

A PICTURE MAKER
(ENGLISH SCREENPLAY)

Screenplay & Direction by
Debargha Maschatak & Anargha Pal

Story by
Debargha Maschatak

Creative Producer
Shashwat Mookherjee

© IndieRise Digital LLP , 2024

© Arachnoid Films , 2024

1 OPENING CARDS

1

The logos and opening cards of the film appear in the style of Handwritten manuscripts.

The sound of a train can be heard passing by, further fading into the sound of a plane soaring above the audience's heads.

2 INT. MOVIE THEATRE - DAY

2

Pitch black. Suddenly a ray of light strikes the spectacles of an audience member, illuminating her countenance. The reflection across the glasses reveals an imperfect manuscript bearing handwritten names. Ravi Shankar's iconic theme is heard as the beginning of *Pather Panchali* plays on the big screen. The audience member smiles. In a single uncut longshot, the camera pans out to reveal a packed theatre.

All eyes are fixed to the screen in awe. The following shots comprise of scenes from the movie playing on the screen, seen only through reflections - be it off the pupils, the gleam of a watch, past a bottle of water, etc (anything in the dark theatre that can reflect the light from the screen.) We never cut directly to the moving images on the screen.

The camera glides past rows of feet beneath the seat, weaving through the audience, their toes tapping in rhythm to the beat of the iconic score, and stops at a point where two legs border the opposite side of the frame vertically, empty in the middle. Kernels of popcorn fall to the floor in the space between the legs. Small hands reach down to retrieve it in the darkness, but adult hands catch it from the side. A small grunt can be heard as the FATHER (39M) gestures to the kid to leave the spilled popcorn where it is. The camera tilts up to reveal the kid, his head positioned right below the beam of light coming from the projector.

The curly-haired kid, TATHAGATA (6M) looks back over his shoulder at the projector's beam, still munching on his popcorn. His eyes fall to a couple sitting behind him. The WOMAN (25M) points to the screen.

WOMAN IN AUDIENCE

Here it comes...

The kid obstructs part of their , but they tilt their heads to see around him.

Without warning, the theatre bursts into applause. The kid turns back.

This is the first time we directly cut to the screen. In Bengali, handwritten on the same dirty manuscript "*Chitranatya o parichalana (Adaptation And Screenplay) - Satyajit Ray*".

Much to the kid's confusion and awe, the audience celebrates the very stained manuscript they have been staring at for the past two minutes in silence.

He stares at words forming the name Satyajit Ray as the entire population of the theatre breaks into a collective applause. One person even whispers "*Almighty!*".

The kid looks to his parents. Their eyes filled with awe, respect and admiration, their lips carved into a smile.

3

INT. LOBBY AREA OF THEATRE - DAY

3

After the screening, the kid exits the theatre, the hands of his parents enveloping both of his. Posters announcing "50 years of *Pather Panchali*" line the walls. We see him in the reflection of a glass-framed poster, a glimpse into the future awaiting him. An elderly man snaps a picture of the poster with a portable handycam. The kid overhears the man saying to his wife.

ELDER MAN

A legend he was...

The kid's features soften, caught in quiet awe. With no filmmaking ambitions set before him just yet, he tries to feel past the admiration, trying to comprehend how a man came to be such a force of nature through his art.

He looks up to his father.

THE KID

Dad, who is Satyajit Ray?

MATCH CUT TO:

4

INT. TATHAGATA'S HOUSE - DAY

4

Tathagata skims past the pages of a book titled "*Speaking of Films - Satyajit Ray*" - 2005 edition.

A homage to "*2001: A Space Odyssey*", *Strauss: Also sprach Zarathustra* plays.

We see close-ups of the foreword written in 2005 and some other important lines from the book.

TATHAGATA'S MOTHER

(O.S.)

Tatha! Dinner. Come quick before it gets cold...

The camera rotates around Tathagata behind his back and we transition to TATHAGATA (11M) researching film directors on Google, as it appeared in 2011.

MATCH CUT TO:

5 INT. TATHAGATA'S HOUSE - DAY 5

Tathagata, deep in his investigation. He searches "Film Directors"

The orchestral music rises to the extremum as we match cut to the display to see Stanley Kubrick (with the hook of the music from "2001: A Space Odyssey"), Steven Spielberg, Martin Scorsese...etc. listed among the search results.

His search then ventures into the adjacent domain, "How to make films?".

The answer is as overwhelming as it is comprehensive, "Script, shot division, storyboard, cast and crew, location, shooting, editing, vfx, music, sound.."

Words alone prove to complex for him. He goes to YouTube and types out, "How to make films beginner tutorial".

He clicks on the thumbnail of a video where a guy (cameo by a film YouTuber) explains the process of filmmaking.

YOUTUBER

You'll hear everyone hammering down your ears how you can't make a film without this or that...but believe me when I tell you, in today's video I will teach you guys the only 3 things you will ever need to make a film.

- 1) A Story... (gestures to a Napkin with a scribblings on it on it)
 - 2) A camera..(brings out Pocket Camera)
- And most importantly...
- 3) Fun...(Smiles)

A smile forms over Tathagata's face. He shifts his gaze to some action figures kept on his desk.

CUT TO:

6 INT. TATHAGATA'S HOUSE HALL ROOM - EVENING

6

Tathagata is shooting a scene on his father's handycam. A very shaky handheld camera accompanied by tremendous background noise - The usual scene that plays out when a kid takes up a camera for the first time.

The only object occupying the shot is a napkin. Its surface boasts a blunt pencil writing, "A Tathagata Chowdhury Production"

He makes an attempt at recreating the title sequence from *Pather Panchali*. The jarring and poorly edited nature of the film, given the inexperience, is entirely overshadowed by the joyful innocence reflected in the process. The film cuts to the next shot with Tathagata's fingers is partially obstructing the frame. Another Page comes into view.

On it is written, "Edited by Tathagata Chowdhury"

Cut to the next shot, another page. This time around, the pencil can be seen within the frame, remnants of shavings scattered about the edge, indicating Tathagata having sharpened his pencil. The writing is clearer now - "Written by Tathagata Chowdhury"

Next shot - "Directed by Tathagata Chowdhury". The current writing sits atop the previously erased one, Tathagata having employed a rubber to correct the earlier misspelled iteration of his name.

Next shot - his film begins. Tathagata puppeteers a Hulk action figure by hand. The footage is very shaky. His MOTHER(44F) and FATHER (45M) walk past in the background.

Hulk goes and opens the fridge. It is his intention to get a hold of the chocolate being guarded by Batman.

In a winner takes all showdown, Hulk and Batman fight it out in an intense battle. In one of the shots, the director the accidentally lands a blow on the camera.

Towards the end, Spiderman swings in, defeats both of them and swings back out, taking the chocolate with him. A great plot-twist.

The credits roll. Identical to the opening credits, except for the presence of an extra shot is in the end saying "Thanks for watching". The screen goes to black before the VLC Media Player interface pops in.

MATCH CUT TO:

7 INT. TATHAGATA'S HOUSE TV AREA - EVENING 7

The camera pans out of a TV, revealing Tathagata hosting a screening of the film for his mom and dad to watch.

Both parents shower him with laughter and applause in equal measure.

TATHAGATA'S FATHER

If the chocolate now rests with Spiderman, what about your share?

TATHAGATA

(proud of himself)

I have more.

Mom lovingly rubs his head.

TATHAGATA'S MOTHER

Our little Satyajit Ray.

Tathagata smiles.

TATHAGATA'S FATHER

All right, study time. *Get your books out, I'll be with you in a few minutes.*

They leave. Tathagata's smile fades away.

He goes back to his room and takes out *Aam Aatir Bhenpu (The Mango Seed Bugle)* (The Original Extract from *Pather Panchali* by Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay) from his school bag. He reluctantly opens it, the smile returning to his face almost immediately. Tathagata makes a rectangular frame on the cover of the book, imagining the scene from *Pather Panchali*.

MATCH CUT TO:

8 EXT. MAIDAN - MAGIC HOUR 8

THE FOLLOWING 3 SCENES WILL INTERCUT WITHIN THEMSELVES

SCENE 1 OF INTERCUTTING

TATHAGATA (14M), along with few of his friends are standing at Maidan, an empty grassland. Children play as a tram is passes through, beyond the grass, mirroring the famous train scene from *Pather Panchal*.

Tathagata's brother looks up at the sky, brushing the sweat off his brows.

Tathagata marks the frame by bringing his hands up and making a rectangle with his fingers (as directors do to see their framing) in an exterior setting.

Tathagata looks through the peephole of a DSLR, the camera held onto by another KID (14).

KID 1

Careful. I'm homeless if I drop or damage it.

Although satisfied with the framing of the shot, Tathagata doesn't like where the actor is standing. The scene unfolds through the camera's recording.

TATHAGATA

(O.S)

A little to the left..

The kid standing within the frame moves to the left.

TATHAGATA (CONT'D)

No. No. Too much...go back to the right. Yeah. Fine. Hold there.

Anit, have Farhan in the frame for the entirety of the shot. Adhering to the Rule of thirds.

Ok.. Farhan, ready?

The kid in frame raises a thumb.

Take 1 -

TATHAGATA (CONT'D)

All right..when I say so, start running. Straight as an arrow.

The kid in the frame starts running.

TATHAGATA (CONT'D)

Yo yo. Not yet. *After* I say "Action"!

KID 2

Oh..

Take 2 -

TATHAGATA

Okay. Ready?..Nah. Wait. All right..3, 2, 1 and, Action.

The kid starts running. The cameraman doesn't. Tathagata facepalms.

TATHAGATA (CONT'D)

Anit. Go after him..

The two burst laughing..

Take 3 -

TATHAGATA (CONT'D)

Farhan, get running as soon as I say "Action!" and Anit, launch after him...got it?

Okay..3, 2, 1 action.

They start running. The unsteady hands begin to capture the shaky footage. Farhan, while running, turns back to look at the camera.

TATHAGATA (CONT'D)

Cut. Cut. Cut...

Take 4 -

TATHAGATA (CONT'D)

Don't ever look at the camera. Just run straight, and Anit, follow in a sprint from behind, understood?

Okay. Now, let's go..3,2,1 ...And Action

They start running again, another attempt rewarding them with the shot they were looking for. The music rises. They laugh at the face of failure, enjoying every moment.

There is innocence in these setbacks. Having the time of their lives, they spread out their arms in the run as if birds, soaring high.

A number of intercutting shots bring forth their joy in the making of film. They fall to the ground only to get back up and running.

Tathagata shoots his friends chasing one another. Its a joyous scene. The tram passes by as the flock makes a run towards it.

9 INT. TATHAGATA'S BROTHER'S HOUSE - EVENING

9

SCENE 2 OF INTERCUTTING

Tathagata, at his elder cousin's (20M) house for his Puja break. Fire-works burst and color the night sky as the Durga Puja Bisharjan Band (The Statue Immersion Party) steadies on outside, making their presence known by their deafening close-proximity drumming.

Nestled on the sofa, Tathagata watches "Bicycle Thieves". The room surrounding him decorated with festive lights.

Tathagata's brother tightens the strap of his watch, about to depart with the adults to join them in the immersion party when he finds his gaze settling on Tatha, sitting by himself in the dark room, glued to the classic film playing on the screen. Changing his mind, he decides to stay back with his brother, bidding goodbye to the adults.

Tathagata's brother walks up to the sofa.

TATHAGATA'S BROTHER

Heard you've developed quite a knack for cinema. What've you been up to so far?

TATHAGATA

Pather Panchali, Kabuliwala, Mr. India, Life of Pi, Jurassic Park, Spiderman, The Sound of Music, 2001: A Space Odyssey.

TATHAGATA'S BROTHER

Goodness. Stanley Kubrick? At your age? My, my. A true cinephile it would seem (laughs). Follow me, then. You won't be disappointed. Tell me, how'd you not get bored watching space odyssey?

His brother takes him to a cupboard, housing his ginormous collection of movies. He singles out a DVD copy of 2001: A Space Odyssey and holds it up to Tathagata.

TATHAGATA'S BROTHER (CONT'D)

Stanley Kubrick.

Tathagata watches in awe as his brother introduces him to more DVDs and Blu-Rays of iconic films, naming their directors as they come along.

TATHAGATA'S BROTHER (CONT'D)

Spielberg, Scorsese, Hitchcock,
Coppola, Tarantino, Nolan, Ozu,
Kurosawa, Majidi, Panahi, Miyazaki,
Godard, Fellini..know these people?

Tathagata stares with admiration at the DVD covers.

TATHAGATA'S BROTHER (CONT'D)

You'd be gravely mistaken to think
Indian names don't make the cut.
Ram Gopal Verma, The Delivery Guy
Benegal, Mani Ratnam, Mira Nair,
Ray, Sen, Ghatak, Salim
Javed...and...

A surreal shot of Tathagata greets us. Lying in an ocean of DVDs, Blu-Rays and CDs of various films, their covers light up with festive fairy lights. The dark room lit intermittently by the receding lights from the fireworks crackling up the skies.

The crowd outside chants festively.

OUTSIDE CROWD

The year to come, we meet again...

10 INT. TATHAGATA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

10

SCENE 3 OF INTERCUTTING

Tathagata is seated before the TV. An award ceremony is being broadcasted. The award for 'Best Director' is being handed out.

As the winning director makes his way to the stage to receive the award, the entire auditorium erupts into an applause. All rising to their feet to shower respect and celebrate the achievement of the director.

Tathagata closes his eyes. He spreads his arms to his sides in a commanding position. Imagining, manifesting the day when he will be the one walking up to accept the award like this, the applause from the mass directed toward him.

He opens his eyes to the title on TV screen "Best Director Award Winner - (some director)", followed by an interview by the same.

Here, while intercutting, the voice of his brother comes up
"Ray, Sen, Ghatak...and..."

CROWD CHANTS
CHOWDHURY!...CHOWDHURY!

MUFFLED TEACHER VOICE
(o.s.)
Chowdhury!....

MATCH CUT TO:

11 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

11

Match cut to the words "Tathagata Chowdhury", uttered by his class teacher during a parents teacher meeting. An older TATHAGATA (17M, Cleanshaven) looks up abruptly. Beside him is his father.

TEACHER
What happened? Are you alright?

TATHAGATA
Ugh, I am fine.

TATHAGATA'S FATHER
Actually mam, he has a passion for filmmaking, and one of his films got selected in a festival. The screening is today, so he's a bit nervous.

Tathagata smiles awkwardly.

TEACHER
Wow, that's quite good. Hobbies are fun, but he has to focus on his studies as well. Here, his report card.

The teacher hands over the report card. Tathagata's father checks it out, his eyebrows raising. Tathagata is restless to get out of there. He checks his watch repeatedly.

TATHAGATA'S FATHER
Okay then, thank you ma'am.

TEACHER
Okay then, you may leave now.

TATHAGATA'S FATHER
Sure, sure..

Tathagata signs his name on the register, slams the pen down and we matchcut to Tathagata barging into his room.

12 INT. TATHAGATA'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

12

The production design of the house differs, albeit slightly, from when we last saw it, indicating the passage of time.

Tathagata runs past his mother and towards his room as her face greets us to answer the door. She calls out after him.

TATHAGATA'S MOTHER

Slow down. Hey, don't you dare put a toe on that bed without washing up first.

Tathagata pays no attention to the threatening command, slamming the door shut behind him, isolating himself in his room. He picks up his phone and dials. The receiver picks up.

TATHAGATA

Yeah, hi. This is Tathagata, we spoke the other day. Yeah, yeah..yeah. I apologize for not being there in person. I had an exam. Yeah, the very thing I rang up for. How'd they like it?

Oh. My email. The one I used for the submission? Yeah..ok, ok. Thanks. Thank you so much. I'll check and let you in on it ASAP. Thanks again, have a good one.

He hangs up.

He fires up Gmail on his computer, finding an email from a Short Film Festival awaiting him.

He clicks on the email. The contents of the email hint at Tathagata having submitted a short film of his to the festival, the preceding conversation by phone confirming its recent screening there. A video attachment from the event of the screening marks the end of the email, sent as a gesture of compensation for his absence.

Tathagata takes a while to collect himself, slowly building up the courage to open the video file. It'll be a first for him to see complete strangers react to and judge the art he made. Lips quivering, legs shaking, biting at his nails, Tathagata's nervousness is on full display.

Taking a deep breath, he finally clicks on it. The video shows a few people sitting before a small theatre screen.

Tathagata trembles, gripped by both anxiety and excitement at in equal measures. He squints his eyes, darting them across the screen to catch any glimpse of movement or reaction from the audience present in the darkness of the video.

As the words "Directed by Tathagata Chowdhury" come up on screen, the few gathered brings their palms together in an applause.

Tathagata pauses the video. He can't believe his ears. His legs stop shaking as his lips part to release his fingers the from his mouth. *People clapped for me?*

He rewinds, and plays the section again. The faint sound of applause is unmistakable! Yes, people are clapping for HIM.

He rewinds again, cranks the volume dial to MAX and repeats the portion of the video, playing it back again and again.

The worry lines fade off of Tathagata's forehead, welcoming joy in its place. Its too overwhelming. Tears begin to roll down his cheeks. Navigating his way through the utterly complex emotion, he sobs and cackles at the same time, choking on his breath.

He stands up, an eager determinism over his face. He raises his arms to his sides, just as he once did as a child. Closing the eyes to embrace the well-earned applause. He has achieved it - the acknowledgment of strangers, and that has made him more fulfilled than any kind words from people he has grown up with. And thus, he will go to any length to chase this feeling for the rest of his life.

NARRATION

This narration will play part by part throughout the entire film. This is old Tathagata reminiscing about the his childhood days of innocent filmmaking.

OLD TATHAGATA (V.O.)

And what is the meaning of it all?

...It was like an extravaganza,
everyone was clapping mindlessly, a
magical experience....

..who are these creatures, they are not called magicians, yet they are...

...It was my love for the craft...the camera had a special place...in me...

I was running towards them Covered in them...covered in a magic of passion.... It was like a dream yet it felt real.... The joy in those little moments was the most valuable thing for me....

I mean, I can't really explain it in words, it's an otherworldly feeling.

...that was the first time...I had heard that...I heard people clap to something I made....so did I ..like I...umm.. get it ?...the meaning of it all....did I?...

I used this song for the end credits of my film, because this song stands for passion...

But I have more stories to tell... This is nothing but an opening act... Actually as a picture maker, stories are everywhere around me. They consume me.

I am sure I will get to justify all those stories one day. Well let's be an optimist...after all we are just a bunch of Dreamers...

Yours, Tathagata....