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APUR PANCHALI: THE SONG OF APU'S ROAD, WITH CAUTIONED STEPS – CRITICAL REVIEW

Aneek Chaudhuri

Abstract:-It took almost six decades to justify the road shown by Satyajit Ray a.k.a. Manik Da through the mastery of Kaushik Ganguly. Pather Panchali (The Road of Song) was released in 1955, the first film of Apu trilogy; Apur Panchali got screened in front of all cinephiles in 2014 that added another feather to director, Kaushik Ganguly. Apur Panchali brings in a real depiction of the struggle faced by a person who preferred to stay behind the doors than choosing to stay before the lens.

Keywords:Apur Panchali , Critical Review , struggle faced , proper mannerisms .

INTRODUCTION

Pather Panchali was indeed the most heart-warming and sensible beginning of the Apu trilogy; followed by 'Aparajito' (the unbeatable) and 'Apur Samsar' (Apu's life). Coming back to Apur Panchali, literally meaning 'The Song Of Apu' or 'The Song Of Apu's Life' details the life of the actor who played the character of Apu in Pather Panchali. Not to be confused that it is the real life story of Apu i.e. Subir Banerjee.

Subir Banerjee has been depicted as any other ordinary Bengali person living a middle-class life in the city of Kolkata. The whole film revolves around three layers i.e. present Apu (Subir Banerjee), young age of Subir Banerjee and the episodes of Apu trilogy.

Arko (Gaurab Chatterjee) is a student from SRFTII (Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institution of India) and roams around the streets of North Kolkata to explore the original Apu i.e. Subir Banerjee.

Subir Banerjee is to be felicitated by Berlin Film Fraternity for his performance in Apur Panchali (as a child actor); the same reason propels Arko to reach Subir. It was both, a matter of pride and a nostalgic connection for Arko to be associated with the great Apu trilogy; on reaching Subir Banerjee (through a chain of references), Arko discovers him to be someone who gets irritated on being linked with Satyajit Ray or Apu. The same has been depicted in a direct manner in the film.

Apur Panchali is a subtle type of docu-feature (documentary cum feature film) which lets us know everything about Subir Banerjee's life, although the truth has been shown through proper mannerisms of acting.

Finally, Arko convinces Subir Banerjee for an unforced interaction. This leads him to know more about the inner life of Subir Banerjee and ultimately, takes him to the felicitation ceremony of Berlin Film Festival.

Subir Banerjee can be heard saying, "He (Satyajit Ray) might have abandoned him, but did exactly Apu leave me?". This infuses life into the film; it's the mixture of the feelings of glory, as well as disappointment that shadows a person's mental growth. The same happened with Subir Banerjee, where he often tends to lose his originality, overshadowed by his cinematic character. Things would not have been hurtful, if he was involved in the medium of films and acting. It took a haunting route when he was himself doubtful to make others believe the truth of reel Apu (the truth that he played 'Apu').

Arko often can be seen to compare the inuendoes in Subir's life with Apu trilogy. This instills more passion into him. Nostalgia has been depicted to take a passionate and believable route in Apur Panchali.

AESTHETIC EXCELLENCE OF APUR PANCHALI

The film starts in a well-set manner. Apur Panchali could not have been crafted in a better way, as done by

Kaushik Ganguly. All the viewers should remember that the film is more about the child actor that played Apu, not Apu himself.

The first scene opens up with a bit of graphics complementing the birth of Apu in Pather Panchali. It is a reel from the classic Pather Panchali, made in 1955.

The scene says “Satyajit Ray made Pather Panchali and gifted Apu to the world of Cinema”, accompanied by the scene when Apu gets born in Pather Panchali. One should not juggle the real world of Subir Banerjee with the reel depiction of Subir as Apu. Kaushik has been clever enough to justify this intricate bridge with “An actor was born” after the birth scene of Apu.

A Bridge Between Apur Panchali & Apu Trilogy

Apu walks up the village lanes to reach an unseen land; often it is a natural occurrence with villagers when they roam around the village to explore a better way of passing their time. In the same way, Arko is depicted to walk along the streets of Kolkata to reach Subir's house, and the destination is vague to him. The destination, here, is not Subir's house, it is the ability to convince Subir Banerjee to take him to Berlin Film Festival. Considering the existence of Subir Banerjee, which was still unknown to Arko, things were vague and unclear.

What is expressed the best in this film, is Arko's point of view of Subir Banerjee. As he reaches Subir Banerjee's residence, he knocks the door (in case, he rings the bell). In response, Subir Banerjee peeps out through a pin-hole attached to the entrance door. Subtle, isn't it? Arko perceives Subir's pin view as the one that can be easily related to the scene in Pather Panchali; Durga wakes Apu up, while Apu (being reluctant) tries to hide his face with a piece of sheet. The hide & seek between the brother and sister was not anything new, as Durga fingered upon the small hole in Apu's sheet; it's Apu's glimpse through the torn cloth. It can be called as a nostalgic comparison of two films, bridged by 6 decades.

If we go deeper into Arko's perceptions and nostalgia, he is seen to relate Subir's life with episodes from Apu trilogy. (Subir Banerjee narrates his life to the aspiring filmmaker)

There have been references from Apu trilogy often; however, another example is the scene when Subir hears the demise of his infant son. But, I must say that this scene looks overworked and does not come natural.

There are scenes when Subir has been shown struggling to give away the shadow of Apu in his mid-age. Be it the scene when Subir gets to interrupt a film-shooting or the scene when he sticks his ear to the lamp-post to apply his Apu-etic experiences.

MUSICAL SCORE AND CINEMATOGRAPHY

Inradip Dasgupta has used his instruments very cleverly in the film; somewhat, it also gives the effect of the music employed in Pather Panchali. At the same time, it blends well with the modern audiences.

There's nothing much to say about the music in Apur Panchali and it complements well with the situations.

Much similar is the case with cinematographic effects. Composed frames, superb harmony and excellent shot selections! Cheers to Shirsha Ray (D.O.P.) and the director's perspective of film-making.

The best thing about cinematography in Apur Panchali is the composition of scenes. How can one forget the use of trolley-shots in flashback frames? Or, the bird's eye view shot that slowly crawls upward toward the end of the film, things have been employed swiftly. Nothing seemed distracting, actually.

CONCLUSION

Kaushik Ganguly has put forward a phenomenal concept through Apur Panchali. One must have heard of 'One-hit wonders', but what actually happens to a person's life when he/she gets lost after enjoying a celebrated status for a short-while? This has been identified, clarified and justified in this film.

It is really hard for an actor to shoulder the burden of being part of the history once, and then suddenly feels history being snatched away from him. The same has been explained in the most appealing form of cinema by the director. It is not a film dedicated to Apu or Subir Banerjee, but it's a piece for all those who have preferred to choose shadow than getting faded by some unwanted attention. Hence, an appreciative piece by Kaushik Ganguly and it deserves a salute.

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