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FILM INDIA: Part I

Satyajit Ray

June 25 - July 24, 1981

Saturday July 11 at 2:00
Tuesday, July 14 at 6:00

THE ADVENTURES OF GOOPY AND BAGHA (GOOPI GYNE BAGHA BYNE). India. 1969.
Script, Music and Direction: Satyajit Ray. Produced by Nepal Dutta/Ashim Dutta.
Based on a story by: Upendra Kishore Roy Chowdhury. Photography (Part color):
Soumendu Roy. Editing: Dulal Dutta. Dance Direction: Shambhunath Bhattacharjee. 132 mins.*

With: Tapan Chatterjee (Goopi), Robi Ghosh (Bagha), Santosh Dutta (King of Halla/King of Shundi), Harindra (Barfi), Jahar Roy (Prime Minister), Santi Chatterjee (Army Chief of Halla), Durgadas Banerjee (King of Amloki), Gobinda Chakravarty (Goopi's father), Chinmoy Roy (Spy), Prasad Mukherjee (King of Ghosts), Nath Chattopadhyay.

"Based on a fairy story by his writer-artist grandfather, Upendra Kishore Ray, Goopy Gyne and Bagha Byne fits into no recognized category. Some people have classified it as a film for children. If so, then it is also for the grown-up in the sense that Alice in Wonderland has its adult levels. Others have seen a Brechtian quality in Goopy. However interpreted, Goopy satirizes power and the absurdity of war.

"It is the double exposure of reality and fantasy which makes this allegory a seriously funny contemporary film with several levels of meaning and comment. A village boy, Goopy, imagines himself to be a singer. Mocking Brahmins induce him to sing the Rajah awake. The demonlike Rajah commands the boy's presence, smashes his tanpura and expels him into the wilderness seated on a sorrowing donkey. On the edge of a forest, Goopy stumbles upon the sleeping Bagha with his drum. He, too, has been expelled from his village on account of his atrocious drumming.

"With night there comes the delightful King of the Ghosts speaking an enchanting gibberish of sensible nonsense. He presents the boys with the double meaning Dance of the Ghosts: the classical warriors are battling shadow puppets shimmering as if seen through water. In contrast, the East India Company ghosts move with mathematical exactitude. The professional ghosts, preachers and lawyers, masked and clad in absurd balloon-like garments, are ironic comics doing one another to death. The three-section sequence has intense cinematic quality, the dances being conceived for film and unrelated to any stage presentation.

"The wise ghostly King having bestowed three boons on the boys--they shall make magical music, obtain food and clothes and go where they wish, aided by magic slippers--they set off for adventure in Shundi and Halla. Passing comment from

*In Bengali; English subtitles

an ultra-superior musician informs them of the musical competition in Shundi. There they find the populace struck dumb, save the Good King, who speaks a literary language for lack of conversation.

"The boys' gay folk music charms the Good King and they become his court musicians. The satire is delicious and framed within enchanting, fanciful sets. But the poor Good King is threatened with war by Halla. This King--he's only bad when drugged--is the victim of his villainous minister and his tame magician. Goopy and Bagha rush to save the peace, hopeful that their music will transfix and transform would-be aggressors.

"Ray's humanism ebbs and flows, breaking through the fantastical surface to give the film unexpected flashes of human depth. Everything happens with a reality of its own. The seemingly perfectly realistic slips into the sheerest fantasy and nonsense and back into the credible. The believable quality of what should be unbelievable lies in Ray's handling of characters; for example, the range of the competitive singers and their varying styles; the bombastic General bouncing about, longing to escape from leading Halla's skinny troops into battle; the spy, epitomizing all the shadowy creatures sucked into espionage; the bewildered Ambassadors automatically responding to the King of Halla's wild cry of 'War! War!' Suddenly, at the very end when peace comes, and brides for the boys are brought forth, Ray introduces bright Toy-land color.

"The blend of humor and pathos gives life to what could easily have been a tissue of artificial whimsy or, in the hands of some other Indian director a gaudy mythological film. Goopy can best be described as a breath of fresh air. This explains its enormous success in Bengal. It has caught the imagination."

--Marie Seton, (The Times, London, 6/23/69)

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