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A Film Parable Of Corruption

Satyajit Ray's "The Hero," shown at the Film Festival on Friday night, is a leisurely and gentle depiction of the gradual corruption of India by Western influences.

Ray sets his parable on board a train carrying a handsome, insecure motion picture star, played by Uttam Kumar, to Delhi to pick up a prize. He realizes how quickly he may topple from prominence if his films are not hits. He drinks relatively heavily, and reports in the morning papers describe a nightclub brawl in which he participated.

We learn that he protects his image by not being candid in interviews, by insisting on being non-committal in political matters. He is a kind man who requires sleeping pills in order to rest.

BEAUTY

On the train he meets a beautiful editor (Sharmila Tagore) of a woman's magazine. She wishes to interview him and while at first he is elusive, gradually he finds himself eager to talk to her.

When he consumes most of a bottle of scotch, and is drunk, he insists on telling her more about himself. His reports are related in flashbacks: his early training in the theater, his first screen role, and various incidents caused by his great popularity.

Almost all the passengers on the train reflect the inroads of Western culture. An advertising executive pleads that his wife flatter a business man whose account he wishes.

NOTES

Miss Tagore, in American fashion, wears dark-rimmed spectacles to proclaim her intelligence, then removes them gracefully when she wishes to reveal her beauty.

Eager to get her story about the actor, she takes notes surreptitiously when he is unaware he is speaking for publication.

This is less dramatic than many of Ray's previous films, because the flavor in India is less strong. The life it depicts is less exotic, this very dilution being the theme of this engrossing production.

—P.K.