

## ON THE INDIAN SCREEN

# 'Parinay': Abounding in negative virtues

By Our Film Critic

**I**N these fiercely commercial times when the value above all values is the exchange value, unexamined, parrot-cry sort of expressions of idealism look as anachronistic and embarrassing as grandpa's rusty pocket-watch with vital parts missing.

This variety of idealism looks as irrelevant and decrepit in representational arts as it does in children's 'moral science' books.

It is for this reason that the hero of Samantar Chitra's "Parinay" (directed by Kantilal Rathod) invites dismissal or indulgence more than identification.

Imagine a modern-day college student who spends his time reading Keats under the village tree, who visits the Gandhi museum to seek inspiration in Gandhian idealism as if it were air which just had to be inhaled and whose one great passion is to run a school for children in his village.

It is not an easily identifiable type, but that's the hero (Ramesh Sharma). What's more, a rich, glamorous co-ed, Rekha (Shabana Azmi), is not only irresistibly attracted to him, but also agrees to renounce her affluent world to accompany him to the village as his wife.

### FRAGILE STORY

The trouble with the hero is that he never seems to have encountered any nagging questions—a trouble he shares with the script. It is the sort of script which believes people are what they declare themselves to be. Which is why Ram, the hero, emerges as a pasteboard figure.

Rekha's critical disenchantment with village life is understandable, but not the arbitrary haste with which it comes about. It is the parts of the film dealing with the couple's estrangement which carry a measure of conviction.

The final reconciliation between the couple is aimed at making the weaker sections of the audience reach for their handkerchiefs rather than at suggesting a logical resolution of the conflict.

The story (by Harin Mehta) is thin and fragile, and all director Kantilal Rathod (of "Kanku" fame) is able to extract from it are a few sensitive, sharply observed scenes.

One is that meeting in which Rekha's mother (superbly played by Achala Sachdev) discusses her marriage with Ram. Another is the chance meeting, on a tourist bus, between

the estranged couple. Scenes which come alive, thanks to sensitive direction and restrained acting.

On the whole, however, "Parinay" is a film which has more negative virtues (no fights, no clowning etc.) than positive ones. The latter include Shabana Azmi's generally brilliant portrayal.