

THE APU TRILOGY

DIRECTED BY SATYAJIT RAY

PATHER PANCHALI **APARAJITO** **APUR SANSAR**
Song of the Little Road The Unvanquished The World of Apu

"Never having seen a Satyajit Ray film is like never having seen the sun or the moon."

—AKIRA KUROSAWA

Two decades after its original negatives were burned in a fire, Satyajit Ray's breathtaking milestone of world cinema rises from the ashes in a meticulously reconstructed new 4K restoration. *The Apu Trilogy* brought India into the golden age of international art-house film, following one indelible character, a free-spirited child in rural Bengal who matures into an adolescent urban student and finally a sensitive man of the world. These delicate masterworks—*Pather Panchali* (*Song of the Little Road*), *Aparajito* (*The Unvanquished*), and *Apur Sansar* (*The World of Apu*)—based on two books by Bibhutibhusan Banerjee, were shot over the course of five years, and each stands on its own as a tender, visually radiant journey. They are among the most achingly beautiful, richly humane movies ever made—essential works for any film lover.

**New 4K restorations made by the Criterion Collection in collaboration with
the Academy Film Archive at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences**

Booking Inquiries: Janus Films
booking@janusfilms.com • 212-756-8761



Press Contact: Ryan Werner
rtwerner@me.com • 917-254-7653



PATHER PANCHALI

Song of the Little Road

INDIA • 1955 • 125 MINUTES • BLACK & WHITE •
IN BENGALI WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES • 1.37:1

The release in 1955 of Satyajit Ray's debut, *Pather Panchali*, introduced to the world an eloquent and important new cinematic voice. A depiction of rural Bengali life in a style inspired by Italian neorealism, this naturalistic but poetic evocation of a number of years in the life of a family introduces us to both little Apu and, just as essentially, the women who will help shape him: his independent older sister, Durga; his harried mother, Sarbajaya, who, with her husband often away, must hold the family together; and his kindly and mischievous elderly "auntie," Indir—vivid, multifaceted characters all. With resplendent photography informed by its young protagonist's perpetual sense of discovery, the Cannes-awarded *Pather Panchali* is an immersive cinematic experience and a film of elemental power.

AWARDS

Best Human Document, Cannes Film Festival, 1956

Best foreign film, National Board of Review, 1957

Best picture, best director, San Francisco International Film Festival, 1957

CAST

Harihar, Apu's father **Kanu Banerjee**

Sarbajaya, Apu's mother **Karuna Banerjee**

Apu **Subir Banerjee**

Durga, Apu's sister **Uma Das Gupta**

Indir Thakrun ("Auntie") **Chunibala Devi**

Young Durga **Shampa "Runki" Banerjee**

Sejo Thakrun (bitter neighbor) **Reba Devi**

Nilmoni's wife (kind neighbor) **Aparna Devi**

Prasanna (schoolteacher) **Tulsi Chakraborty**

Baidyanath Majumdar (village elder)

Binoy Mukherjee

Chinibas (sweet seller) **Haren Banerjee**

Dr. Harimohan **Nag**

Chakravarti (village elder) **Haridhan Nag**

Priest **Kshirod Roy**

Ranu (Durga's friend) **Roma Ganguli**

CREDITS

Directed by **Satyajit Ray**

Produced by **Government of West Bengal**

Screenplay **Satyajit Ray**

Based on the novel *Pather Panchali* by

Bibhutibhusan Banerjee

Cinematographer **Subrata Mitra**

Original music **Ravi Shankar**

Editor **Dulal Dutta**

Art director **Bansi Chandragupta**

Sound recordist **Bhupen Ghosh**

Production manager **Anil Choudhury**



APARAJITO

The Unvanquished

INDIA • 1956 • 109 MINUTES • BLACK & WHITE •
IN BENGALI WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES • 1.37:1

Satyajit Ray had not planned to make a sequel to *Pather Panchali*, but after the film's international success, he decided to continue Apu's narrative. *Aparajito* picks up where the first film leaves off, with Apu and his family

having moved away from the country to live in the bustling holy city of Varanasi (then known as Benares). As Apu progresses from wide-eyed child to intellectually curious teenager, eventually studying in Kolkata, we witness his academic and moral education, as well as the growing complexity of his relationship with his mother. This tenderly expressive, often heart-wrenching film, which won three top prizes at the Venice Film Festival, including the Golden Lion, not only extends but also spiritually deepens the tale of Apu.

AWARDS

Golden Lion, Venice Film Festival, 1957
FIPRESCI Prize, Venice Film Festival, 1957
New Cinema Award, Venice Film Festival, 1957
Best director, San Francisco International Film Festival, 1958

CAST

Harihar, Apu's father **Kanu Banerjee**
Sarbjaya, Apu's mother **Karuna Banerjee**
Adolescent Apu **Pinaki Sengupta**
Student Apu **Smaran Ghosal**
Bhabataran, Sarbjaya's uncle
Ramani Sengupta
Nanda-babu (upstairs neighbor)
Charuprakash Ghosh
Headmaster **Subodh Ganguli**
School inspector **Moni Srimani**
Schoolteacher **Hemanta Chatterjee**
Teli (Bhabataran's patron) **Ranibala**
Nirupama, Teli's daughter **Sudipta Roy**
Anil **Ajay Mitra**
Kalicharan (Harihar's guest) **Kali Banerjee**
Akhil (press proprietor) **Kalicharan Roy**
Moksada **Kamala Adhikari**
Lahiri (Sarbjaya's employer)
Lalchand Banerjee
Lahiri's wife **Santi Gupta**
Pande (first-floor neighbor) **K. S. Pandey**
Pande's wife **Meenaksi Devi**
Abinash (schoolteacher) **Anil Mukherjee**
Doctor **Harendrakumar Chakravarti**
Palwan **Bhaganu Palwan**

CREDITS

Directed and produced by **Satyajit Ray**
Screenplay **Satyajit Ray**
Based on the novels *Pather Panchali* and
Aparajito by **Bibhutibhusan Banerjee**
Cinematographer **Subrata Mitra**
Original music **Ravi Shankar**
Editor **Dulal Dutta**
Art director **Bansi Chandragupta**
Sound recordist **Durgadas Mitra**
Production manager **Anil Choudhury**



APUR SANSAR

The World of Apu

INDIA • 1959 • 105 MINUTES • BLACK & WHITE •
IN BENGALI WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES • 1.37:1

By the time *Apur Sansar* was released, Satyajit Ray had directed not only the first two Apu films but also the masterpiece *The Music Room*, and was well on his way to becoming a legend. This extraordinary final chapter brings our protagonist's journey full circle. Apu is now in his early twenties, out of college, and hoping to live as a writer. Alongside his professional ambitions, the film charts his romantic awakening, which occurs as the result of a most unlikely turn of events, and his eventual, fraught fatherhood. Featuring soon to be Ray regulars Soumitra Chatterjee and Sharmila Tagore in star-making performances, and demonstrating Ray's ever-more-impressive skills as a crafter of pure cinematic imagery, *Apur Sansar* is a breathtaking conclusion to this monumental trilogy.

AWARDS

Best foreign film, National Board of Review, 1959
Sutherland Trophy, British Film Institute Awards, 1959

CAST

Apu **Soumitra Chatterjee**
Aparna **Sharmila Tagore**
Kajal, Apu's son **Alok Chakraborty**
Pulu, Apu's friend **Swapan Mukherjee**
Sasinarayan, Pulu's uncle **Dhires Majumdar**
Sasinarayan's wife **Sefalika Devi**
Landlord **Dhiren Ghosh**
Bridegroom **Tusar Banerjee**
Murari, Aparna's brother **Abhijit Chatterjee**

CREDITS

Directed and produced by **Satyajit Ray**
Screenplay **Satyajit Ray**
Based on the novel *Aparajito* by
Bibhutibhusan Banerjee
Coproducer **Aminyanath Mukherji**
Original music **Ravi Shankar**
Cinematographer **Subrata Mitra**
Editor **Dulal Dutta**
Art director **Bansi Chandragupta**
Sound recordist **Durgadas Mitra**
Production manager **Anil Choudhury**



ABOUT THE RESTORATION

In 1992, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences presented an honorary lifetime achievement Oscar to director Satyajit Ray. When sourcing material from Ray's films for the Academy Awards ceremony, telecast producers were dismayed by the poor condition of the existing prints. The following year, after Ray's death, a project was initiated to restore many of Ray's films, including those in *The Apu Trilogy*.

In 1993, several of the filmmaker's original negatives were shipped to Henderson's Film Laboratories in London. In July, a massive nitrate fire at the lab spread to the film vaults, destroying more than twenty-five original negatives of important British classics—and burning several Ray films, including the original negatives of *The Apu Trilogy*. Any ashes, fragments, or film cans that could be identified as belonging to Ray's films were sent to the Academy Film Archive, but the trilogy negatives were deemed unprintable—there were no technologies available at the time that were capable of fully restoring such badly damaged film elements.



When the Criterion Collection began working on this restoration with the Academy Film Archive in 2013, the negatives were in storage and hadn't been seen in twenty years. Many portions were indeed burned to ash, and what remained was startlingly fragile, thanks to deterioration and the heat and contaminants the elements had been exposed to. Head and tail leaders were often missing from reels. Yet significant portions survived, from which high-quality images might be rendered.



No commercial laboratory would handle this material, so it was entrusted to L'Immagine Ritrovata in Bologna, one of the world's premier restoration facilities. There, technicians successfully rehydrated the brittle film using a special solution (one part glycerol, one part acetone, three parts water). Scanning tests

determined that pin-registered wet-gate scans yielded the best results. Technicians then set about physically repairing the elements. This meant almost a thousand hours of meticulous hand labor, which even included rebuilding the perforation holes on the sides of the film and removing melted tape and glue. Using fine-grain masters and duplicate negatives preserved by Janus Films, the Academy, the Harvard Film Archive, and the British Film Institute, the technicians found excellent replacements for the unusable or missing sections of the original negatives. In the end, 40 percent of *Pather Panchali* and over 60 percent of *Aparajito* were restored directly from the original negatives. The two surviving reels of *Apur Sansar* were too damaged to be used in the restoration, so all of that film was restored from a fine-grain master and a duplicate negative.

Over the course of nearly six months of steady work, the Criterion Collection restoration lab handled the digital restoration, including eliminating dirt, debris, warps, and cracks. Emphasis was placed on retaining the look and character of the original material, preferring when necessary to leave damage rather than overprocess digital images that might lose the grain and feel of film.

All in all, the restoration of *The Apu Trilogy* has been years in the making. The return of these films to theaters marks a triumph for the archivists and members of the preservation community who had the foresight and faith to protect these vital treasures of world cinema—even when all seemed lost.



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SATYAJIT RAY BIOGRAPHY

Satyajit Ray was an only child, born in 1921 into a creative, intellectual family of Brahmos—members of a Christian-influenced Hindu movement—in Kolkata. His grandfather, Upendrakishore Ray, was a renowned writer, composer, and children’s magazine founder, and his father, Sukumar Ray, was a writer and illustrator, a household name for his nonsense verse. Satyajit had an unsurprising early

facility with the arts, both musical and visual. His father died when he was not yet three, and he lived with his mother and an uncle in the southern part of Kolkata, where he taught himself to read Western classical music and discovered Hollywood movies.

After finishing college, beginning in 1940, Ray studied art for two and a half years in Santiniketan, at the university founded by the great Bengali intellectual, writer, and artist Rabindranath Tagore, who would become one of the most important influences in his life. Returning to Kolkata, Ray found work as a graphic artist at a British-run advertising agency and a Bengali-run publishing house, and cofounded the Calcutta Film Society, where he and other film lovers watched mostly European and Hollywood movies and engaged in lengthy *addas* (coffeehouse conversations) about what was missing from Indian cinema, which was still primarily a Bollywood landscape. While working full-time, Ray began writing screenplays on the side, for his own enjoyment and occasionally for pay, deepening his understanding of cinematic storytelling.

In 1949, Ray met the great French director Jean Renoir, who was location scouting in Kolkata for *The River*. When Renoir asked if he had a film idea of his own, Ray described the story of *Pather Panchali*, a novel by Bibhutibhusan Banerjee for which Ray had once designed woodcut illustrations and that struck him as being highly cinematic in nature. Renoir encouraged Ray’s love of film and his pursuit of the project.

In 1950, Ray and his wife, Bijoya, moved to England, where he would work at his advertising agency’s London office. During those six months, the couple saw ninety-nine films, including Vittorio De Sica’s recent neorealist masterpiece *Bicycle Thieves*. It was this film that had the strongest impact on Ray, as it led him to the discovery that one could make a film with nonprofessionals, on location, largely outdoors, and on a shoestring budget. In late 1950, on the boat back to Kolkata, he wrote a first treatment for *Pather Panchali*.

In 1955, after three years of shooting and editing that was intermittent due to a lack of financing, Ray completed his debut film, which, after legendary screenings in New York and Cannes, officially put him on the map during the golden age of art-house cinema; with *Pather Panchali*, Ray took his place alongside Ingmar Bergman, Federico Fellini, and Akira Kurosawa as one of the most important international filmmakers. He went on to close out the 1950s with a string of masterpieces, including the two films that rounded out *The Apu Trilogy*, *Aparajito* (1956) and *Apur Sansar* (1959), and *The Music Room* (1958).

Over the course of his thirty-six-year career, Ray would direct twenty-eight features. He also designed posters and composed musical scores for many of his own films. He won awards at the world’s major film festivals, including Cannes, Venice, and Berlin. In 1992, thanks to

a campaign led by several Hollywood heavyweights, including Martin Scorsese and Francis Ford Coppola, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences awarded him an honorary lifetime achievement Oscar, which he accepted from a hospital bed in Kolkata, where he had been admitted for a heart condition. Less than a month later, Ray died at the age of seventy. His work remains an inspiration to filmmakers around the world.

FILMOGRAPHY

- 1955 *Pather Panchali (Song of the Little Road)*
- 1956 *Aparajito (The Unvanquished)*
- 1958 *Jalsaghar (The Music Room)*
- 1958 *Paras Pathar (The Philosopher's Stone)*
- 1959 *Apur Sansar (The World of Apu)*
- 1960 *Devi (The Goddess)*
- 1961 *Teen Kanya (Three Daughters)*
- 1961 *Rabindranath Tagore (documentary)*
- 1962 *Kanchenjunga*
- 1962 *Abhijaan (The Expedition)*
- 1963 *Mahanagar (The Big City)*
- 1964 *Charulata (The Lonely Wife)*
- 1965 *Kapurush-o-Mahapurush ("The Coward" and "The Holy Man")*
- 1965 *Two (television short)*
- 1966 *Nayak (The Hero)*
- 1967 *Chiriakhana (The Zoo)*
- 1969 *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne (The Adventures of Goopy and Bagha)*
- 1970 *Aranyer Din Ratri (Days and Nights in the Forest)*
- 1970 *Pratidwandi (The Adversary)*
- 1971 *Sikkim (documentary)*
- 1972 *Seemabaddha (Company Limited)*
- 1972 *The Inner Eye (documentary short)*
- 1973 *Ashani Sanket (Distant Thunder)*
- 1974 *Sonar Kella (The Golden Fortress)*
- 1976 *Jana Aranya (The Middleman)*
- 1976 *Bala (documentary short)*
- 1977 *Shatranj Ke Khilari (The Chess Players)*
- 1979 *Joi Baba Felunath (The Elephant God)*
- 1980 *Hirak Rajar Deshe (The Kingdom of Diamonds)*
- 1981 *Sadgati (Deliverance, television movie)*
- 1981 *Pikoo (Pikoo's Day, television short)*
- 1984 *Ghare Baire (The Home and the World)*
- 1987 *Sukumar Ray (documentary short)*
- 1989 *Ganasatru (An Enemy of the People)*
- 1990 *Sakha Prasakha (Branches of the Tree)*
- 1991 *Agantuk (The Stranger)*

EAST MEETS WEST

SATYAJIT RAY AT CANNES

The story of the sensational release of *Pather Panchali* and Satyajit Ray's rise to prominence in the 1950s is a truly global one. It is the head-spinning tale of an Indian filmmaker who, encouraged by one of the world's great French directors, pursued his love of film, discovered Italian cinema while temporarily living in London, and returned to his native Bengal to make his first film, which, after being discovered by New York tastemakers, was invited to screen at the legendary Cannes Film Festival. In terms of Ray's career, the rest is history.

In 1949, when he met and befriended Jean Renoir (*The Rules of the Game*), who was in Kolkata scouting locations for his drama *The River*, Ray already wanted to become a filmmaker, but the French legend's encouragement was crucial to his pursuing a career in cinema. A year later, Ray moved to England for six months to work in his advertising agency's London office; while there, he saw ninety-nine movies, including, most fortuitously, Italian director Vittorio De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves*. That neorealist masterpiece showed Ray new possibilities for making films in an authentic and inexpensive way, and his debut, 1955's *Pather Panchali*, was deeply informed by the tenets of Italian neorealism: outdoor location shooting, the use of nonprofessional actors, a focus on everyday lower-middle-class life.

The film was not quite finished when, in 1954, Monroe Wheeler, chief curator at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, was visiting Kolkata and met Ray. The two men hit it off, and Ray showed Wheeler some stills from his film, piquing the American's interest. Six months later, on behalf of Wheeler, director John Huston, location scouting in Kolkata, paid Ray a visit. Ray showed him half an hour of roughly cut together film, without sound. Eventually, Ray received a letter from Wheeler saying, "If John Huston likes it, his word is good enough for me." At the end of April 1955, Ray sent an unsubtitled print of *Pather Panchali* to Wheeler at MoMA, and it was screened there on May 3. The screening was well received and resulted in a U.S. distribution deal for Ray, but perhaps more importantly, it led to word of mouth that ultimately helped get the film accepted into the Cannes Film Festival the next year.

Indian films had shown occasionally at Cannes over the years, including works by Chetan Anand, Bimal Roy, and Raj Kapoor, but *Pather Panchali* was a true revelation, one that opened Western viewers' eyes to the possibilities of Indian cinema. At first, though, it seemed as if it might escape notice; the only scheduled screening was late in the evening and poorly attended, with few of the festival's jurors showing up. Those there, however, saw something deeply compelling: a portrait of Bengali life in a style informed by the masters of European cinema (not only Vittorio De Sica and Jean Renoir but also Roberto Rossellini), with a humanist approach to character that rendered a potentially exotic subject intimately knowable to viewers from anywhere in the world. At the insistence of the handful of critics who saw it, another screening—this one highly attended and hugely successful—was quickly arranged. Ultimately, *Pather Panchali* won the thirty-five-year-old Ray Cannes's newly created award for Best Human Document.

The arrival of *Pather Panchali* at Cannes and the subsequent embrace of *The Apu Trilogy* around the world was a watershed moment. It was an early expression of a postwar cinema culture that was acquiring an increasingly global perspective. Festivals like Cannes allowed for the kind of cultural cross-pollination that would not only create the golden age of art-house cinema but also define the second half of the twentieth century. In the story of Apu and his family, the world was reminded of the universality of the human spirit.



THE MUSIC

Among *The Apu Trilogy*'s many claims to fame is the fact that the music for all three films was created by the legendary Ravi Shankar. At the time, he was virtually unknown in the West, but he was already famous in India as a performer of Indian classical music, and well-known as a composer. His subtle yet stirring music for *Pather Panchali*, *Aparajito*, and *Apur Sansar* is one of the defining characteristics of *The Apu Trilogy*.

Satyajit Ray and Shankar had known each other for over ten years when Ray approached Shankar to compose music for *Pather Panchali* in late 1954. Working around his concert commitments, Shankar composed and recorded music over the course of one night, working until 4 a.m. as Ray projected selected scenes for him.

Shankar chose to use no Western instruments. In addition to his sitar, three other string instruments were selected—the *tarshehnai*, the *bhimraj*, and the *sarod*—along with the *pakhwaj* for percussion and a haunting flute. Ray ended up with more than enough material and took it to the editing room. One piece of music was so lovely that, while editing, Ray created a sequence—the dance of the water bugs as the monsoon approaches—just to showcase it. Perhaps the most memorable use of Shankar's music is near the end of the film, when Apu's father, Harihar, returns home after having been gone for months and shows his wife a new sari for Durga, not knowing that their daughter has died. Sarbajaya cries out in anguish, and Ray uses only Shankar's raga, played in high notes on the *tarshehnai*, to express her agony.

For *Aparajito*, Shankar was again busy touring but found a few hours of time for Ray. The session was almost too brief, and in the end, Ray felt he barely had enough to complete his film. However, for *Apur Sansar*, which involves more locations, settings, and tonal changes than the other films, Shankar had more time to devote, even bringing in violins, cellos, and a piano for one of the pieces, and recording over the course of three days.

The Apu Trilogy's enormous success helped catapult Shankar to stardom around the world. In the sixties, he was instrumental in sitar music's becoming an international sensation, performing in a revelatory, climactic set at the 1967 Monterey International Pop Festival in California; in the seventies, he toured with George Harrison. In the late seventies, the music from the *Apu Trilogy* soundtracks was released as an LP. In 2007, the *Guardian* placed *Pather Panchali* at number four on its list of the greatest film soundtracks of all time.

TEN INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT *THE APU TRILOGY*

1

Satyajit Ray worked a twenty-hour-a-day schedule to complete the editing of *Pather Panchali* in time for its premiere at New York's Museum of Modern Art on May 3, 1955, in a print without subtitles. The New York opening of this restoration falls sixty years, almost to the day, after that premiere.

2

Pather Panchali was such a smash in New York that it played for eight months at the Fifth Avenue Playhouse in 1958.

3

Aparajito won the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival, making it the only sequel to have ever won the grand prize at one of the world's three major festivals (Berlin, Cannes, and Venice).

4

Matt Groening, creator of *The Simpsons*, is a big fan of *The Apu Trilogy*, and he named the show's convenience store owner Apu Nahasapeemapetilon after its protagonist.

5

Ray started out as a graphic designer and book illustrator, and his creations included woodcut art for a children's edition of Bibhutibhusan Banerjee's novel *Pather Panchali*. As a filmmaker, he designed all of his own publicity materials, and usually his opening credits.

6

In 1951, while Ray was trying to raise money for *Pather Panchali*, he drew thirty-one pages of storyboards for a documentary about Indian classical musician Ravi Shankar. The film was never made, though the storyboards have been preserved by the Satyajit Ray Society.

7

Cinematographer Subrata Mitra was only twenty-one years old when he began work on *Pather Panchali*, and had never handled a movie camera before.

8

Ray and Mitra pioneered the use of bounced light. For *Aparajito*, they had to build a studio set that would replicate the living conditions of Apu's family in Varanasi (then known as Benares), a structure that had a central courtyard and a skylight opening at the top, and that was essentially without shadows. Mitra came up with the idea to stretch a sheet of cloth above the studio-built courtyard and bounce artificial light from below, creating more depth and natural-looking shadows in the courtyard space.

9

Chunibala Devi, who plays "Auntie" in *Pather Panchali*, was a stage actor at the turn of the century, worked in silent cinema, and then retired from entertainment. She was about eighty years old when Ray met her, and aside from being one of the few actors who received a small salary, she also required a daily dose of opium.

10

Apur Sansar was the first film Ray made with actors Soumitra Chatterjee and Sharmila Tagore, who would become major stars. Each went on to appear in many more Ray films.