

Document Citation

Title	Pratidwandi
Author(s)	Chidananda Dasgupta
Source	<i>Publisher name not available</i>
Date	1972
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Pratidwandi (The Adversary), Ray, Satyajit, 1971



Still from Satyajit Ray's *PRATIDWANDI*

PRATIDWANDI (The Rival) *The Adversary*

Script and direction: Satyajit Ray. From the story by Sunil Ganguly. Photography: Soumendu Roy and Purnendu Bose. Players: Dhritiman Chatterjee, Krishna Bose, Jayashri Roy and others.

THIS IS UNDOUBTEDLY Ray's best film since *Charulata*, and his first direct involvement with an acute contemporary problem—the problem of unemployment. The treatment is more confident than in his recent work, and a greater creative

energy has gone into the making of the film. The story has a young man looking for a job, going in for an interview for one, failing to get it as a result of his outburst against the way the establishment treats the candidates and then reconciling himself to a humdrum life as a medical representative in a suburban area. In the reserve and introspection of the young man (newcomer Dhritiman Chatterjee) there is a return to the inner world of Apu, and the hero's failure seems in part due to the exposure of a sensitive mind to the cynicism of the present-day environment, his inability to put up with the indifference to which others have become inured. His anger at this indifference bursts out at an unguarded moment, but does not grow into a philosophy of protest; it subsides into an acceptance of fate.

In treating a powerful theme in this non-trendy manner, Ray is more true to himself and less anxious to keep up with things than he has been suspected of lately. The craftsmanship is superb, and the film has many memorable sequences—the poignant opening in negative showing the death of the boy's father, the hot, interminable wait for the interview, during which the contenders turn into skeletons staring into space, the little lane with the "Hotel" sign into which the hero's ambitions disappear. Sometimes the pace is forced and the confidence falters—the day nurse turned prostitute in the evening goes into negative when taking off her bra—but the film as a whole has something of the universal feeling and introspection which have been the hallmark of Ray's cinema in the past.

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