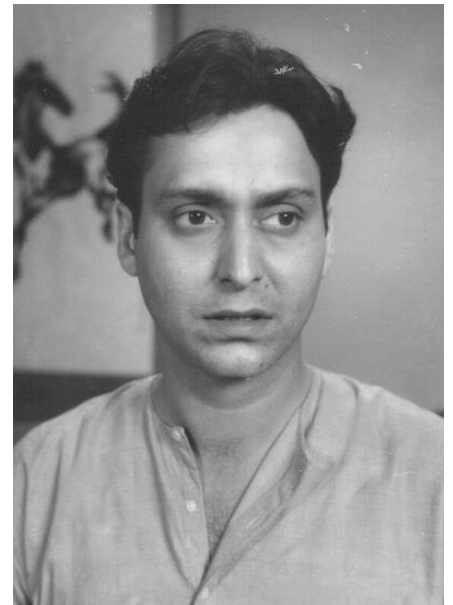


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UP IN THE CLOUDS / Aakash Kusum (1965)

Mrinal Sen

Bengali language



OVERVIEW

Director Mrinal Sen made his first feature film in 1953, but was slow to come into success as his first few films didn't fare well at the box office. Eventually, he tasted both success and controversy with *Baishey Sravan* (*Wedding Day*, 1960) and *Aakash Kusum* (*Up in the Clouds*, 1965). Soon after, *Mr. Bhuvan Shome* (1969), a landmark film, radically altered new cinema and art-house cinema in India; other films such as *Mrigayaa* (*The Royal Hunt* 1976) and *Aakaler Sandhane* (*In Search of Famine*, 1980) still retain their impact. He won awards at all the major international film festivals, including Cannes, Venice and Berlin. His films usually have a signature shock treatment style that is both cerebral and hard-hitting, coupled with technical jugglery and gimmicks. He was both loved and hated for his uncompromising political stance and critique of his contemporary communist government in West Bengal. Along with Satyajit Ray and Ritwick Ghatak, Sen is considered one of the trio of great Indian filmmakers both domestically and internationally.

Film Sen directed the film and wrote its screenplay, based on a story by Ashish Barman and produced by Purbachal Film Productions. It won the National Award for the Best Regional Film in Bengali, though its reception was mixed. A few critics hailed the film as a hidden tragedy of a dreamer, the first truly urban film in Bengali and far ahead of its time. But the general audience was dissatisfied by the sudden transition from a jovial mood to a sad ending, along with unusual cinematic techniques that some felt were overused. Most condemned Ajay (the protagonist) as an imposter and conman; consequently, "ambition" became a "dirty word" and Sen had to alter his tag-line from "A story of desperate ambition" to "A story of life-love-desire told in a fascinating way".

Controversy Today the film is remembered most as a hotbed of controversy between Sen and Satyajit Ray. The debate began in the "Letters to the Editor" column of *The Statesman* newspaper, where Ray wrote: "May I point out that the topicality of the theme in question stretches well back into antiquity, when it found expression in that touching fable about the poor deluded crow with a fatal weakness for status symbols?" The reference was to a children's fable where a crow donned feathers to impersonate peacocks and impress his fellow crows, but obviously failed. Over a months-long bitter public debate, another of Ray's letters ended with the now-famous statement, "A crow film is a crow".

film is a crow film.” Sen was deeply hurt by Ray’s reaction, but he never betrayed his emotion and continued to remain courteous and professional with Ray.



CINEMATIC NARRATION

Foreshadowing Sen liberally uses foreshadowing in this film, but instead of suggestive dialogue he uses a suggestive musical score and poetry. These are all performed without accompaniment by the actors themselves. For instance, Soumitra Chattopadhyay, playing Ajay, sings Tagore’s song, “I want the golden deer” in an early scene, referring to a sequence from the *Ramayana* where Sita is misled by the wondrous golden deer, which leads to her kidnapping. In popular culture, a “golden deer” refers to a deceptively beautiful object/ idea leading to one’s ruin. Aparna Sen, playing Monika, also reads aloud from the “The Stolen Child” by W. B. Yeats, foreshadowing how Ajay would attempt to steal her away from her family just like the fairies in the poem. Ajay and Monika, together on a date at the riverside sing another suggestive song by Tagore (“My heart wants the person it cannot get”), unknowingly foreshadowing their final breakup.

Still photographs and jump cuts Inspired by François Truffaut’s use of montage and jump-cuts, Sen uses still photographs and jump-cuts in several key scenes to heighten the impact. For instance, Ajay and Monika’s first meeting and their dates are partially shown in photographs, including an instance when Ajay tumbles back into his bed with happiness or when they take photographs of each other on the riverbank. A couple of key scenes are also shown in stills, such as when Phoney-babu sinisterly laughs and demands more money or when Ajay gets beaten up. The overall effect is jarring, often heightening the suspense and emotive impact of the strategically placed photographs, as if freezing moments in amber, just like the relationship at the core of the plot itself. On a more practical level, it allowed Sen to cut down on shooting costs and advance the plot in a few frames instead of lengthier visual narration.



LIST OF CHARACTERS

Ajay Sarkar	A lower-middle class, ambitious young man, enamoured with Monika
Monika	A rich young woman, enamoured with Ajay
Satyen Mitra ("Sotu")	Ajay's rich friend
Phoney-babu	A shady business dealer
Ajay's mother	anonymous
Monika's parents	anonymous

SYNOPSIS

Ajay, a lower-middle class, ambitious and handsome young man, meets the pretty and well-brought-up Monika at a friend's wedding. He then begins a relationship with her on the pretence that he's a successful businessman with his own high-end flat and car, whereas, in fact, he has just started out with his small business and is receiving the generosity of his childhood friend Sotu (Satyen). Happy days pass. But soon, his business associate Phoney-babu fails him; Sotu also admonishes him for deceiving the innocent Monika; and he loses access to Sotu's flat, which he had told Monika's family belonged to him. The cat is let out of the bag when the mutual friend reveals to Monika's father that he is a fraud and cheat. His business sinks and he gets beaten up. When Ajay finally realizes his folly and tries to apologize and explain himself, Monika's father insults him and shows him out of the house. Monika also bids him a final, tearful farewell.



SCENES

Opening Scene A still shot of the iconic Howrah bridge is followed by a wedding invitation card and a still picture of a man dressed as the groom. Seated rows of guests dine at the wedding feast. A voice-over and some still pictures introduce Ajay at his friend Prakash's wedding. Ajay complains that he has sung too many songs already and tries to leave.

Boy meets girl He is then introduced to the young and pretty Monika. They have an awkward conversation about his music and an invited singing gig in Monika's neighbourhood. Their mutual attraction is obvious; they promise to meet again.



Ajay and his mother The next morning, Ajay sings Tagore's song, "I want the golden deer" while consulting his mother about whether to wear his best traditional clothes at the upcoming singing gig while washing and line-drying his own clothes by hand.

A business deal Phoney-babu visits unannounced and Ajay leaves his meagre breakfast behind. They walk a couple steps to a tea and snack shop, filled with unemployed, lower-middle class youth shooting the breeze. They cryptically discuss some business deals. Phoney-babu is the middleman and Ajay has lost some money.



Meeting Monika's family Ajay is handing out autographs after singing at the soiree when Monika arrives and then brings him to her house. Both mother and daughter are very impressed by his singing. He says he's starting a new business. Monika serves tea and snacks that she made and invites him to a meal at her house. When Monika's mother asks for his address, he is caught unprepared and hesitantly gives his phone number instead. She drives him to a taxi.



Setting up at his friend's apartment Ajay rushes to his friend Sotu's high-end apartment and instructs the manservant to tell any callers that he is not at home. He tells his very obliging friend that he'll borrow the flat and nice clothes from him, but does not reveal why.



Job versus business Ajay's mother encourages him to take a salaried job instead of trying his hand at business. Ajay is very annoyed. Later, Phoney-babu suggests some deals with "no risk" and Ajay goes along with him. Waiting with Phoney-babu at a major intersection, Ajay gets frightened and hides when he sees Monika drive by.

A phone call and plans for a date At her luxurious home, Monika reads aloud from "The Stolen Child" by W. B. Yeats. Ajay phones her from his friend's landline telephone. He mentions seeing her and makes up a story about following her in his car. He invites her to watch a film, making up another lie that his work schedule would be free that day.

A date Ajay borrows his friend's suit and car and rushes to the film theatre, where Monika is already waiting for him. They watch a documentary on Kangra painting while chatting. He drives her back to her palatial home and returns to Sotu's flat.



Dreams of being rich Ajay tells Sotu that he's got a good business deal and asks him to finance the venture to sell precision scientific instruments. Ajay smilingly confesses that he went to the cinema but does not reveal any details about Monika.

Ajay's daily life Phoney-babu sells him some defective instruments and complains of labour issues. Ajay promises that he will provide the advance payment in time. A local youngster complains to him that a neighbourhood girl is dating someone from a different locality and the neighbourhood youth want to beat him up. Ajay calls them "donkeys" and "goats" (i.e., stupid).



New business Ajay goes to his new office space that he rented with Sotu's money. Sotu visits to see how Ajay is getting on. Ajay explains that he has received many orders as imports have stopped and there is a rising demand for precision instruments. Smoking on the rooftop of the high-rise, Ajay says he feels like Napoleon, and Sotu compliments him on his choice of office location. They decide to split the potential profit 50-50. Ajay says he'll buy the whole city of Kolkata.



Lies Monika phones Ajay's office and invites him for lunch. He says his mother is at their ancestral home and Monika wouldn't be meeting her, as he had previously given her the address and phone number for Sotu's flat. He lies to Sotu, saying it was a business call.

After the rain We see a waterlogged Kolkata in still photographs. Monika calls Ajay's number to say that she couldn't make it to the restaurant in the rain. But Sotu receives the call instead of the servant and is puzzled. Ajay returns and his deceit about his girlfriend is exposed.

Visiting Monika's family Ajay visits Monika's house and shares laughs with her father, who is a busy lawyer. He invites them for tea in return. Monika offers handmade treats. Ajay feels awkward with all the opulence.



A typical day for Ajay Ajay receives a call from a buyer who hadn't confirmed his order but asks for more goods. He calls Phoney-babu to have the order ready. He then gets his shoes shined and meets Monika at a saree shop in New Market, the biggest fashion shopping hub in the city. He offers to buy her an expensive saree but pretends to have left his wallet at the office. He lets Monika overhear his one-sided, fake directions to his office caretaker apparently searching for the wallet. They blame it on a pickpocket and then she drives him back to his flat.



A date at the riverbank Monika walks on the riverbank strewn with large logs while Ajay sings a very appropriate Tagore's song with a cheerful tune, "My heart wants the person it cannot get". The scene is followed by several still photographs of the couple taking pictures of each other and boats, etc. On the way back, he confesses that he lied about his popularity as a singer and apologizes. Monika doesn't seem to be offended.



A confession to Sotu Ajay tells Sotu that he became "a bigger person", "expansive" when he tried to buy Monika the saree she liked, but he had to "bluff her" as it was too expensive, and that made him "feel small". He asks Sotu if he's being "unscrupulous" and Sotu agrees, but without intending to hurt him. Ajay promises that he will explain everything to her as he's "in love with her". Sotu says that's what he's afraid of and abruptly leaves the room.

Defective goods! Ajay shouts at Phoney-babu as several buyers return their defective scientific instruments. The newly-wedded friend, Prakash, visits, requesting a job for his brother. Ajay tells him all his wealth is just show and borrowed from Sotu.



Beginning of the end We see a series of still photographs of Phoney-babu grinning, Ajay startled and a stern and bespectacled Sotu. In a voice-over, Phoney-babu sinisterly laughs and demands more money and Sotu tries to separate Ajay from the business and argues with him. Ajay refuses to eat and tells Sotu not to give everything a “communist” turn, like “big business is killing small businesses”. Sotu again reprimands him for deceiving the innocent Monika.

Dreams Ajay’s mother initially refuses to give him any money but accedes and writes him a blank cheque. He tells her his dreams of a cozy, cheerful flat of their own where his mother can relax while Monika takes care of her and, of course, their own car. He’s excited about introducing Monika to his mother. Sotu visits Ajay’s office to apologize for his earlier behaviour, but Ajay says both of them are equally guilty.



Lies upon lies Monika says her father wants to visit Ajay’s house. On the drive back from a date, Ajay tries to confess that he has been lying but Monika is too polite and brushes him off. They are stopped in traffic next to the car of a man who recognizes him, but he lies and says he doesn’t know him.

A home visit Monika's family visits Ajay at Sotu's flat, which he has claimed as his own. Sotu comes in unexpectedly and Ajay pretends that Sotu has borrowed his car. Monika's father sees an expensive cigarette lighter, which Ajay claims he has given to Sotu. Sotu somehow keeps up the pretence over tea and snacks. After they leave, Sotu again admonishes Ajay about deceiving Monika, but Ajay says he'll "make pots and pots of money" and soon catch up to her in status.



Plans Ajay goes in search of Phoney-babu but cannot find him anywhere. Sotu and Ajay discuss Phoney-babu disappearing with the money, as well as Sotu's mother coming to Kolkata to stay at the flat for medical treatment. Since the flat will be unavailable, Sotu suggests that Ajay should go on a "business trip" so that the truth isn't revealed to Monika and her family.



Sotu's mother arrives Sotu's mother arrives, bringing gifts for Ajay's mother. Monika calls and Sotu's mother receives the call. There is an awkward conversation between Ajay and Monika, and again Ajay lies to Monika about Sotu's mother. Sotu chokes trying to control his laughter.

Cat out of the bag Ajay's friend Prakash visits Monika's father for a favour. Prakash reveals that Ajay's house and car actually belong to Sotu. Monika's father is flabbergasted. He sees Monika happily singing and seems to decide a course of action.

Trouble with Phoney-babu Phoney-babu keeps telling Ajay that he's trying to get better instruments. Ajay reprimands him. Later, Ajay goes to find Phoney-babu at his house but his son sends Ajay away rudely. Ajay then accidentally bumps into Phoney-babu and assaults him. His son comes running and beats Ajay up, though Phoney-babu tries to stop him. We see some still photos of an injured Ajay.



Verification Monika's father goes to the flat and meets Sotu's mother, verifying the truth. Ajay, chatting with Sotu, is dejected and calls Monika to tell her the truth. But before he can speak, Monika's father disconnects the call.



Closing scene Ajay goes to Monika's house and tries to apologize, but her father calls him an "imposter" and a "cheat" and sends him away. Monika also tells him to leave, but cries inside her room with the door closed. She stands at the window and watches him wave and leave, forever.



CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Ajay

Ajay is the male protagonist of *Up in The Clouds*. In fact, the film gets its name from one of his speeches, in which he realizes that he has been dreaming up castles in the air about his romance with Monika and his business ventures. He is a happy-go-lucky, lower-middle class youth who lives with his widowed mother and dreams of one day of owning a high-end flat and leaving his poverty behind.

Ambitious Ajay's most striking character trait is ambition, which is much greater than a typical young man of his circumstances. So much so, that he's willing to put all he has at risk to achieve his upwardly mobile dreams—be it his mother's savings, the goodwill of his friends and acquaintances or, worst of all, his relationship with Monika, which he thinks will be a stepping stone to social advancement. Certainly, marrying Monika would raise his status overnight. And like every other man, he tries his best to impress his sweetheart, who is way beyond his league, by cultivating elite tastes in cinema and food, and by his general appearance and demeanour.

Optimistic His ambition also blinds him and encourages a gambler's false hope in his dealings with Phoney-babu, where a more practical person would reconsider the dubious deals. His general happy-go-lucky, quick-thinking and spontaneous nature also comes in handy in sticky situations such as when he cannot afford to buy Monika an expensive saree or when she asks for his contact details. Only at the end of the film, after facing business losses and getting beaten up, does he look at life "seriously". But by then it's far too late, for his relationship with Monika and her family, at least, who shoo him away like a stray dog, calling him a "fraud" and an "imposter". Class difference, though, remains the unarticulated elephant in the room.

Deceitful Ajay unthinkingly participates in a casual sort of deception which is common to the Bengali middle class and mostly used for "keeping up appearances". While he deceives everyone close to him—his mother, Sotu and Monika—in various degrees, it is never suggested that the deception is with malicious or harmful intent. Rather, it largely is a matter of circumstance in which he has very few choices. And when Sotu forces him to confront the immorality of deceiving a good-natured, naive and sheltered girl like Monika, he does reconsider his actions and feels guilty. But there is no way for him to make a clean break of it that would be in his favour.



Monika

Monika is the female protagonist of the film. She is a sweet-natured, young woman born to rich parents and raised in a very sheltered manner. Thus, meeting the unpredictable and humorous Ajay is like a breath of fresh air in her otherwise mundane life. However, like her family, she is unable to overcome class barriers when she learns about Ajay's deception and bids him a tearful adieu in the end.

Independent One of her striking characteristics is how naturally Aparna Sen, the actress playing Monika, embodies the image of the "modern" Bengali woman of her times. Raised by an affluent family, not only does she have access to all the luxuries, but she is also remarkably independent in her daily life. She drives her own car— a feat rare in her time— and often drives Ajay around. She unhesitatingly goes to the theatre to watch films and visits restaurants and shops without a friend or chaperone/family member. It is clear that her parents trust her explicitly to make the right choices. But with Ajay, and in her sheltered innocence, she (perhaps) makes a mistake.

Friendly Monika is also excessively friendly, in the sense of typical Bengali middle-class gentility (*bhodrota*), but unlike many others of her class, it is genuine and not an affectation: she really is a soft-spoken and amiable young woman. For instance, at the film theatre, when Ajay casually lies to her that he had to rush and didn't have any time for his evening tea before meeting her, she is profusely apologetic and says he should have told her sooner and she would have arranged for some tea. So much so, that her middle-class gentility prevents Ajay from confessing to her in the couple of instances when he attempts to do so. The first time, she brushes it away, saying that she didn't believe he was a big musical star anyway. The second time, at the end of the film when Ajay phones her and says he has done a "great misdeed", she misunderstands that to mean the wallet he left behind, which her father had gone to his home to return, again preventing Ajay from confessing his deception.

Trusting Monika's sheltered upbringing and sweet nature also makes her very trusting. She is attracted to Ajay fairly quickly and once he is "cleared" by her family, she continues spending time with him more and more frequently. She does not seem to notice the apparent inconsistencies in Ajay's behaviour and is clueless of the fact that he was deceiving her. In fact, if Ajay actually had a chance to confess his deception clearly to her, she might well have forgiven him for abusing her trust.



THEMES

SOCIETY

Class— Upward mobility *Up in the Clouds* may appear to be a romantic comedy ending in the (slightly) tragic and irrevocable separation between the two leads. The film is, however, a much more potent revelation of class realities and aspirations of a formerly agrarian but now urban and rootless Bengali lower-middle class. Even before he met Monika, Ajay was accustomed to use Sotu's high-end possessions frequently. And while Ajay's string of lies begin with trying to impress Monika with his musical talent, it quickly escalates to him wanting to gain unrestricted access to her family as well. This would only be possible if they belonged to the same social class, Hence Ajay almost unthinkingly chooses to portray the persona of an upcoming, successful businessman, hiding his true lower-middle-class origins. This is clear when Monika suddenly suggests they visit him; he is startled and defaults to inviting them to Sotu's flat because he simply can't imagine inviting them to his home in a lower-middle-class neighbourhood. In his own neighbourhood, too, he distances himself from the other youth who have nothing productive to do; they're lazing around everyday and making plans to interfere in the lives of others. For example, a local youth complains to Ajay that a neighbourhood girl was dating someone from another neighbourhood and they should beat up the outsider. Although such neighbourhood feuds were common in that context, Ajay doesn't waste time distancing himself from such behaviours and quickly calls the youth a "goat" and "donkey"- i.e., stupid. At heart, Ajay is already a successful business tycoon, but his reality check ends rather harshly.

Work— business versus salaried job Since colonial times, Bengalis have been derided as 'pen-pushers', working at various kinds of clerical jobs— monotonous and ant-like— so much so, that the stereotype is as prevalent today as it was 250 years ago. A competing stereotype is that of the risk-taking, hard-working Bengali businessman, and Ajay clearly sees himself in that mould. He has several altercations with his mother and Sotu on the issue; they want him to have a stable, salaried job, but he's a gambler who wants big profit from his new business and derides his pen-pushing, unambitious, salaried contemporaries who will never be able to raise themselves up from near-poverty. With Sotu, he is usually angry and defensive on the issue, complaining that his friend gives everything an unnecessary "communist" twist, like saying that "big business is killing small businesses". It is mentioned in passing that the current business supplying precision scientific instruments isn't his first venture; he has a string of failures behind him but remains undaunted in his ambition to make a quick buck. He even emotionally manipulates his mother to give him the last of her savings, which he then promptly loses in his deal with Phoney-babu.

RELATIONSHIP

Friendship The friendship between Ajay and Satyen is closely portrayed in the film. Despite hailing from unequal backgrounds, they have grown up together and are almost like brothers. Satyen does not at all mind lending Ajay his possessions, large and small— he even says that his expensive suits look better on Ajay. In turn, Ajay makes Satyen his "financier" and promises to split the profits of his business 50-50 with him. Seeing how little Ajay is able to reciprocate in material terms, it might appear to the viewer that Ajay is taking advantage of Satyen's generosity. Ajay, in a rare burst of self-awareness, even brings up the topic himself. But Satyen assures him that is not the case. In fact, they are the perfect foil for each other: one practical, the other rash. They also have no qualms in being emotionally vulnerable with each other, no matter the circumstance. This is again typical in that context where the performance of (toxic) masculinity and "unemotional" "macho" men is still a thing of the future. Satyen does not hesitate to reprimand Ajay for his fraudulent behaviour with Monika and rash business decisions with Phoney-babu, but he also always has Ajay's back, as when he pretends to be a servant taking a message for his "master" Ajay, or when he threatens that he'll demolish Phoney-babu legally. And at the end of the film, when love/attraction fails, friendship still holds strong.

Attraction The fleeting relationship between Ajay and Monika also seems a little one-sided, with Ajay reaping more benefits. For a young man from Ajay's background, a girl like Monika is "beyond his league". His decision to keep deceiving her certainly reveals factors other than attraction at play, such as the desire for upward mobility, though he eventually admits to having fallen in love with her. These contradictions are encapsulated in one crucial scene when they meet at a saree shop. Ajay "expansively" offers to buy her a saree that she likes, but it's too costly, so he has to call his office and pretend to have his office caretaker search for his "missing" wallet. To make the situation less awkward, Ajay suggests to the unsuspecting, naive Monika that the pickpocket who took his wallet had a stroke of good luck! On the other hand, Monika is impressed by his musical talent and simple,

unassuming nature; they exchange many sweet nothings over phone calls and go on several dates. But the romance itself is superficial, as the treatment of these calls and dates suggest: none are shown in full, but only in bits and pieces. And no physical intimacy develops between them. If Sen's audience expected Monika to defy her family for the sake of love, they were sorely let down. Her tearful farewell and the ending, akin to *Roman Holiday*, confirms that she cannot overcome the class barrier. The princess returns to the mansion and the commoner to the streets.

APPEARANCE vs. REALITY

Dishonesty Phoney-babu, from the very beginning, is introduced as a slightly shifty character, with a stooping gait, thick eyeglasses and a fat bag held in his armpit—the very picture of a middling agent/ seller of insurance bonds and other scam financial schemes. In fact, the first few conversations between Ajay and Phoney-babu are also somewhat sinister and vague, and only much later is it revealed that the “items” in question are scientific instruments and not smuggled goods. Two sequences stand out. One is when Phoney-babu assures Ajay that the instruments will perform under high voltage though it shows signs of overshooting its measurement apparatus at a low voltage and then sells him a few dozen of these faulty units; and the second occurs when a still photograph of Phoney-babu smiling is accompanied by his sinister laugh and demand for more money. Again, typical of that character trope (shifty dealer), he does a disappearing act— his office directs Ajay to his home and vice versa a few times, much to Ajay's anger, ultimately leading him to getting beaten up. Ajay, in his youthful ambition and gambler's mindset, is a bad judge of character, and Phoney-babu takes full advantage of that, though he isn't a complete monster— just one of the dime-a-dozen scam artists trying to make their way in the murky waters of wholesale business.

Deception Lies beget lies, as this film shows with astounding clarity. Ajay has to sprout one lie after another to keep up his appearance as an upcoming businessman to Monika and her family. From lying about his successful musical gigs to ownership of Satyen's high-end flat, car, bespoke suits and even an expensive, foreign cigarette lighter— Ajay has few qualms about flaunting his “own” wealth. And of course this leads to his undoing when their mutual acquaintance Prakash reveals all to Monika's father. And even despite his close friendship with Satyen, he lies to him about his relationship with Monika until he's caught red-handed. In this, *Up in the Clouds* remains a mirror of society both then and now. A section of the newly urbanized, post-Independence generation in Bengal had no values or moral anchors— lies, deception and corruption were readily acceptable if they could fetch money. It is thus fitting that Ajay's role model is a business tycoon and not a musician or social reformer. In the scene when Ajay and Satyen view the expanse of Kolkata's office neighbourhood from a rooftop terrace, it's not for nothing that Ajay exclaims, “Bloody hell, one day I'll buy off this whole city”! In another two odd decades, the Indian prime minister would go on to defend corruption in high places by calling it a global phenomenon; after another odd decade, a multi-million-dollar scam would rock India. And the trend continues today. Many of Sen's films remain socially significant, but rarely has he been so prophetic.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) In the wake of the controversy over the film (see Overview above), “ambition” became a “dirty word” for its audience. Do you think Ajay's ambition here is justified as a means to an end? Could he have done anything differently?
- 2) What stereotypical traits of the 1960's lady do you observe in the female characters — Monika and her mother, Ajay's mother and Satyen's mother? How do these vary by class and age?
- 3) What impression did the stylistic elements— freeze frames, jump-cuts and foreshadowing music— leave on you? Do you think these are appropriate or overused?
- 4) Do you think this is a successful love story / romantic comedy or something else entirely? Discuss with two examples.
- 5) Would a film with a similar plot be successful in your contemporary cultural context? Explain why or why not.

