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TORONTO FILM SOCIETY  
 THIRTY-SIXTH SEASON  
 THIRD EXHIBITION MEETING  
 MONDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 1983 AT 7:30 P.M.  
 IN THE TOWN HALL  
 ST. LAWRENCE CENTRE FOR THE ARTS

ORDER OF PROGRAMME

CLOCKWORK LIONS ..... 4.5 minutes.  
 THE GREAT TOY ROBBERY ..... 7 minutes.  
 AUTUMN FROST COUNTRY ..... 9 minutes.

INTERMISSION

ASHANI SANKET (DISTANT THUNDER) ..... 101 minutes.

ASHANI SANKET (DISTANT THUNDER)

INDIA                      1973                      101 minutes                      Colour                      16mm

Production Company & Producer: *Mrs. Sarbani Bhattacharya*. Director: *Satyajit Ray*.  
 Screenplay: *Satyajit Ray*, based on a novel by *Bibhuti Bhushan Bannerjee*.  
 Photographer: *Soumendu Roy*, *Eastmancolor*. Editor: *Dulal Dutta*. Art Director:  
*Ashoke Bose*. Music: *Satyajit Ray*.

Cast: *Sounitra Chatterjee* (*Ganeshcharan*), *Babita* (*Ananga*), *Ramesh Mukherjee* (*Biswas*),  
*Sandhya Roy* (*Chutki*), *Gobinda Chakravarty* (*Dinabandhu*), *Chitra Bannerjee*  
 (*Moti*), *Honi Ganguly* (*Scarface* *Jadu*), *Sheli Pal* (*Okshada*), *Suchita Roy*  
 (*Khenti*).

Awards: Award for Music Direction & President's Medal, New Delhi 1973  
 Golden Bear, Berlin 1974  
 Golden Hugo, Chicago 1975

To filmmakers throughout the world, Indian movies mean Satyajit Ray. To most Indians, however, the director's delicately textured tapestries, often of Calcutta life and village families, seem odd and unsettling. Ray has stated that his films are usually shown in Delhi at 8 o'clock on Sunday morning and do not play widely in India. Ray does have a following in Bombay and, of course Calcutta, but Bengali films do not have a wide audience.

Ray lives in Calcutta and claims that he has a love-hate relationship with that city. His roots are there. He cannot work anywhere else and has no desire to work outside of India, as he feels he would lose his freedom, and perhaps his confidence working in a studio environment. He writes his films, he cuts and designs them, he operates the camera, he writes the music and also the advertising and he does not want to lose this control in an atmosphere of front office memos and tempermental stars.

As one of the world's major directors he has made over twenty feature films, along with several documentaries and shorts, since his first feature in 1955, *Pathar Panchali*. Displayed is a virtuoso skill in gently exploring the pressures, the cruelties and the fragile, often unspoken relationships of the poor and middle-classes.

Pauline Kael states, "Ray is sometimes for us Westerners, (and perhaps for Easterners also?) a little boring, but what major artist outside film and drama isn't? What he has to give is so rich, so contemplative in approach (and this we

Thursday, 6:15 PM  
October 11, 1973

Friday, 9:30 P.M.  
October 12, 1973

India 1973  
Berlin Festival 1973:  
Grand Prize  
100 minutes

# Ashani Sanket

## Distant Thunder

**Director**  
Satyajit Ray  
**Executive Producer**  
Mrs. Sarbani Bhattacharya  
**Production Company**  
Sarbani Bhattacharya  
**Screenplay**  
Satyajit Ray  
**From the novel by**  
Bibhuti Bhushan Bannerji  
**Photography**  
Soumendu Roy  
**Editor**  
Dulal Dutta  
**Music**  
Satyajit Ray

**Cast:**

Gangacharan  
**Soumitra Chatterji**  
Ananga  
**Babita**  
Chhutki  
**Sandhya Roy**  
Dinabandhu  
**Gobinda Chakravarty**  
Biswas  
**Romesh Mukerji**  
Jadu  
**Noni Ganguly**  
Mokshada  
**Sheli Pal**  
Moti  
**Chitra Bannerji**  
Khenti  
**Suchita Roy**  
Nibaran  
**Anil Ganguly**  
Adhar  
**Debatosh Ghosh**

*Distant Thunder* is set in 1942; Singapore has just fallen. To remote Bengali villagers, it all seems far away, but soon the cost of rice begins to escalate. At first Ganga and his wife are not affected. He is a Brahmin, schoolteacher-priest-doctor rolled into one. But he too is to suffer from the hoarding, the profiteering, the corrupt system. This raising of consciousness is masterfully counterpointed by the brilliance of color and image which only serves to intensify the contrast between the beauty of the setting and the (understated) horror of the situation.

### Shorts

## **Alphon in Wonderland**

France  
**Director: Maxim Ferrler  
Gerald Poussin**  
Running Time: 5 minutes

## **Medina**

USA  
**Director: Scott Bartlett**  
Running Time: 14 minutes  
Distributor: A Serious Business Company/Film-Maker's Cooperative

as the man-made famine of 1943", reads the last, accusing title after an apocalyptic vision in which the hero and heroine are faced by a silhouetted horde of starving, skeletal people receding endlessly into the distance, converging on their front gate with arms stretched out in supplication. The effect here is a curious mixture of Russian agit-prop and expressionism, and moving as it is, it fits uncomfortably into the subtle intimacies where Ray is most at home. To prepare for it he has to resort to the melodrama which (again in a rape scene) marred the perfection of 'Days and Nights in the Forest,' this time not only with the rape sequence, but with the earlier, looming shot of a hideously scarred man who will eventually profit from social disaster by persuading a woman to sell her body for a measure of rice. The pity of it is that none of the melodrama is really necessary, since Ray tells the whole story, much more subtly, in the brilliant central section of the film where the Brahmin couple are pushed and pulled, with a delicate humour that is wholly persuasive, into an awareness of their true status as human beings. With the quiet, quizzical logic Ray deploys so effectively (*Distant Thunder* is particularly reminiscent of the "Postmaster" episode in "Three Daughters"), their horizons are widened and their privileged positions simultaneously whittled away from under them. The focal moment is perhaps the one in which the jaunty Brahmin, one of those Chekhovian figures Soumitra Chatterjee plays so well--an endearing mixture of dignity and absurdity as he plods through the mud with his rolled umbrella and his folded duster protecting his head from the sun, busily setting himself up as priest, physician and universal pundit all rolled into one--suddenly realizes that for all his Sanskrit learning and the skimmed newspaper headlines with which he dazzles his illiterate flock, he really knows nothing. Hitherto he has explained the war, more or less, as "Our King is fighting the Germans and Japanese", but managed to locate Singapore somewhere in the remoter states of India. Then an old man, a beggar even though a Brahmin, casually tells him the true story, not only strategically (where the war is happening) but economically (why rice is scarce and soaring in price.) Typically, Ray avoids any feeling of didacticism here by making the old man a whining misery, determined to cadge all he can from his hosts, and deserving of sympathy and respect only because he is starving. Also, typically, Ray makes the scene central not by stressing its ideological importance but by focussing on the secret, approving smile with which the wife (another of Ray's magical heroines) encourages her husband to listen and digest the lesson. The crux of the matter for these two good people, who are only just learning how to use their goodness, comes not with the open rhetoric of their vision of starving millions, but with their confrontation by a single victim immediately beforehand: the wife's friend, a low-caste peasant woman whom, as Brahmins, they cannot even touch as she lies dying outside their house. In Indian terms, the husband's decision to break the taboo by burying her to save her body from the jackals, and the wife's silent nod of approval, amounts to a revolution: and in his exploration of their evolving relationship to one another and to their community, Ray makes it more earth-shattering than all the global implications of his final image and title." Tom Milne, Monthly Film Bulletin, May 1975.

FILMOGRAPHY OF SATYAJIT RAY

7

- 1955 PATHER PANCHALI (SONG OF THE ROAD)
- 1956 APARAJITO (THE UNVANQUISHED)
- 1957 PARASH PATHER (THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE)
- 1958 JALSAGHAR (THE MUSIC ROOM)
- 1959 APUR SANSAR (THE WORLD OF APU)
- 1960 DEVI (THE GODDESS)
- 1961 RABINDRANATH (Documentary)
- 1961 TEEN KANYA (THREE DAUGHTERS)
- 1962 KANCHANJUNGH
- 1962 ABHIJAN (THE EXPEDITION)
- 1963 MAHANAGAR (THE BIG CITY)
- 1964 CHARULATA
- 1965 KAPURUSH-O-MAHAPURUSH (THE COWARD AND THE HOLY MAN)
- 1966 NYAK (THE HERO)
- 1967 CHIRIAKHANA (THE ZOO)
- 1968 GOOP GYNE BAGHA BYNE (THE ADVENTURES OF GOOPY AND BAGHA)
- 1970 ARANYER DIN RATRI (DAYS AND NIGHTS IN THE FOREST)
- 1970 TWO (Short for Esso, Children's World Theatre)
- 1970 PRATIDWANDI (THE ADVERSARY OF SIDDHARTHA AND THE CITY)
- 1971 SEEMABADDHA (COMPANY LIMITED)
- 1971 SIKKIM (Documentary)
- 1973 ASHANI SANKET (DISTANT THUNDER)
- 1974 THE INNER EYE (Documentary)
- 1974 SONAR KELLA (THE GOLDEN FORTRESS)
- 1975 JANA ARANYA (THE MIDDLEMAN)
- 1976 BALA (Documentary)
- 1977 SHATRANI KE KHILARI (THE CHESS PLAYERS)
- 1978 JOI BABA FELUNATH (THE ELEPHANT GOD)
- 1980 HIROK RAJAR DESHE (THE KINGDOM OF DIAMONDS)
- 1981 PIKOO'S DAY (Short for French Television)