



Bengal Connected

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Seventy five years after the end of British rule, images and words that document how the Partition divided the railway that once united Bengal



In Satyajit Ray's 1955 neo-realist classic *Pather Panchali* (*Song of the Little Road*), the details of village life in turn of the century Bengal float on a breeze of gentle games, rituals, and boredom of two young children. In an early scene, at once promise and danger, the children chase each other through a dense kash grass field and then suddenly stop, games forgotten.

These inhabitants of a remote village in British India have stumbled upon an alien creature of iron and smoke. A train cuts the horizon line and bifurcates the cinema screen at an angle. The modernity of mechanized transport has arrived somewhere at a distance; though it may bring opportunity, it also hints at how quiet village lives, with no sense of an outside world, are about to change forever. Ray placed the railway as a jagged arrival in the lives of naive, happy village humans. All that befell their lives in subsequent years -- mysterious disease, loss of prestige, eroding religious rites, forced migration, and city alienation -- unfold over three harrowing films that make up the Apu Trilogy.

