Neelkantha dies with a quote from a Manik Bandyopadhyay story about a weaver who wove an empty loom because 'one must do something'. Geeta Kapur's essay 'Articulating the Self into History' (1989) is the most extended study on the film.