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| Ritwik Kumar Ghatak (1925-1976) |
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| Ritwik Ghatak (b. 4 November 1925, Dhaka, Bangladesh; d. 6 February 1976, Kolkata, India) was an Indian Bengali filmmaker known as one of the proponents of Indian parallel cinema (also known as the Indian new-wave). His family migrated to Calcutta from East Bengal during partition, and his work bears the imprint of the political and cultural climate of post-independence, post-partition Bengal. His films were characterised by tones of despair and angst, and frequently critiqued the nation-state. Ghatak was a member of the Indian People Theatre Association (IPTA), and wrote plays as well as adaptations of works by Bertolt Brecht and Nikolai Gogol before writing and directing films. The left-leanings of IPTA and its promotion of political avant-garde art, the influence of Indian mythologies, the impact of Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein and modernist playwright Brecht, and Ghatak’s own background in theatre all lay the foundation for his modernist melodramatic films. Ghatak’s career as a director spans only eight films, including the famous refugee trilogy: *Meghe Dhaka Tara* [*Cloud Capped Star*](1960), *Komal Gandhar* [*E-Flat*] (1961), and *Subarnarekha* [*The Golden Thread*] (1965). Certain themes consistent across these films include post-colonial modernity, alienation, displacement, and nostalgia tied to the refugee experience. His films frequently present the crisis of masculinity, along with explorations of resilient femininity. |
| Ritwik Ghatak (b. 4 November 1925, Dhaka, Bangladesh; d. 6 February 1976, Kolkata, India) was an Indian Bengali filmmaker known as one of the proponents of Indian parallel cinema (also known as the Indian new-wave). His family migrated to Calcutta from East Bengal during partition, and his work bears the imprint of the political and cultural climate of post-independence, post-partition Bengal. His films were characterised by tones of despair and angst, and frequently critiqued the nation-state. Ghatak was a member of the Indian People Theatre Association (IPTA), and wrote plays as well as adaptations of works by Bertolt Brecht and Nikolai Gogol before writing and directing films. The left-leanings of IPTA and its promotion of political avant-garde art, the influence of Indian mythologies, the impact of Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein and modernist playwright Brecht, and Ghatak’s own background in theatre all lay the foundation for his modernist melodramatic films. Ghatak’s career as a director spans only eight films, including the famous refugee trilogy: *Meghe Dhaka Tara* [*Cloud Capped Star*](1960), *Komal Gandhar* [*E-Flat*] (1961), and *Subarnarekha* [*The Golden Thread*] (1965). Certain themes consistent across these films include post-colonial modernity, alienation, displacement, and nostalgia tied to the refugee experience. His films frequently present the crisis of masculinity, along with explorations of resilient femininity.  While Ghatak used various filmic elements to represent social and political concerns, his films frequently experiment with form and aesthetics — form and content are frequently brought together to create a sense of political urgency, and the distanciation effect. Ghatak frequently worked in the genre of melodrama, conveyed through expressionistic use of camera angles, dramatic lighting, montage, and disjunctive repetitive sound. In *Meghe Dhaka Tara*, for example, the sound of a cracking whip randomly throughout the film prompts a removed analytical view of the film opposed to total immersion into the world of his film — a sound that, according to scholar Ravi Vasudevan, conveys the social and historical forces weighing down on the film’s protagonist. In another film, *Ajantrik* [*The Unmechanical*/*Pathetic Fallacy*] (1958), Ghatak explores the relation between man and machine through a taxi-driver and his Chevrolet named Jagaddhal. Unlike most modernist explorations of man and technology rooted in fear and anxiety, the film stages a different relationship with mechanisation — infused with life and emotion, the taxi breaks down when its driver is attracted to a woman.  Ritwik Ghatak’s influence is extensive, and can be found in the works of his students Mani Kaul and Kumar Shahani.  [File: Meghe.jpg]  Figure Caption: A still from *Meghe Dhaka Tara* (1960)  <http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-wFaN6wNe2jU/TcJx6tpLIuI/AAAAAAAACS0/qqKeVn1r_Do/s1600/cloud-capped-star1.jpg> Selected Filmography:Director *Nagarik* [*The Citizen*] (1952)  *Ajantrik* [*The Unmechanical / The Pathetic Fallacy*] (1958)  *Meghe Dhaka Tara* [*The Cloud Capped Star*] (1960)  *Komal Gandhar* [*E-Flat*] (1961)  *Subarnarekha* [*The Golden Thread*] (1962) Writer *Musafir* (*Traveler*); Dir. Hrishikesh Mukherjee (1957)  *Madhumati*;Dir. Bimal Roy (1958) |
| Further reading:  (Banerjee)  (S. Banerjee)    (Bhaskar)  (Carrigy)  (Dasgupta and Bhattacharya)  (Ghatak)  (Gooptu)  (Nagarik, 1952)  (O'Donnel)  (Rajadhyaksha)  (Raychaudhuri) |