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# Drama of India At Cinema II

By **ALTON COOK**

Wisdom of the elders in religious matters is given an irreverent jolt in "Devi," the new picture from India at Cinema II. This conflict in Hindu religious belief stirred so much controversy in its homeland that only the intervention of Nehru allowed it to be shown abroad.

The aged and fanatically devout patriarch of a wealthy family has a vision in his sleep, convincing him that his 17-year-old daughter-in-law is an incarnation of the goddess Kali. Dispute flares over whether this is truly a divine revelation or a mere nightmare.

The young husband fights frantically against having his bride snatched from him as a deity. The girl is in doubt but is frightened into quiet submission.

## Hailed as Miracle

A pauper brings his unconscious and apparently dying grandson to her for a miracle cure. A wise old servant drips some nourishing soup into the boy's mouth and he revives.

Nevertheless, that is hailed as a miracle and caravans of pilgrims begin arriving from far and wide. The outcome is bitterly tragic.

"Devi" is a work of pro-

ducer-director-scenarist Satyajit Ray, whose "Apu" trilogy firmly established him as a favorite with New York's foreign film audience. His narrative style has become much more direct and his technique more sophisticated. His points are made quickly and sharply with none of the mystical pondering that characterized his earlier work. He has cut his oversize time allotments down to 96 minutes this time.

## Lavish Background

The ritual pageantry that runs through the picture would have benefited by color, but Ray still makes effective use of these lavish settings in black and white. The idea for the story, by the way, was suggested to Ray by Rabin-dranath Tagore.

The girl, Sharmila Tagore (no relative), has a gift of expressing emotion and inner turmoil with a minimum of movement in body and face.



**Sharmila Tagore . . . in "Devi."**

She is statuesque, almost mute and immensely appealing. The conflict between father and son is eloquently conducted by Chhabi Biswas and Soumitra Chatterjee.

"Devi" has value both as a drama and as a mark of progress by one of Asia's most fascinating young film directors.

**STAR** — Miss Tagore, cast as the reluctant goddess in "Devi," was last seen in the "Apu" trilogy as Apu's bride. "Devi" reunites her with leading man Chatterjee, who acted Apu.

