

Rediscovering Ray and Pather Panchali

The month of May helps the cineaste gain fresh insights into some of Satyajit Ray's masterpieces with a special focus on *Pather Panchali* 50 years after it was made

COME May and a stream of Ray's memorabilia dot the cultural landscape of the city. Umpteen stories, layered in mythical garb, fly thick and fast rolling out those impeccable celluloid imprints. *Pather Panchali*, a turning point in Indian cinema, was the focus of a seminar held at Nandan celebrating Ray and his films. Mrinal Sen, Tarun Majumder and a veritable clout on Ray like Sanjoy Mukherjee, Mihir Bhattacharya, Mainak Biswas, Nabinananda Sen comprised the list of speakers.

Nandan CEO Nilanjan Chatterjee in his brief introductory note threw light on the financial crunch that haunted *Pather Panchali* till contributions poured in from various quarters, the most startling of which is Kishore Kumar doling out Rs 5,000 for the film. In fact, Ray was so inspired by *The Bicycle Thief* that he watched the film 55 times before getting into his debut venture.

"I don't want to see a movie of the peasants who eat with hands". To negate

Panchali is often rendered to a half-silent movie leaving ample scope for the

audience to ponder over. Durga's rain drenched silhouette drips of a fairytale



Poster on display at Nandan

like enigma as Apu Durga become "recognisably Indian".

A screening of *Pather Panchali* aside, the day kick started with an exhibit of Ray's film posters by Rudrajeet Mookherjee. The personal collectibles, which Mookherjee has painstakingly assorted over a period of time smacks of a Ray loyalist. Preservation of heritage motif seems to be the key message of this exhibit. A documentary filmmaker by profession, Mookherjee rattles off names like Arora Ranjan Bose, Ramlal Nundy, Kamal Ghosh, Soumendu Roy, Goutam Chatterjee, Parimal Ray and others who have lent an unstinted support to him. Barring Ashani Sanket and Shatranj ki Khiladi all the other Ray posters find pride of place.

Mookherjee is next mulling over a Tapan Sinha exhibit and also a New Theatres showcase which completes its 75th run in 2006.

— NEELANJANA GAUTAM