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# The Museum of Modern Art Department of Film

11 West 53 Street, New York, N. Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

FILM INDIA: Part I

Satyajit Ray

June 25 - July 24, 1981

Thursday, July 2 at 6:00

Saturday, July 4 at 5:00

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APARAJITO. India. 1956. Produced, directed and written by Satyajit Ray for Epic Films Private Ltd. (Calcutta). Based on the Bengali novel by: Bibhuti Bhusan Bandyopadhyay. Photography: Subrata Mitra. Editor: Dulal Dutta. Art Director: Bansi Chandragupta. Music: Ravi Shankar. Sound: Durgadas Mitra. Production Manager: Anil Choudhury. In Bengali; English subtitles. Courtesy Macmillan Audio Brandon. 127 mins.

With: Pinaki Sen Gupta (Apu, the boy), Kanu Banerjee (Harihar), Subodh Ganguly (Headmaster), K.S. Pandey (Pandy), Karuna Banerjee (Sarbojaya), Ramani Sen Gupta (Uncle), Kali Charan Ray (Press Proprietor), Sudipta Ray (Nirupama), Smaran Ghosal (Apu, the adolescent), Charu Ghosh (Nanda Babu), Santi Gupta (Landlord's wife), Ajay Mitra (Anil).

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"This is the second film of Satyajit Ray's trilogy which began with the remarkable *PATHER PANCHALI*. The boy Apu proceeds a little further along the road of experience; and the viewpoint of the film changes with his. Life is different now, and it is not merely the changes of scene which make it so. The voices of authority are the cultured scathings of the university teachers, no longer the squalling abuse of Mrs. Mukerjee next door. Trains are no longer wonderful apparitions in enchanted paddy-fields, but the familiar instruments of enlargement, of communication and separation. As town life grows to include not just streets and cars and electric light, but also friends, and village life shrinks in what it can offer, so, as the film goes on, does Apu's mother seem smaller, less the mistress of every situation, no longer necessary to her son.

"While *PATHER PANCHALI* was primarily a matter of experiences, *APARAJITO* shows Apu more in his personal and human relationships--above all in his changing relationship with his mother. The theme of the sacrifice which parents may make in equipping their children for a world which they can never really share--universal enough in itself--has rarely, if ever, been tackled by the Western cinemas, though in Japan Ozu has devoted twenty-five years and almost all his works to the exploration of this particular family relationship. Ray observes it all with remarkable insight and discretion; the mother overcomes her momentary unwillingness to give up her son to himself and his future; later, when she has given up the chance to have him beside her as she is dying, she has forlorn hopes and imaginings, as she hears the trains come by, that this last piece of self-sacrifice will not really be required of her. Apu's momentary recognitions, his tactful deceit when he pretends to have missed the train, in order to make up for his roughness towards her, are equally real and touching. It is this observation and insight which makes Ray's work so universal, and which show him as a director of outstanding promise, as well as achievement...."

--"Monthly Film Bulletin" (March 1958)

\* (THE UNVANQUISHED)



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"In adapting the second half of Bannerjee's novel *PATHER PANCHALI* and the first half of the second novel, '*Aparajito*,' Ray reshaped the book. As he has stressed: 'Books are not primarily written to be filmed. If they were, they would read like scenarios; and, if they were good scenarios, they would probably read badly as literature.'

"In order to make an effective film, Ray eliminated numerous episodes and characters. He concentrated upon 'the profound truth of the relationship between the widowed mother and the son who grows away from her. The whole raison d'etre of the scenario, as, indeed, of the film, was this particular poignant conflict.'

"At the opening of *APARAJITO* in Benares, the family relationship is seen intact. Apu is still a little boy. He is ten years old and interpreted by Pinaki Sen Gupta (who also appears as the young son in *JALSAGHAR*). Sarbojaya continues to slave for him, while her husband, Harihar, spends most of his time reading the scriptures on the ghats leading down to the holy Ganges. By tradition, many Bengalis retire to Benares to end their lives there. Thus, Harihar had a community of his own people to serve even though Benares is far outside the boundaries of Bengal.

"In taking his second step--*APARAJITO*--had Ray not had confidence in himself, he could have sought to shape the sequel in the same vein of lyricism as *PATHER PANCHALI*. But he felt the need to grapple with new problems. With the exception of the opening sequence in Benares, the essentially 'documentary' elements and beautiful visual passages which served to create such appeal in *PATHER PANCHALI*, become subordinated in *APARAJITO* to Ray's handling of scenes in studio sets, and the preoccupation of building up the psychological development of Apu in subtle scenes between mother and son.

"The entire camera work for *PATHER PANCHALI* was executed with direct sources of light, natural light for the daytime sequences and direct studio lighting for the night scenes. With the commencement of the second film, Ray and his cameraman, Mitra, began experimenting with the reflected light, which they continued to explore in all Ray's subsequent films, including their first color picture, *KANCHENJUNGA*."

--Marie Seton in "Portrait of a Director:  
Satyajit Ray" (Indiana University Press, 1971)

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*APARAJITO* was awarded the Golden Lion at the International Film Festival in Venice in 1957 as well as the International Film Critics' Prize and the New Cinema Prize.