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Film Festival Winner at Vogue

"Pather Panchali," which was chosen Best Picture during the recent International Film Festival in San Francisco, is a tender and moving film of universal appeal.

It opened yesterday at the Vogue. The simple story of a poor Italian family, troubled as are families anywhere but surviving with courage and sadness, "Pather Panchali" is set in Bengali. The children are alternately mischievous and gay, helpful and concerned. There is the ancient of the family, a toothless old woman who demands attention, who goes away when she thinks she is not getting enough, and who returns because she cannot bear to be away.

POVERTY

And there are the parents. The father is the less responsible member of the family: he travels to the city in hope of earning more money, and the mother is left to try to hold the group together. But the father is not a contemptible figure. It is merely that he cannot bear to observe the corrosive effect of their continual poverty. He returns when he is able, because he is genuinely attached to his family.

The picture, directed by Santayjit Ray, is the first part of a trilogy. The second part, also directed by him and with many of the same cast, called "Aparajito" won the Grand Prize last summer at Venice, indicating that the trilogy may well attain historic proportions.

FASCINATING

Ray was chosen Best Director during the recent festival, and his hand in the picture is fascinating to watch. He refuses to be hurried. Moments of fragile beauty are captured to enhance the film and to reflect the simple beauties that the poor families of Bengali enjoy.

Prior to a storm, he permits

his camera to linger on a pool as the vagrant breezes lift gently the lily pads in the water. The children chase off to watch a locomotive, and all the delight of a link with far off lands is captured and reflected.

Life and Death are present in "Pather Panchali," which means "The Little Road." The picture ends with the family journeying by cart to a neighboring community to make a new start, and where "Aparajito" will begin. This is a profound film, but by no means a depressing one, although its report on Indian life is persuasive indeed.

P.K.