FILM AS URBAN INVESTIGATOR: Satyajit Ray's *Aparajito* and Banaras

by

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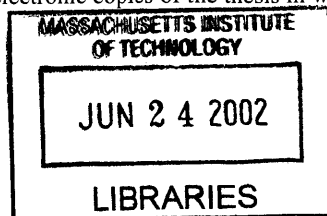Department of Architecture

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Abstract

This thesis explores a method of studying the city of Banaras, located in the north-central part of India, through Satyajit Ray's movie *Aparajito* (1957). This method attempts to disengage the all-subsuming sacred aura of Banaras to reveal underlying historic and cultural formations. As the inter-play between the movie and the city excavates peripheral discourses engrained in the film, these discourses are further subjected to the aesthetic parameters of Ray. His engagement with traditional practices and the psychology of individuals re-structure different cultural and spatial aspects of Banaras. Through the simultaneously engagement with the aesthetics of the film and Banaras multiple readings are formed. This process of re-aestheticizing Banaras reaches its conclusion in a re-edited '*Aparajito*'. By inhabiting the film I attempt to reveal the the manner in which Ray positions and contextualizes the characters of the film to the city and its culture.

Thesis Supervisor: **Mark Jarzombek**
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TO MAMA, PAPA

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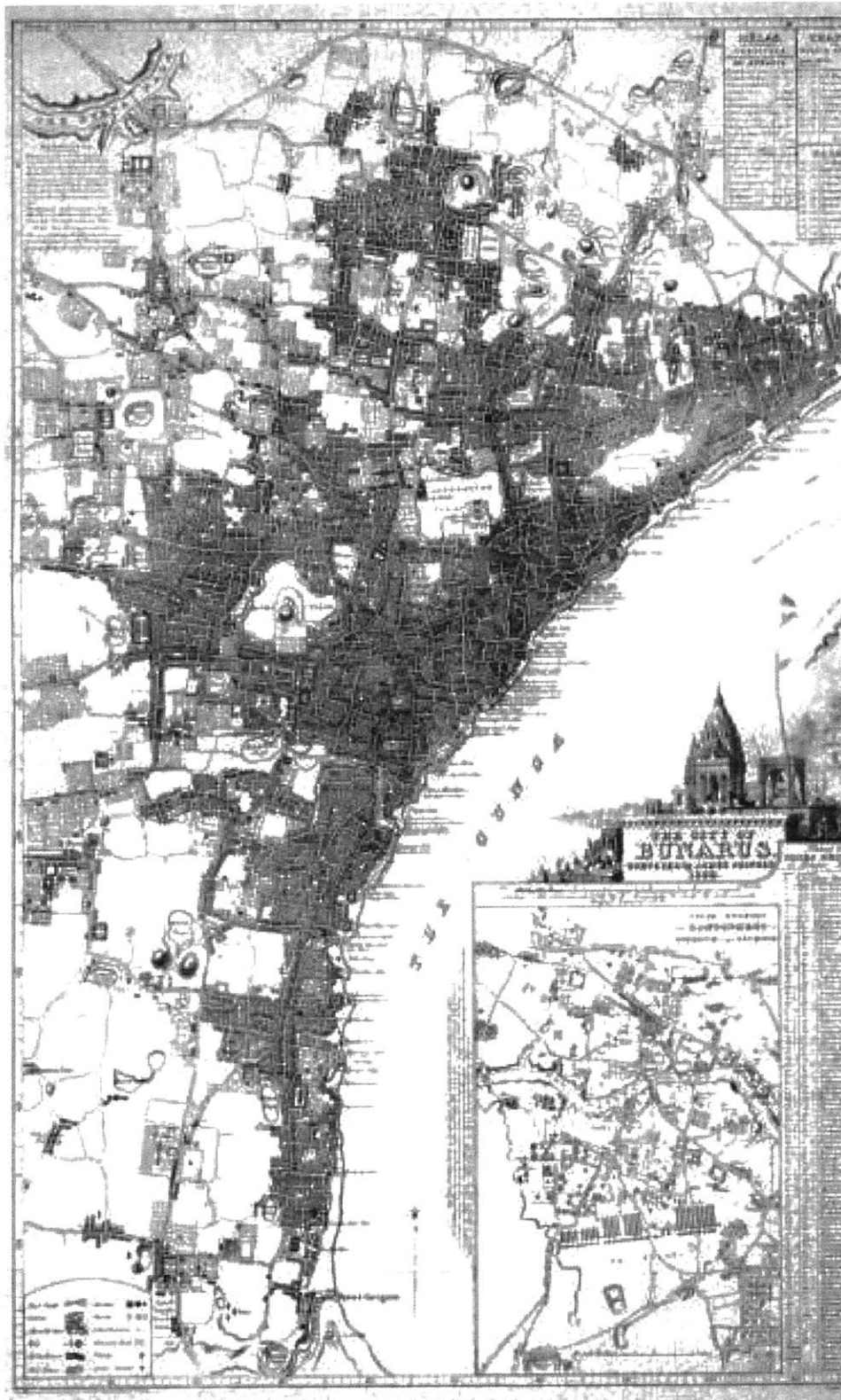for constantly coming down to Boston and feeding /loving me.

Anurag

for the many stories from the b-side lounge.

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Finally, my entire family in India that anxiously prayed for a timely completion of this thesis.

C o n t e n t s

Map of Banaras by J. Prinsep, 1822. Coute and Leger 1989, p.8

Introduction

This thesis seeks to formulate a method of reading and representing certain spatial and cultural aspects of the city of Banaras, located in the north-central part of India, through the film '*Aparajito*' (1957) by Satyajit Ray (1921-92), one of India's leading film directors. This movie is the second in a sequel of three films the first being, *Pather Panchali*/ Song of the Little Road–1954 and the third being *Apu Sansar*–1960.[1] Popularly seen as a national allegory, these three movies are visualized through the journey of growth of a boy (Apu) from a priestly family in feudal Bengal, India, to the city and hence to the realm of modernity. One third of *Aparajito* is set in Banaras. Here, the life of Apu (about age 9) with his father, Harihar and mother, and Sarbojaya in Banaras until the death of his father is depicted. At which time Apu leaves Banaras with his mother.

So what is Banaras? How do we describe it? Where is it in our imagination? These are the questions posed by the film and that can be extrapolated into the domain of urban history. As a city sacred to Hindus, Banaras tends to be defined in a way that polarizes its history and its modernity, its rituals and its urban setting. Satyajit Ray goes against this trend seeing Banaras both as an urban site and a cliché. It is through this way that Ray engages *with* the city, so to speak, and brings sacredness back to the realm of the individual and everyday life in Banaras. I claim that this aesthetic position that the movie entails, is also an ideological position that allows one to investigate the formal and cultural codes of the city as brought out by the film.

Defined in the film through certain spatial and cultural elements, Banaras, is seen through a realm of 'fictions', where the narrative of the film and the aesthetic/political ideals of the filmmaker overlap. Over-laying fiction (the narrative of the film) in reality (the built form of the city) invests the resulting film with specific forms of cultural knowledge. This knowledge allows insights into the culture of Banaras and the aesthetic structure of the film. Needless to say, these insights are not absolute but rather in the nature of incisions that bring out different social discourses through the interplay between the spatial and cultural formations of Banaras and the manner they have been represented.

Because cultural characteristics of Banaras are being contextualized to the film, such a reading allows me to continue the process of re-aestheticizing. A part of my conclusion attempts to 'inhabit' the space of 'the filmmaker' and reveal the manner in which Ray positions and contextualizes the characters of the film to the city and its culture.

The written part of my thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter deals with *ghats* or the riverfront of Banaras. In this chapter, I analyze the way Ray engages the *ghats*, its social history and practices, and its picturesque beauty. I argue that even as Ray accepts the popular imagery of sacredness held in the *ghats*, he simultaneously inverts those images to highlight everyday practices in the *ghats*. Parallel to this, I describe the manner in which Ray engages with the space, history and cultural practices of the *ghats* to position Apu and Harihar's personalities within the broader narration of the film.

The second chapter analyses the manner in which the film contextualizes Harihar, Apu and his mother, Sarbojaya, through certain spatial and cultural traits. Here, the concept of threshold, as a spatial encounter, becomes important. In particular, I analyze the manner in which Ray ties the spatial thresholds encountered by his protagonists to their individual belief systems and psychological disposition. Specifically, I analyze the relationship between Harihar's and Sarbojaya's traditional lifestyles and the physical thresholds they encounter in the film. In the case of Apu, I discuss the manner in which thresholds become encounters with living traditions that characterize important cultural facets of Banaras.

The third chapter reviews the carefully edited portrayals of cultural practices in Banaras. I first describe two important sacred practices in Banaras, namely scripture reading and sacred performances in a temple. I will argue that Ray constantly displaces the image of sacredness, prioritizing its imagibility through common people and the individual. I will also articulate the manner in which Ray modernizes the experience of death through Harihar. In doing so, he brings aspects of modernity into a living tradition (Banaras as a holy city to die in) and allows their co-existence in Harihar's moment of death.

Positioning the Inter-Play

In this thesis, I will look beneath Satyajit Ray's film *Aparajito* to an underlying historic/ cultural realm. This realm will be divided into three sections that will structure my thesis. They are, firstly, local/regional political-economic practices that reconsolidated Hinduism as a way of life in Banaras. Secondly, the colonial historiography that re-configured historical evidences to privilege Hinduism as a substructure that defined Banaras. Lastly, the Indian nationalist aesthetic discourse in the early twentieth century that had a strong influence on Ray.

The Banaras depicted in *Aparajito* is seen against the grandeur of its *ghats*, which were mainly built in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The building of the *ghats* was in fact a part of a process that allowed the re-invention of the Hindu tradition after the decline of the Muslim rule (1775) in Banaras. For example, the Marathas, a Hindu regional regime in the western part of India invested heavily in the major centers of Brahmanical Hinduism, such as Banaras, in order to legitimize their position of power. Between 1780-1820, the Marathas built a large number of bathing *ghats* such as *Amritrao Ghat, Ahilya Ghat, Scindia Ghat* and *Bhonsla Ghat* along with the main temple in Banaras, the *Visvanatha* Temple. Along with the interventions from regional power groups, at a more local level there emerged three local power groups in Banaras. They were the Rajput Dynasty, the merchant bankers and the Gosains-mendicant traders-soldiers. These groups, as they simultaneously thrived on pilgrimage, patronized and defined different types of Hindu cultural practices in Banaras.[1]

The Hindu practices in Banaras was coincident with the excavation of larger mythological narratives by one wing of Oriental studies. E.B. Havell, an influential figure of Oriental studies, wrote a book in 1905, called, '*Benares the Sacred City: Sketches of Hindu Life and Religion*' in which he re-organized historic perception of Banaras away from the Mogul past to form a coherent image of Hindu ideals in the city through time. In his book, Havell, consolidated Banaras as a Hindu artifact with a deep spiritual core that defined India. Banaras set within larger mythological narratives was re-configured to *Brahmanism* (a purer, original form of Hinduism). This essential *Brahmanical* spirit reflected the *Vedic* worldview that based itself on the premise that reality concealed an intrinsic life force conceptualized as *Brahman*.[2]

Havell argues that the city's topography along the river edge, *a magnificent natural amphitheater, facing the rising sun*[3], enunciates a higher spiritual order that is positioned in relationship to important religious texts namely the *Vedas*, *Brahmanas* and *Upanishads*. As an imagined space of high religiosity, the city maintains its centrality through Buddhism, and becomes the present center of the 'modern Hindu culture.' He ignores the five centuries of Muslim rule and addresses them only in relation to the crafts existing in Banaras. Attributing Muslim arts and crafts to an earlier greater tradition of Hindu crafts, he argues, that the best of the craftsmen may have been forced to convert to Islam during the rule of the Moguls.[4]

Havell further argues that a visible divine presence (as defined by Hinduism), is an essential characteristic of the whole city, including elements of its built form (its ghats, and its temples) and its cultural life. According to him, the *ghats* become a reflection of '*vedic brightness*', a monument composed of '*massive monasteries and palaces, built by devout Hindu princes*' and an '*amphitheater that is one vast sun temple*'.[5] In all the descriptions of Banaras, Havell invokes ancient mythologies to form a mythic space that subsumes in it the local culture and practices of everyday life. Havell positions 'the sacred' in the city that defies its history (after all, the ghats were built not 100 years ago in a city that Havell considered holy for many centuries before that). Yet, for him, it is this consolidation of sacred belief as a reflection of a higher spiritual *vedic* past that allows the mythic intensity of Banaras to gain stronger foundations through contemporary history.[6]

We are thus dealing with two kinds of histories, one local and the other mythological, that together define and consolidate the Hindu tradition in Banaras. In addition, late nineteenth century Oriental scholarship, as seen in the work of Havell and Ananda K. Coomarswamy, also started to define Indian arts, culture and aesthetics through this *vedic* worldview. For them, craft tradition in India was interwoven with a spiritual aesthetic that was uniquely Eastern. Their writings provided the core of historical knowledge and archeological expertise on the Indian aesthetic tradition. This scholarship, as Tapati Guha Thakurta indicates, became a legitimizing base for the Indian nationalist aesthetic discourse.[7] This new oriental scholarship, despite its romantic-classical structure was however more sympathetic to Indian culture than the older official understanding of the oriental subject. This distinction marked their central role in the formulation of nationalist thought.

Late nineteenth century Indian nationalism in Bengal, sought to define 'essential' marks of cultural identity in various aspects of social and cultural life. According to Partha Chatterjee, one important element of such a cultural identity was the inner, spiritual domain, a domain of cultural sovereignty that was modern yet

apart from the processes of modernization and the West.[8] The new aesthetic philosophy set its agenda within this broader nationalistic discourse and was mainly characterized by the aspiration of creating new artistic idioms that imagined a culturally sovereign 'nation'.

Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) and artist Nandlal Bose (1882-1966) who were important personalities of this movement influenced Satyajit Ray's aesthetic sensibilities. Rabindranath Tagore envisaged a future for the Indian arts movement, in his university in *Santiniketan*, Bengal. According to Tapati Guha Thakurta, Tagore's images of the Indian nation were in the lived traditions of villages. Artistic creation in *Santinikentan* involved an active dialogue with the natural environment, rural life and folk traditions. Nandlal Bose's work in the 1920' and 1930's also explored themes that defined sacredness through nature and everyday life.

It is well worth recording Ray's own reminiscences of his early training in *Santiniketan* with Nandlal Bose. He says, "*As a student of painting in Rabindranath Tagore's university in Santiniketan, we had to learn the rudiments of Chines calligraphy. We rubbed our sticks of chinese ink on porcelain palettes, dipped our bamboo-stemmed Japanese brushes in it and held them poised perpendicularly over mounted sheets of Nepalese parchment. 'Now draw a tree', our professor Bose would say (Bose was a famous Bengali painter who had made pilgrimages to China and Japan). 'Draw a tree, but not in the western fashion. Not from the top downwards. A tree grows up, not down. The strokes must be from the base upwards...' (T)his was basic- this reverence for life, for organic growth. When you paint, each stroke of brush, each movement of finger, of wrist, of elbow, contemplates and celebrates growth. And not just things that live and grow. Everything that comprises perceptible reality I observed, felt analyzed and reduced to its basic texture, basic rhythm.*[9]

These notions of finding an organic rhythm in nature and cultural artifacts are reflected all through, *Aparajito*. As the frame is filled through pictorial details of everyday life in Banaras, Ray brings the aesthetic language and cultural concepts of Santiniketan and Indian nationalism to respectable realism.

The nationalist discourse and the cultural histories of Banaras are brought together through the aesthetic of neo-realism, an aesthetic that in Andre Bazin's words, transferred "*to screen the continuum of reality.*"[10] The main emphasis is in recording fluidity of everyday life and the 'unimportant' actions in their strict temporal continuity as the script turns its back on drama and spectacle.

The popular notion of Ray's ostensible non-ideological position sees *Aparajito*, along with the entire sequel, as an allegory of nation building, epitomized in the self-emancipation of Apu. In this interpretation, tradition seen in the ecology of the villages and the environments of Banaras are the necessary thresholds to the site of modernity, Calcutta. One could argue that in this fashioning of a national allegory, tradition has been positioned in order to reveal and even psychologize both the potentials and the traumas that are encountered in the experience of modernity and nation building. Nevertheless, the space of history in this film is not a contested one, but a space that lays the rites of passage for self-emancipation from the feudal world.

However, when viewed from the perspective of nationalist discourse that prioritized everyday life one has to take into account that everything is filmed to produce just that dense texture of life. The movie's continuity is thus textured by minute events. As Geeta Kapur states, if this film is seen as an ethnographic allegory, it allows us to read the narration against the grain of the local and mythological histories that formed Banaras after the eighteenth century.[11] As the act of choosing events and the manner of recording become delicate and problematic, the movie as it symbolizes social formations creates the potential of speech, for recording a social discourse.

 This is the point where I interplay Ray's *Aparajito* and Banaras to read into the way Ray's own aesthetic structure and nationalist agenda engages everyday traditions and mythologies of Banaras to situate the sacredness of the city. He does this within the essentialist paradigm that tends to define Banaras as a sacred site beyond time and history.

Positioning Myself

For someone growing up in Delhi, Banaras had always been a distant image of sacredness. The city became a presence in my life only when my brother went to pursue his engineering education in the I. T. B.H.U (Institute of Technology, Banaras Hindu University). I was fourteen when my brother started his studies in B.H.U. The word 'Hindu' next to Banaras in the name of the university raised no particular question in my mind as my brother's hostel room overlooking a mango tree and his life in the BHU campus became my predominant image of Banaras. This city became a more curious object as I struggled through my undergraduate dissertation in Ahmedabad, a city in western India. At that time, a close friend was actively involved in imposing Deleuze's 'rhizome thinking' to 'order' Banaras, as I tried to make sense of Delhi in relationship with the politics of post-independence.

Thus when I finally did travel to Banaras, I had two very different memories that to a large extent structured my experience of the city: my brother's life in Banaras and my friend's epistemological imposition on it. I saw the city through these very different lenses. This sense of a viewing, of trying to make sense of another person's experience, may be my unconscious trajectory that finally realized the concept of this thesis, of viewing Banaras through a film.

My own interest to Banaras came with my experience of the river front, observing different human engagements along the river and the multiple histories narrated by local priests and boatmen about the palaces and temples that formed the ghats and the city. There lay a curious interplay of exploring and experiencing the city through a distant aesthetic eye that based itself on other peoples knowledge and personal memories. Banaras as a city has thus constantly motivated a sense of distant engagement, mediated through different people's experiences and narrations. This motivation, to be a distant aesthetic eye that realizes different people's biographies/ viewpoints of the city creates my position. Banaras is thus viewed through Satyajit Ray's camera and grafted with different forms of knowledge to structure Harihar, Sarbojaya and Apu's experience of the city.
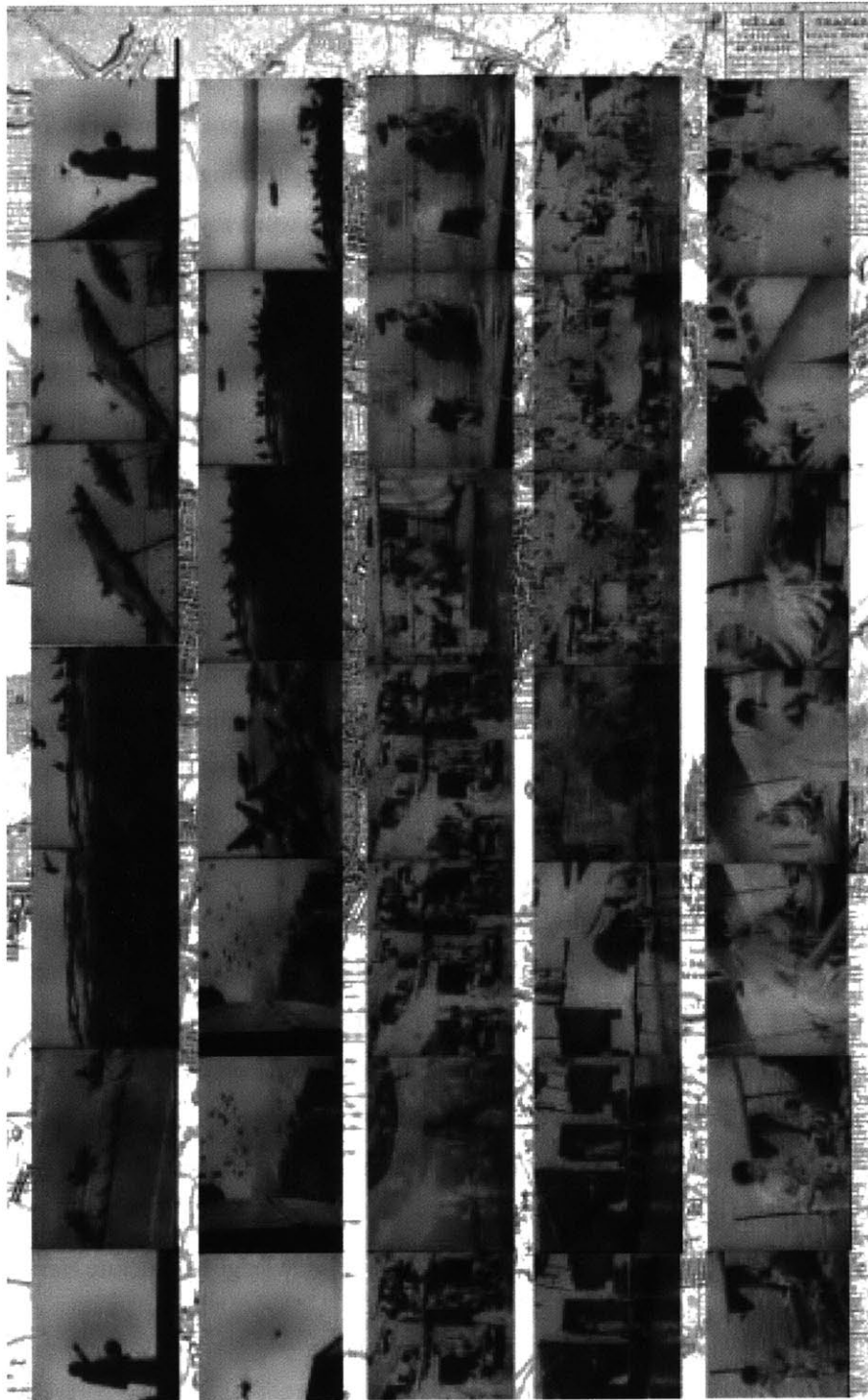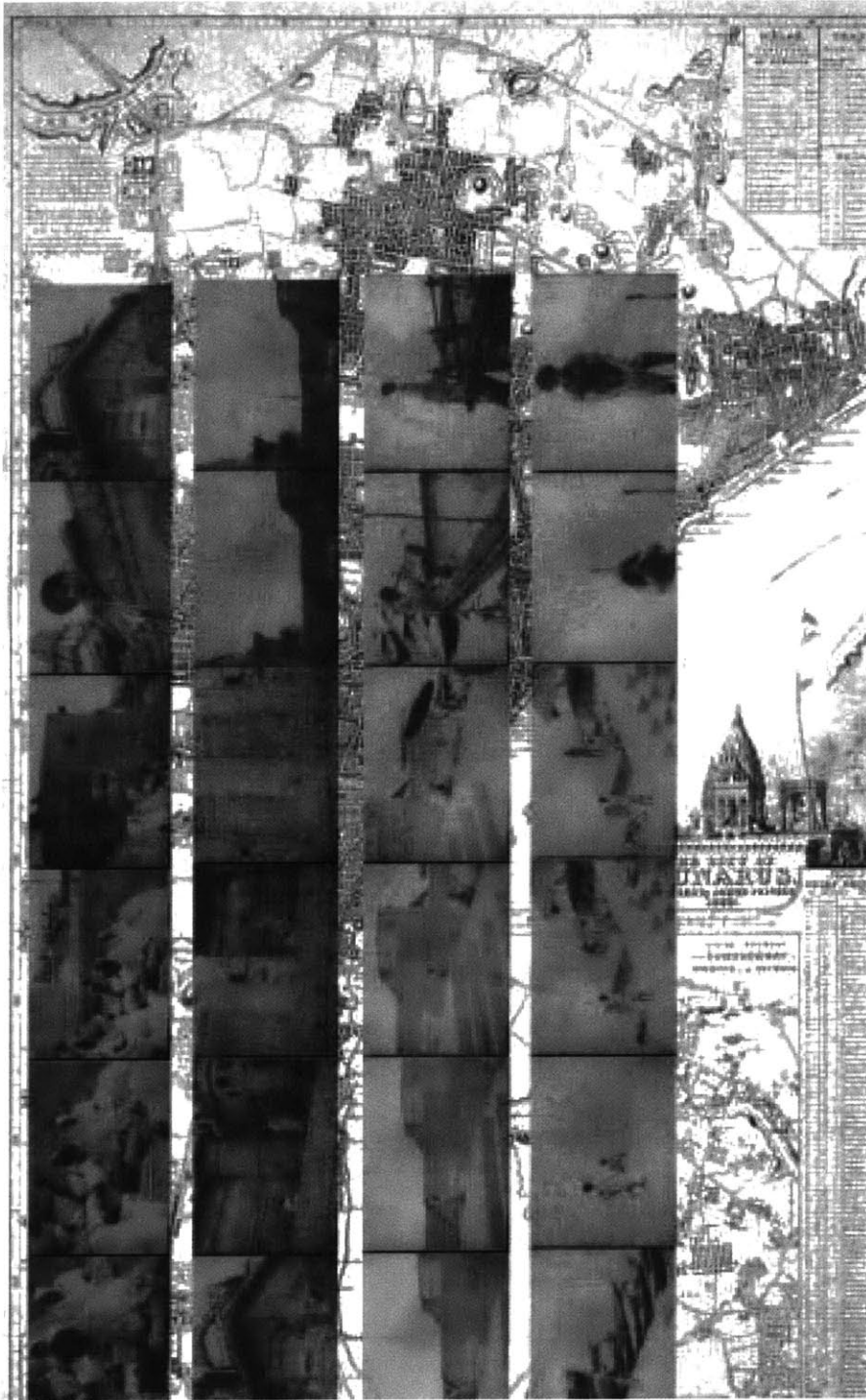
Chapter One

The *Ghats*

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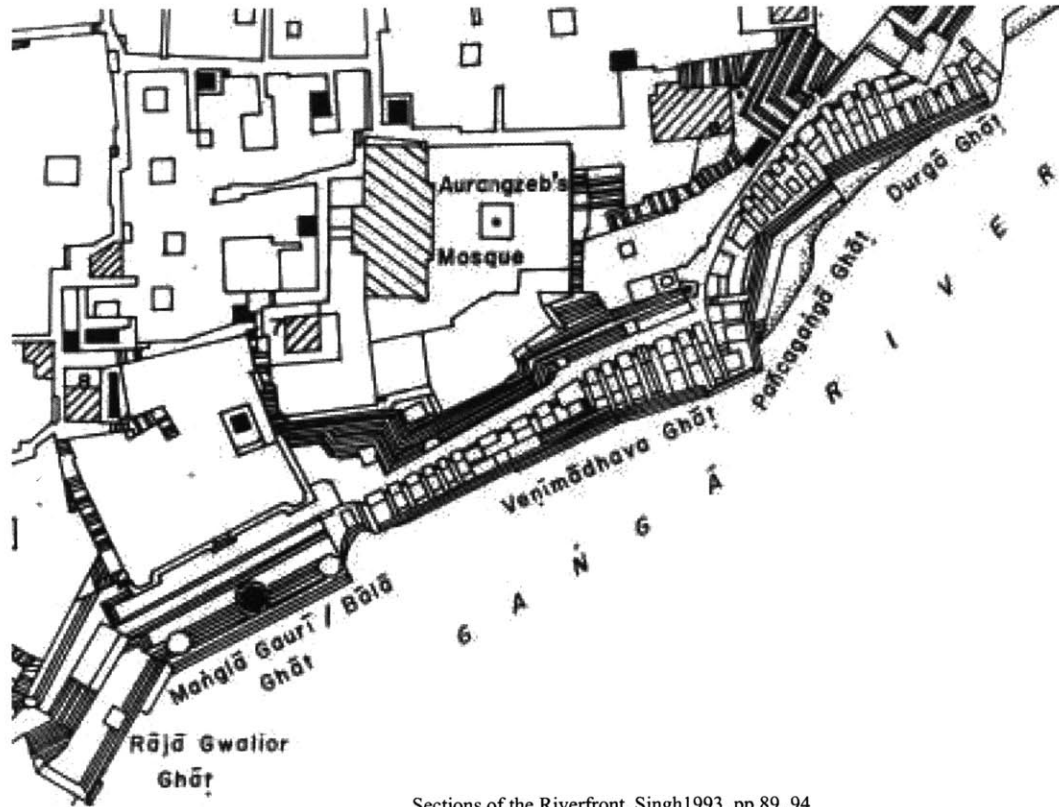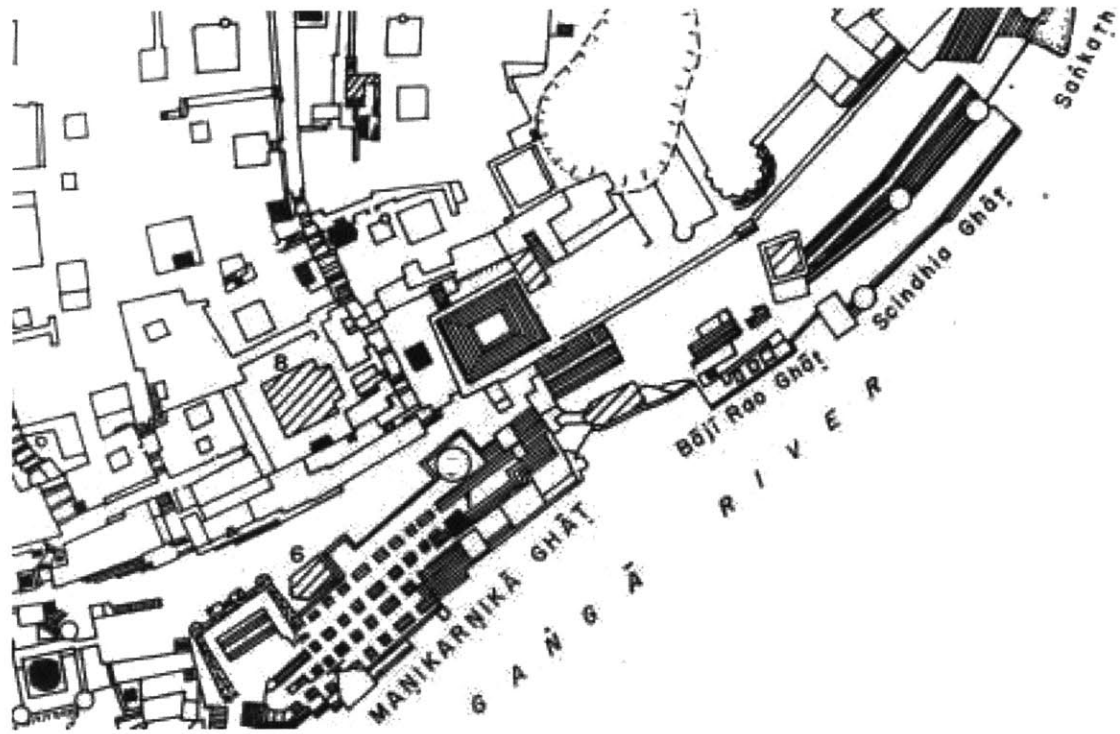
Sections of the Riverfront. Singh1993, pp.89, 94

Introductions

Satyajit Ray's film *Aparajito* (1957) introduces the city of Banaras from a moving train that passes over the *Dufferin* Bridge into the city. Between blurred girders, the view is that of the river edge, of the *ghats* of Banaras. The view reveals a continuum of fragmented glimpses of terraces that form a curve along River Ganges, and form a wall that introduces, protects and images the city of Banaras as a sacred site.

The *ghats,* built permanently in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century were constructed as a series of stone terraces and stairs that penetrate the building edge of the city and drop towards the river. Many of these terraces support individual buildings that were once the palaces of various regional monarchies that sought to re-invent the Hindu tradition in the city by the late eighteenth century. The elevations of the palaces accentuate the monumentality of the steps, combining with the cascading section to give a strong front to the river edge. Their construction served as a statement of power and legitimization of these different local rulers.

The steps and the plinths are still today filled with life. They are used for ritual purposes and for daily ablutions that involve bathing and swimming in the river. There are five important pilgrimage *ghats (Assi Ghat, Kedar Ghat, Dashashvametha Ghat, Manikarnika Ghat and Panchganga Ghat)[1],* two *ghats* that serve as cremation sites *(Manikarnika Ghat and Harishchandra Ghat),* with the remaining *ghats* used for more secular purposes. The type of uses in a given section of the riverfront depends on the position of the *ghat* with respect to the city.

However it is the panorama of steep flights of steps that has come to represent the mythic character of Banaras. It is this panorama that Satyajit Ray presents us with from the bridge and yet he simultaneously inverts it. The spaces of the *ghats* are formally explored by breaking down its monumentality into essential forms, that simultaneously reveal everyday activities enacted on them.

Aparajito: Begining Sequence

Early morning and the myth of creation

Ray introduces the viewer the *ghats* before dawn, when pigeons flutter around before the interruption of human activity. We see in essence a montage of single shots. The first frame, looking up towards the sky captures a Brahmin priest standing on a plinth of one of the *ghats* feeding pigeons along the river edge. The next frame takes us to a detail of a vertical stone surface of the *ghats*. The emphasis is on the texture and decorative details that support various activities of pigeons. This shot then moves to capture the surface of the plinth against which the river is framed. This is the first time that the river is introduced in the early morning sequence. Ray draws our attention to the materiality of the plinth and to the play of light and shadow on it.

He then continues by showing us the vertical edges of the plinth that frames the sky beyond and the next shot captures two traditional palm-leafed umbrellas set along the edge of a plinth with pigeons flying and settling on top of them. This shot, in deep focus captures the horizon line behind the umbrellas. The interesting aspect here is the manner in which the two umbrellas characterize different qualities. The umbrella in the foreground becomes an *object*, in that its geometry and material quality become counterpoints to the planar (horizontal and vertical) elements that characterize the *ghats*. The umbrella in the background expresses this counterpoint by creating a space —the shaded wooden seat beneath it—on the *ghat*.

The first six montages feature elements of the *ghats*: the plinth, the vertical surface behind it, and the two umbrellas. In imaging these features, their material, as well as their architectonic and functional characteristics, the montage uses generic principles of formation – depth-anchorage-object. This montage then sets up the two long shots that create partial panoramic views of the *ghats*. These shots, framed from a fluted buttress and an edge of a wall, with the built form merging into the horizon formed by the river and the sky, emphasize the space of the riverfront as distinct from the city.

The emphasis is not on the monumentality of the *ghats* but on the sense of enclosure that is experienced in this space. This is achieved a distinct undertone of grayness is contrasted by one or two elements that are given prominence. For example, the first shot an octagonal plinth with a person sitting on it, a little boat in the river and the fluted buttress in the foreground. In the second shot, the surface of a wall and the horizontal plinth along it is emphasized. Thus, in the panorama itself, Ray emphasizes the fragments that make up the majestic riverfront through the different tonalities.

The opening montage ends with an abrupt re-cut of the shots of increased activity of pigeons on the plinth (to denote passage of time) and gives way to a pan shot that leads us from the plinth into the expanse of the river, a boat in the middle of the river, and then finally the horizon lit by the rising sun. This pan shot frames the experience of viewing the horizon and the sky beyond imbues with it the experience of the spiritual through nature.

Ray constantly positions the *ghats* against nature, as the contrast in their grayness allows the sky to be experienced in its vastness and with a sense of infinite. Ray through the montage posits this relationship embedding the source of the sublime *in nature* rather than engaging nature to bring in the idea of grandeur through the image of the *ghats* as Havell had us experience it. (... *the Moon, is sinking slowly behind the ghats, and in the dim light of his silvery rays the massive monasteries and palaces, built by devout Hindu princes, loom mysteriously out of the mist...).* [2]

Important shot in this context is the framing of the plinth set against the distant sky. This frame captures the vertical surface of the plinth in the lower left corner of the frame. As the plinth in its darkened texture roots itself to the ground, it provides a strong contrast to the sky that fills the rest of the frame and extends infinitely outwards. Here, the dark silhouettes of fluttering pigeons scale the vastness of the sky against the plinth, as the center of the frame disappears to imagine infinite extensions of the homogeneous, light gray, sky.

Aparajito: Begining Sequence

Further, as Ray fragments the *ghats*, he repositions sacred myths in the manner he frames the Brahmin priest in the beginning of the movie. The darkened, vertical silhouette of the Brahmin on the center of a clear horizontal plinth, contrasted against the sky creates a telling mythic image of Banaras as the city of Lord *Shiva*.

Many Hindus consider Shiva the 'supreme lord' in the Hindu Pantheon. According to Hindu mythology, *Shiva's Linga*[3] *or the Linga of light* first pierced the Earth in the city of Banaras. The *linga of light* is considered a symbol of supreme 'partless' reality, a fiery column of light that created life. It is the axis *mundi* according to Mircea Eliade, a pillar at the center of the world, originating deep in the netherworlds, cracking the surface of the earth and splitting the roof of the sky.[4] This mythic connotation, that of the axis mundi or the *linga* of light, is further invoked through the priest in a subsequent shot. Here, his silhouette fills the center of the frame with his head turned up, looking at the sky.

This suggestion of laying down essential paradigms that define Banaras through a brahmin priest is telling. It starts to reveal Ray's acceptance of Banaras as a feudal Hindu city and as the center of Brahmanical control and authority. Yet he inverts the sacred, as the image is not allowed to take on a pure iconic aspect. The predominant point of view is in situating everyday life, and here it is that of a priest feeding pigeons in the shadows of dawn.

Aparajito: Begining Sequence

Aparajito: Begining Sequence

Everyday life

After showing the sunrise, the movie frames a woman meditating on the edge of a plinth under an umbrella that emerges from one corner of the frame to shade her. All the elements of the *ghats* that till now were fragments of experience are brought together to represent sacredness in everyday life. Ray makes a transition into the space of the river to document fragments of the *ghats* and the social practices along them. The transition links the meditative posture to the world of everyday life along the river. Here the *ghats* and the river become embed in both sacred and secular experiences. Further, as the following sequences introduce the manner in which the river is engaged by individual practices, they overlap differing architectural conditions that form this liminal zone with the water.

The river *Ganga*, is revered as both goddess and mother[5]. Along all pilgrimage points many devotees bathe in the Ganges. According to Diana Eck, the river is the archetype of sacred waters just as Banaras is the archetype of pilgrimage spots. Yet this river is also the source of many secular activities including bathing buffaloes and cows. The river as much as it is a sacred spot, it is also used by Banarasis in their daily lives to bathe, wash clothes and to swim. Further, the river supports an entire occupational structure of boatmen, who take people across the river to different villages or too different points along the *ghats*[6]. Ray engages both these practices: sacred and secular simultaneously.

The first sequence brings together a number of activities performed by men and women in close proximity to another. Bathing and its rituals, regardless of whether they are motivated by reasons of pilgrimage or are simply activities of daily life, define a collective that creates their own representational spaces. The section of the *ghats* imaged is characterized by a horizontal layering of plinths scaled to human height, articulated with alcoves. Further, the temporary structures (umbrellas and wooden planks) create their own, distinct, rhythm.

Aparajito: Begining Sequence

The next shot frames a woman and man performing rituals[7] on a temporary wooden plank, and a small boy who activates the shot behind them. His everyday activities overlap with the sacred rituals of the old couple though each seems to be engaged by his/her rituals in a different manner. The next shot shows two mothers supported by a plinth wall bathing their children. Here again, while one child is shown with relative independence, the other child is given a bath by his mother. In front of them is a boat, another architecture of temporality that creates its own space along the river edge.

It is precisely here, that we can also see the setting of the narration of the movie, as Ray juxtaposes secular actions of young boys with rituals of elderly people. Simultaneously the invocation of the mother and son relationship in context to the boat is also important. For the boat also ascribes in it, a passage to other, unknown lands that Apu, as he grows into his own, aspires for. As in the case of the novel, where he finally does set sail on a ship to South America. This narration, nevertheless, is situated within everyday activities.

Thus, in summary, Ray breaks down traditional actions, both sacred and secular, and represents them through individuals. In his representation, Ray allows for every person to engage tradition in his own terms. While he sets a collective matrix of spatial practices, he simultaneously prioritizes the individual.

Aparajito: Begining Sequence

Harihar introduced

To establish the theme of everyday life and its allegorical value, Ray moves further away from the *ghats*. As he indexes the passage of time, what is revealed is the play of shadows between various elements that come together to create the riverfront: niches created in solid plinths, steps, platforms, temporary structures and human activity. These elements are articulated in a shot that highlights their relationship by means of shadows. Each element is given its due importance as a transition occurs between this pan shot and the next. The transition compresses these individual architectonic relationships along the river edge into a larger order that popularly images all representation of the *ghats*: the steep flights of steps penetrating into the river.

The next shot pans a greater dimension of the *ghats* as the steep flights of steps that penetrate the river are imaged. Ray pans human activities, focusing on the octagonal plinths that become small islands in the array of steps, the circular forms of the umbrellas and the shadows of the plinth that breaks up the graphic continuity of the steps. These fragments are now the counter points that break up the power of the continuous flights of steps that create their own sense of the infinite.

By framing the overall experience of the river, Ray reveals the power of the steps as connectors, as the spatial base that absorbs all individual idiosyncrasies into a collective sacred imagination. The river and its intense relationship to individual elements are subjugated in a larger narration as the sacredness of the water is mirrored through the power of the flights of steps. It is here that Havell's amphitheaters that allow the imagination of one vast sun temple is revealed. As Ray repositions the subliminal experience into the *ghats* we are introduced to the father of main character (Apu) of the movie/sequel, Harihar.

Aparajito: Begining Sequence

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This relationship between individual spatial practices and lived experiences on one hand, and the representation of space that embodies elements of power on the other, is completed in the next shots. These shots show Harihar in the *ghats* of Banaras.

The film picks up the movement of Harihar from his ritual engagement with the river, as he comes out of the water into the space of the *ghats*. The shot starts by looking down into the river capturing Harihar turning away from the water and making his way up the steps of the *ghats*. While the steps are never seen in the shot, the river and the space that a *ghatia*[8] creates with the umbrella and wooden planks become his backdrop. This backdrop, characterized by the umbrella, the flowing water and the plank that is broken and unstable, images impermanence and temporality as essential experiential qualities, qualities that are left behind to come into the domain of permanence, or the *ghats*.

The camera angle then changes to capture the space of another priest or *Ghatia*. As the shot closes into the space of the priest, depicted by the shadow of the umbrella, the facade of the Digpatia palace is slowly revealed in a gray grainy texture. This shot also reveals the scale and monumentality of the palace by the single opening that looks onto the river. This palace built by the King of Bengal in 1830 is an important representation for the Bengali community in Banaras that Harihar is a part of. Ray closes up to frame Harihar's body against the distant yet solid presence of the palace. Here, the manner in which the body dominates the frame individualizes Harihar's character and yet is set within the framework of power that consolidates his association with the Bengali community.

The background then changes to the steep flight of steps of the *Causatthi ghat*[9] (the adjacent *ghat*). This *ghat* in itself is a sacred site, containing in its precinct a temple of sixty-four goddesses and is an important point of certain pilgrimages (*Yogini Tirtha* and *Agastya Tirtha*). The steps of the *ghat* becomes a monumental backdrop on which Harihar creates his own path as the shot ends with Harihar's body being enframed in the flood of steep steps that form this sacred space.


Harihar Introduced

The steps and the facade thus become textures that form the space of power as well as important monumental elements that make the river edge. Further, Harihar's spatial trajectory that is situated and subsumed in the place defined by tradition of sacredness and is set against the symbols of power that defines his community in Banaras. Ray thus simultaneously frames Harihar's identity, as an individual who is a part of an imagined community (Bengali), and who is also more intensely subsumed in the sacred tradition through his occupation as a priest.
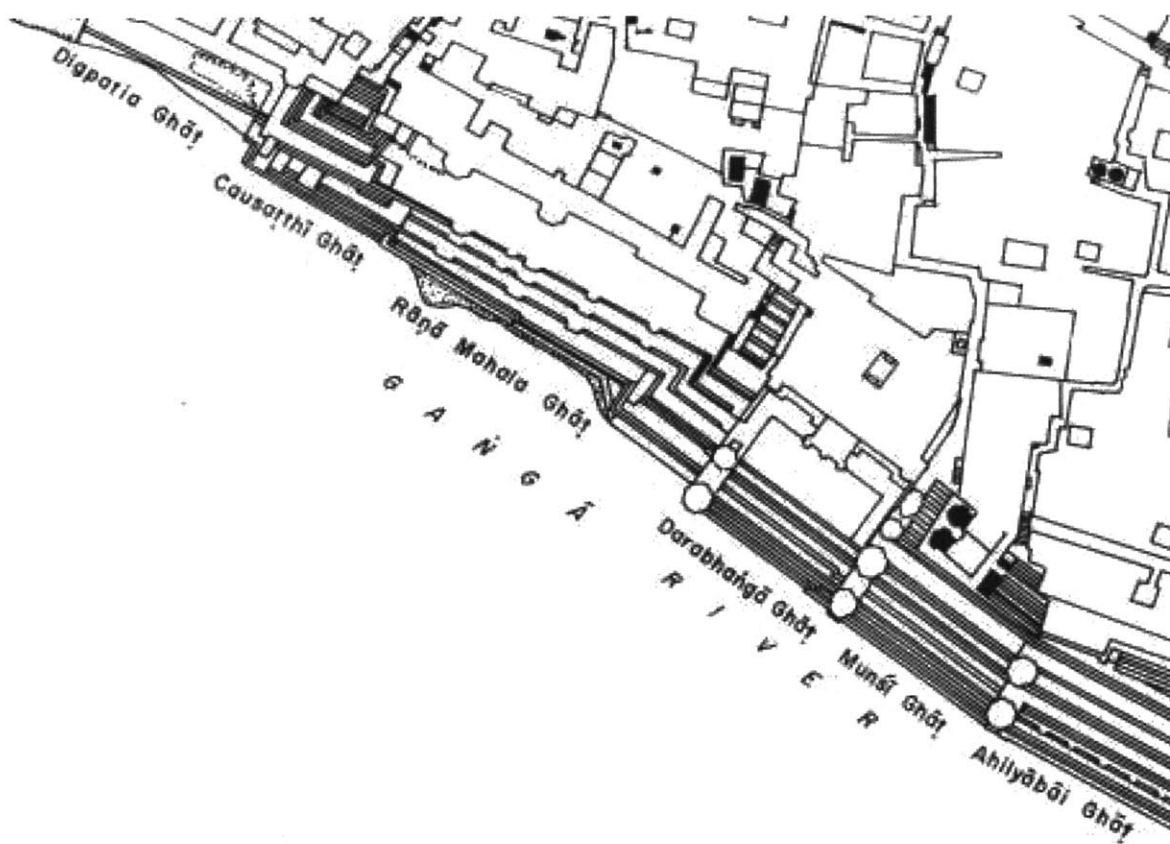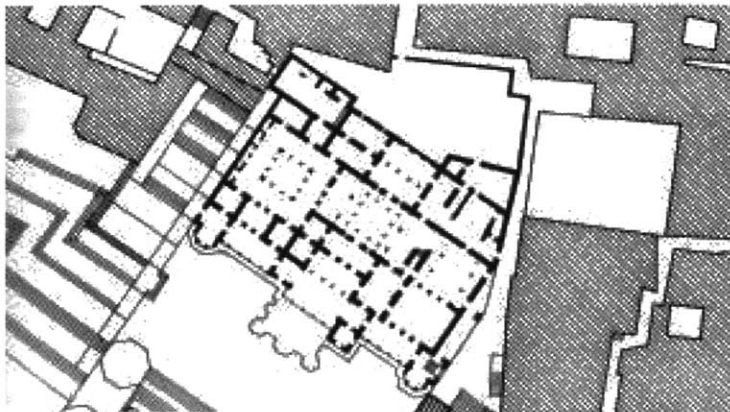

The main ghats where the film was shot. Singh 1993, p.81

Harihar Introduced

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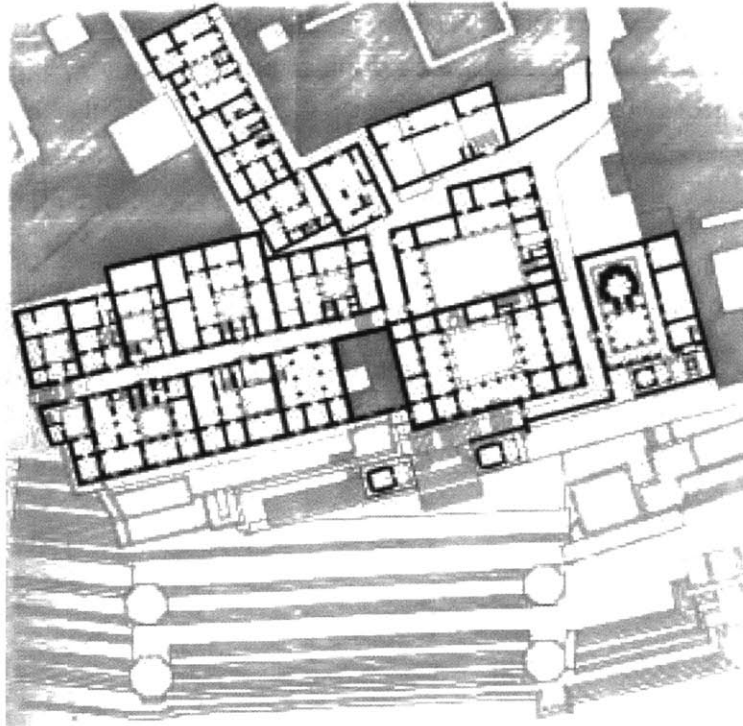
Indore State. Site Plan
Coute and Leger 1989, p.15

Darbhanga Palace. Site Plan
Coute and Leger 1989, p.15

Palaces along the *ghats*

Explorations

After the initial introductions into the *ghats* and the practices that are held along the river during the morning, the movie re-situates itself on the ghats in the late afternoon. Here Ray captures Apu's explorations that are set in the spaces of *Munshi, Darabhanga* and *Rana Mahala Ghat*. *Munshi Ghat* is the northern most *ghat* and it neighbors *Darabhanga Ghat* after which is the *Rana Mahala Ghat* towards the south and is followed by the *Causatthi Ghat* (Harihar's bathing ghat) and then the *Digpatia Ghat* (the palace of the King from Bengal).

Darabhanga ghat is characterized by the formal palace of the King of Darbhanga from Bihar[10] and was built in 1815. Sridhara Narayana Munsi, a finance minister in the State of Darabhanga, built Munshi Ghat in 1912. The King of Udaipur built the *Rana Mahala Ghat*, in 1670. This section of the ghats represents the part of Banaras that is defined by palaces and temples built by various regional monarchies. Further, as Banaras sits on a plateau fifty to seventy five feet above the river each of these palaces impose a strong façade of solid walls on to the ghats.

Two half-octagonal buttresses along the edge characterize the wall that creates Darabhanga *Ghat*'s edge and along the center three fluted circular buttresses strengthen the wall. These walls support the palace on top at the level of the city. Further, two temples set on a high plinth characterizes *Munshi Ghat*. This plinth is like an island on this ghat, surrounded on two other sides by flights of steps that connect the city and the two temples on top of the plinth to the main ghat and the river. The *Darabhanga Ghat,* and the *Munshi Ghat* are articulated by a linear array of steps that go down to the river. Three rows of cascading octagonal plinths break the linearity of the steps down and also articulate the edges of these two ghats.

The *Rana Mahala Ghat* is also a similar, though less imposing, form along the vertical edge. Here the wall is articulated by a rhythmic array of half-octagonal buttresses that support a palace on top. What is important here is the sectional shift, as this ghat is as long *Munshi* and *Darabhanga Ghat* and has continuous horizontal steps broken by rectangular plinths. Unlike the octagonal divides in the earlier ghats, the plinths are less dramatic and less imposing.

Apu's Exploration

The movie leads us into the edge of *Darabhanga Ghat* where Harihar is reading scriptures to widows along the plinth edge. As Ray moves away from Harihar's enclosure he reveals the horizontal formation of the *Munshi ghat*, its length articulated by linear flights of steps that are fragmented by the interspersed octagonal plinths. People sitting on the plinth farther away complete this frame. As Ray captures life on the ghats in late afternoon, the camera pans away from Harihar's space to frame Apu looking down at his father while sitting on top of one of the octagonal plinths. Apu's face is framed by the detail that articulates the ending of an octagonal plinth and the *shikara* (roof) of the temple. This is the first time that Ray focuses on the temple in his viewing of the ghats. However, in the introduction itself the temple's sacred power is diminished by the plinth detail, that diagonally cuts across the center of the image to support Apu's face.

The framing of Apu's face prioritizes craft over established symbols of sacredness and indicates Rays position in terms of positively engaging artisanal tradition over and above the stronghold of tradition. Further, it sets the theme for Apu's walk through different ghats. As Ray documents the horizontal/sectional qualities of the ghats he prioritizes particular details over established symbols of sacred and secular power (the temple and the palace walls). Moreover, the power and picturesqueness of the ghats is captured through Apu's movements. In this sequence, the conception of spatiality that defines the architecture of the *ghats* is rendered ambiguous. What is inscripted in the movie instead, is an urban text, a space, which in Michel de Certeau's words "takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities and time variables"[11]. Space here is caught in the 'ambiguity of actualization' and is composed of intersections of elements that actuate Apu's movements within the ghats.

The next shot captures Apu standing on the octagonal plinth. The ghats start to assume an almost solid base as the background captures the ending of he *Darabhanga* Palace, another octagonal plinth at a higher level, and one of the temples set on the vertical plinth structure of the *Munshi Ghat*. These fragments of the sacred and of political representations of power allow Apu to stand tall along the plinth edge that marks the beginning of the steps down towards the river.

Apu's Exploration

The steps, almost compressed and folded into the octagonal plinth, become the common base of the frame along which Apu's movement is mapped. As Apu moves along the plinth edge of *Darabhanga Ghat* the camera captures the wall of the palace, its semi-circular fluted buttresses. The horizontal plinth, that otherwise positions the palace and its place of power now frames Apu instead as he moves across the plinth. The palaces in the background, despite being symbols of power, are subjugated to the rhythm in Apu's movements and to the details of the plinth line that forms a continuous horizontal across the screen.

In the next shot, Ray focuses on the horizontal plinth between the palace walls and the flights of the stone steps of *Darabhanga Ghat*. This plinth becomes a platform that supports the palace walls and the walls of *Munshi Ghat* on one end and the steps that rise to an octagonal plinth on the other. This composition, almost sectional in it representation, also marks the end of the *Darabhanga Ghat* and forms a gateway into the next ghat, the *Rana Mahala Ghat*. Two very different conditions of the ghats are brought together. As they frame Apu's path, these shots of the ghats also reveal different spatial experiences. While one side creates the edge and allows the experience of solidity / impermeability, the other side becomes a plinth to step onto and see/ experience the expanse of the river and the land beyond. The horizontal platform, imaged parallel to the frame, becomes a solid base that supports the wall and the single octagonal plinth.

This image captures Apu emerging from the horizon and walking on the platform. Apu's body thus forms a perspective that is framed by the section of the *ghats*. Further, there is a powerful superimposition of the sky and the ghats, as the section becomes a cup that holds the vastness of the sky in it. And here, in-between these two powerful realities lies Apu as an emerging verticality/ almost an axis mundi 'that penetrates the sky and the netherworlds'. Ray constantly suggests yet stops short of creating an iconic image through Apu and yet through him, Ray represents the land of Shiva.
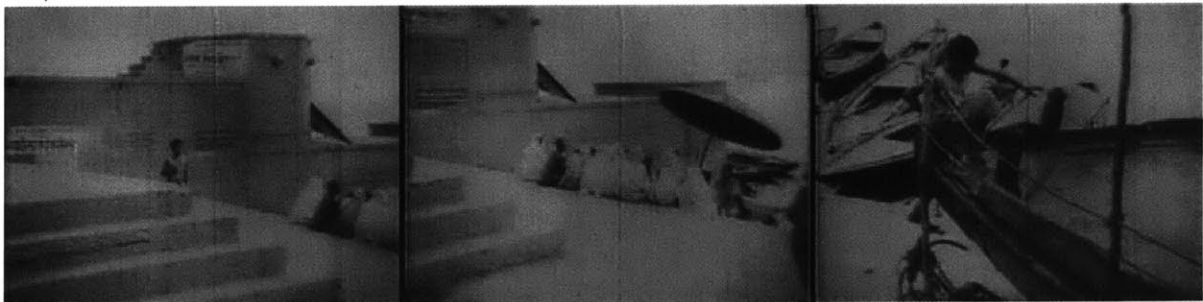

Apu's Exploration

Ray thus engages with the ghats to empower the individual. In this another theme is set, that of the constant invocation of Apu's trajectories between two realities. The horizontal nature of the *ghats* when explored through Apu also start to connote Apu's vexed position between tradition and modernity. In these sequences Apu literally walks on the seam that ties two worlds together, the world of culture/ tradition and now a more secular imaged world of nature (sky and the river).

In the next shot, Apu climbs down the platform framed between the palace walls and the octagonal plinth, into the *Rana Mahala Ghat.* The steps ending in the lower right corner of the frame define his movement. At the same time this shot captures the force of the plinths of *Darabhanga Ghat* that cascade down into the river, articulating with it the sectional complexity of the river edge. Further, as Apu moves across, he passes a group of widows being read scriptures by another priest (i.e. not Harihar).

The next pan shot reverses Apu's context: he now faces the river. The solid plinth/ platform becomes a surface that is almost an extension of the river. The river here becomes an unexplored realm that Apu looks at. Ray shows Apu climbing on top of a boat, looking at the distant horizon and coming back on to the ghats, this time at a lower level, nearer the river. The strong sense of presence that Apu had in *Darabhanga Ghat* is now re-contextualized to the river in front. Further, in the previous shot the built structure was dis-empowered to the continuity and solidity of the plinth line. Now the plinth itself fragments into steps and penetrates into the river.

Apu's journey ends as he reaches his father's bathing ghat, the *Causatthi Ghat,* where he encounters wrestlers exercising on the edge of the water. The diagonal framing between the river and the steps suggest a very narrow space occupied by Apu and the wrestlers, who symbolize a strong traditional lifestyle in Banaras. Apu here looks at what later becomes his threshold, his unconscious reflection of his vexed position with respect to tradition. Thus as representations of tradition (sacred practices and the wrestlers) are positioned


Apu's Exploration

to create places of social activity, they become ensembles of order, of situated structures through which Apu finds his way to the river and the boat in order to create rites of passages for his unconscious journey to self-emancipation.

In summary, at a formal level Ray views the ghats to structure Apu's movement and simultaneously brings forth certain characteristics of the ghats: their sectional complexity, the relative narrowness of the space and the strong borders (the city and the river) between which they are built. Further, throughout his representation of the *ghats*, Ray focuses on spatial traits to reveal Apu's psychological disposition. In all their picturesque magnificence the ghats never dominate Apu and become a sharp contrast to Harihar's movement through *Rana Mahala Ghat* after the end of the scripture reading session. Here, the ghat is viewed horizontally as the shot captures the linearity of the steps and the wall articulated by the rhythms of the octagonal buttresses. The meeting of these two elements is exactly at the center of the frame. The image thus reveals a stable, coherent place in which Harihar is positioned.

Apu's Exploration
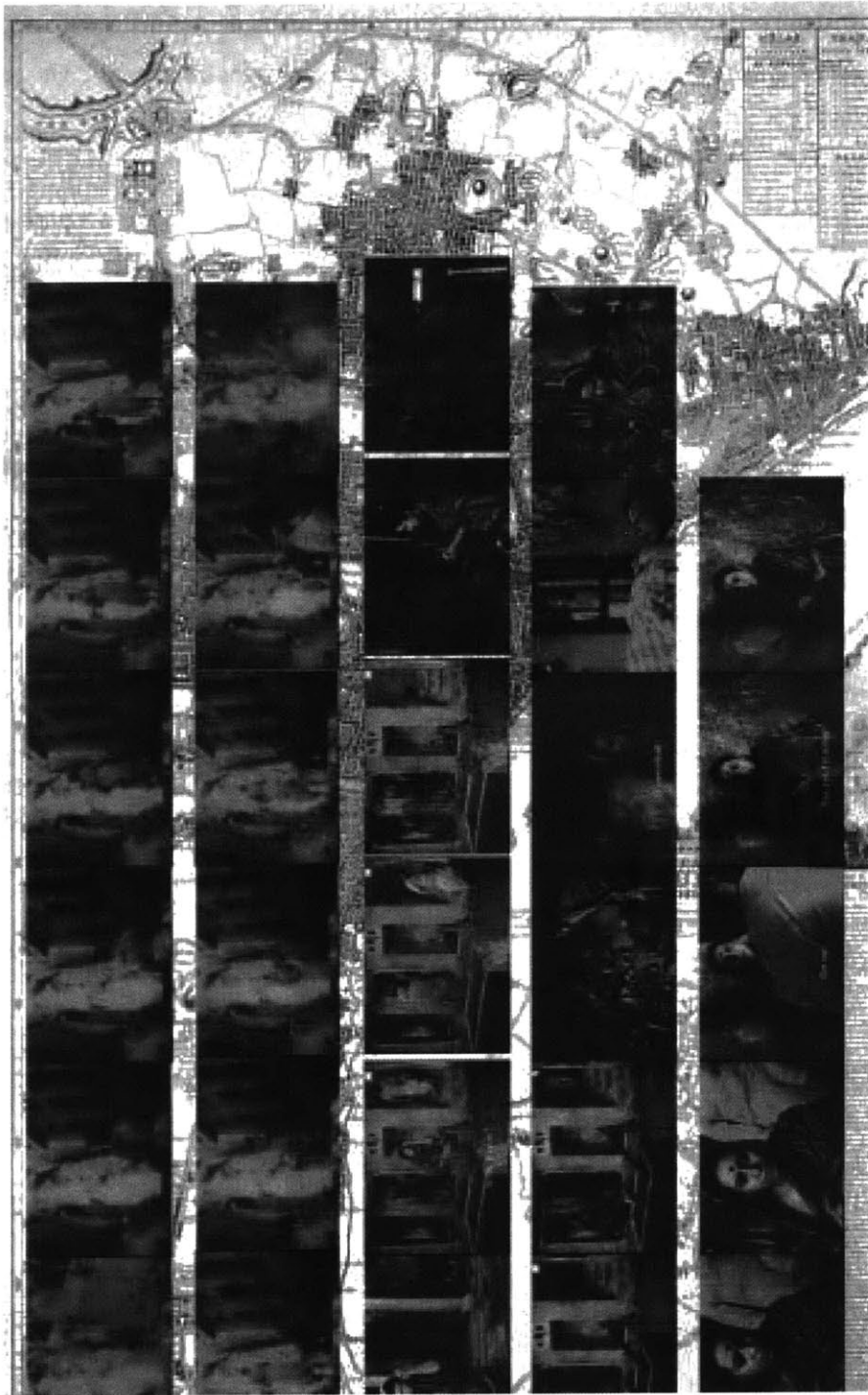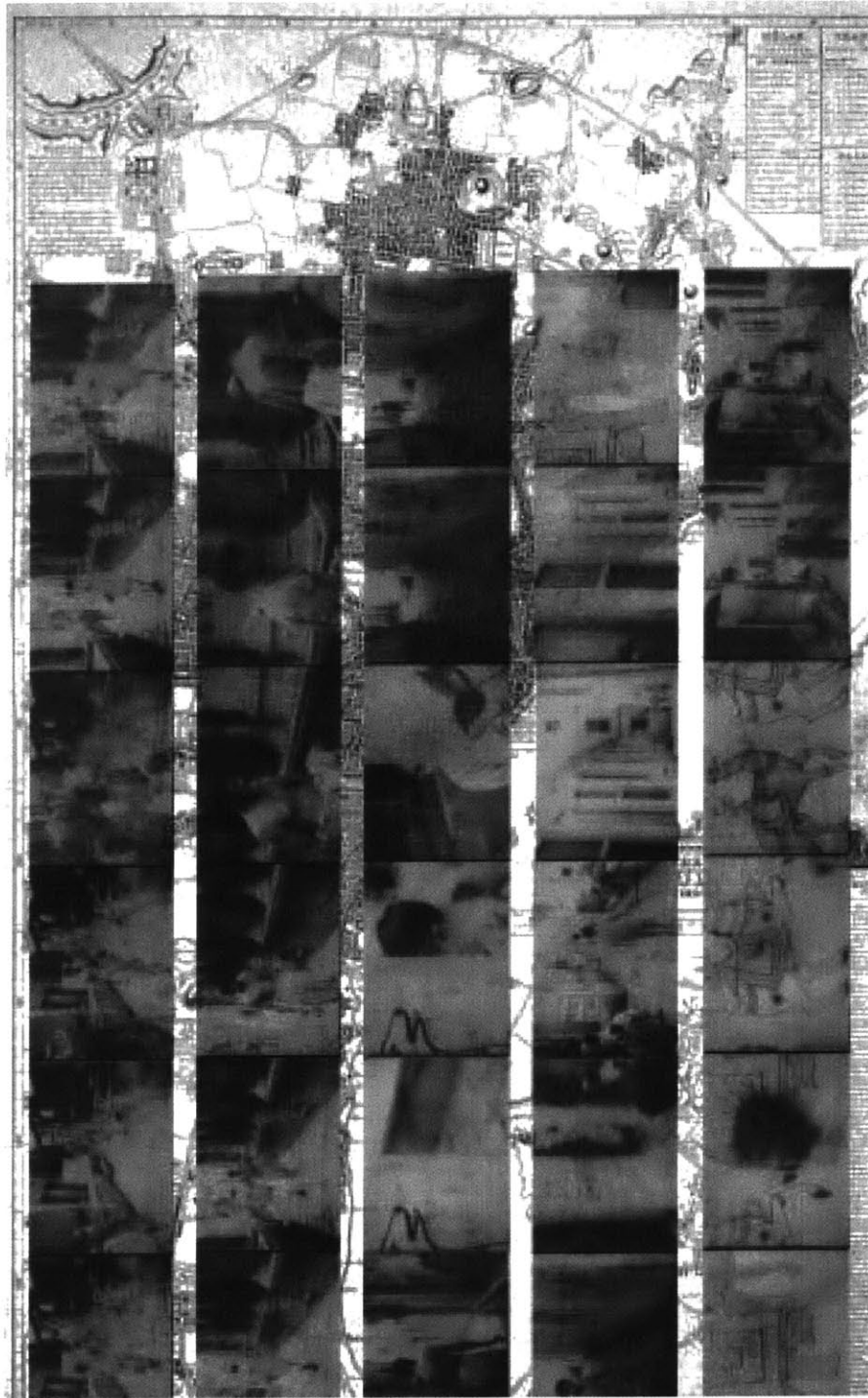
Chapter Two

Spatial Definitions

Harihar's Threshold

Threshold/positioning

The dictionary defines a 'threshold' as a point of beginning or entry. To be at a threshold thus implies having left something behind. In other words, 'threshold' becomes a point of rupture situating the subject between two worlds. Indeed, the movie portrays gateways, into a temple or into a house, as important physically articulated thresholds.

However, in Banaras, thresholds are not always formal architectural formations such as a gateway that mark points of transitions between different neighborhood (*mohallas*), an entrance to a house or a temple. They are sometimes indeterminable zones that exist through the mythologies that define the sacred zones of the city. For instance, certain kinds of iconic images create points of transition from one sacred zone to another. Banaras, contains thresholds containing images of popular deities that are believed to guard borders and regions of the city. Ganesha, for example, is believed to be the Lord of the Threshold. Diana Eck states, "*It is significant that this guardian of the limen, the 'threshold' is himself what might be called a 'liminal' deity. He stands betwixt and between the human and the animal form, part prince and part elephant.*" Further, different thresholds guarded by Ganesha articulate the approach to the sacred center of Banaras. Eck states, "*In the kashi khanda, fifty-six Ganeshas are enumerated within and around the 'sacred circle'. They are arrayed at eight directional points in seven concentric circles, centering around Dhundhiraja near the Vishvanath temple. They are called the fifty-six Vinayakas.*"[1]

These broader sacred passages co-exist with other local/ human shrines that frame more minutely the territories of Banaras. They bring in local sacred histories. For example, Diana M. Coccari shows us the importance of 'ghosts spirits' as 'guardian deities' for some specific neighborhoods in Banaras, a large number of which are made up by low-caste communities.[2] Called *Bir Babas*, these shrines are dedicated to people who suffered violent, unnatural, premature, or untimely 'deaths' that rendered them unqualified for normal rites of death. Many of these people are reported to have sacrificed themselves to protect their family, caste or community. Thus their shrines tend to become sacred centers for the people of a community. Coccari adds that these shrines are many times a penetration of a rural worldview into an urban, '*Brahmanical*' environment.

If a threshold is defined as a phenomenal encounter, it could be seen as a passage that forms an indeterminable spatial zone whose recurrence locates personal mythologies and histories. In this context the threshold gains its *presence* by means of ones beliefs and practices. Thus, the experience of a threshold may be defined as a passage that reflects the cultural/ psychological disposition of the individual. Ray in his representation of Banaras, seems to visualize this operational definition of the threshold beyond the idea of a gateway that marks the entrance of a house, city or a temple. Harihar, Apu and Sarbojaya tend to create their own, separate thresholds in the movie. Analyzing their private thresholds allows us to see the way Ray engages different traditions to situate each person.

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Harihar's Threshold

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Thresholds in Tradition

The movie images the space of transition from the *ghats* to the family's courtyard in the Banaras to Harihar and Sarbojaya's individual thresholds, one belonging in the world and the other at home. This dichotomy between the city and the home, where the city represents the material world belonging to men, and the home represents women, was an important element in the world-view of Indian Nationalism.

Partha Chatterjee in his essay, "The Nation and its Women"[3] argues that the nationalist ideology, based on the notion of the inner and outer domain, saw women as a source of sustained spiritual strength, and as the location of the nations true identity. Though the nationalist patriarchal discourse tried to set up a more 'modern' woman contained in the house, this opposition that tradition had nurtured between the spaces for men and women was actively engaged and re-thought. Ray in his movie allows the workings of this tradition.

Ray creates Harihar's threshold in the space of transition from the *ghats* to the narrow streets of Banaras. These spaces in Banaras tend to be characterized by isolated or dense clusters of iconic and aniconic images that are objects of ritual attention and are familiar images of the Hindu Pantheon such as the *lingas* of *Shiva*, representations of *Ganesha, Hanuman, Bhairava, Durga*, and *Kali*. There may be shrines devoted to less popular god and goddesses, to ascetics and other shrines dedicated to the memory or the power of people who have past away. These images are located on raised platforms, inside the roots of large 'holy' trees, in the niches of boundary walls or small temple structures. This space becomes Harihar's space for ritual actions as he walks back home after bathing in the river.

Ray here frames and prioritizes the experiential qualities of this space. Two trees and a wall articulated by sacred niches mark the boundaries of the threshold. Just as Ray images a sense of compression and darkness to contrast the sunlit expanse of the *ghats*, he projects the religiousness of space through individual actions rather than communal ones.

Sarbojaya's Threshold

The presence of the sacred is indicated through Harihar's actions and those of the widow who crosses his path. A single step, lit through the filigree pattern of sunlight that marks the end of the *ghats,* also articulates the beginning of the ritual actions. As Harihar steps into that space, a widow comes into the threshold from the city, revealing the narrowness of this enclosure. Their intertwined movement as they engage in their sacred performances form the private experiences of a threshold. Yet this space is also the gateway from the riverfront to the city. Ray, by the manner he images the space allows one to simultaneously experience both a community threshold and a dense *lived* environment of different individuals.

From the city, we now move with the camera into the private space of the family into the courtyard of the house, into Sarbojaya's domain. The courtyard, according to Kapila Vatsayana, is perceived as the subliminal center, as the space of Being, and the peripheral rooms symbolize manifest realities.[4] This notion of sacredness is seen when Sarbojaya decorates the courtyard during *Diwali* (festival of lights). Ray frames Sarbojaya lighting lamps that are placed along the courtyard edge.

However, for most of the film this courtyard space reflects Sarbojaya's social position as a housekeeper. Ray introduces Sarbojaya in the movie, with her cleaning the courtyard space. Demarcated by columns and a floor edge, and containing a concrete basin and tap, the courtyard becomes the spatial enclosure that contains her life in Banaras. Her only movements beyond this space are to the kitchen and the bedroom of the house, and occasional visits to the main temple in Banaras. This courtyard thus becomes a spatial container that she maintains, cleans and protects (from the monkey).

As she performs her everyday chores the courtyard also becomes an architecture that produces Sarbojaya as an object and subject of the gaze. This space reflects Beatric Colomina's statement that *"Architecture is not simply a platform that accommodates the viewing subject. It is a viewing mechanism that produces the subject. It precedes and frames its occupants."*[5]

Sarbojaya's Threshold

An interesting element of the movie is that this is the only space that is actually a movie set created to allow us to see into a traditional Indian house. Ray creates an opposition between the stairwell and the tap in the courtyard. Sarbojaya constantly occupies this space as she performs her household duties. The positioning of the tap, of the plinth opposite the stairwell makes her vulnerable as she sits with her back to the stairwell, always subject to an unknown, unexpected visitor, of becoming the object of someone's gaze. Ray constantly frames Sarbojaya against the steps (empty or filled), highlighting her vulnerability when men living on the floors above come down the staircase. The courtyard thus also becomes a reflection of Sarbojaya's insecure position, as a woman in a traditional house for the courtyard is also a passage for the men living in the house. Paradoxically, this space that is hers, is also the space where she is most vulnerable.

What maintains her security and separation is the veil or the *purdah*, a practice of sexual segregation that divides the space between men and women. This social practice is present through out the movie as Sarbojaya negotiates her privacy and honor against the various men, particularly the musician who lives on the terrace. Ray, on more than one occasion has shown the importance of this social practice, in Sarbojaya's accidental encounters with the various men who passed through the courtyard.

This social practice, as Dagmar Engels says, was not just the veil that women covered their hair and their faces, but a complex of norms that involved sexual modesty and a generally demure behavior towards men.[6] As it created the social segregation between the men and the women, it was also an expression of male honor and patriarchal control of female sexuality. *Purdah* thus was a *space* that simultaneously protected the vulnerable nature of women and controlled her sexual instincts. It also became the space that created distinct and complimentary roles for men and women.

Was the space of the *purdah* then Sarbojaya's real 'threshold', a point where she was simultaneously inside and outside her personal social/sexual sphere? Ray shows not only the act of veiling but also the extent of that veil depending on a given situation. When Sarbojaya goes outside to the temple with Apu as she crosses the threshold of the temple, all one sees is her veil. Similarly when Harihar is sick and unconscious and the room of the house has become a community space with the doctor there, the space of the *purdah* deepens as against the time when she is doing her everyday activities.

The space of the veil finally collapses when the musician attempts to make a pass at Sarbojaya during the time Harihar is ill. Here Ray breaks down this threshold to image Sarbojaya as *Kali*, a Hindu goddess that expresses the latent principles of violence and destruction that lie within feminine strength and is ironically the source for patriarchal control. As Sarbojaya's vulnerability is exposed, the collapse of her ordered world is also symbolized.

Sarbojaya's Threshold
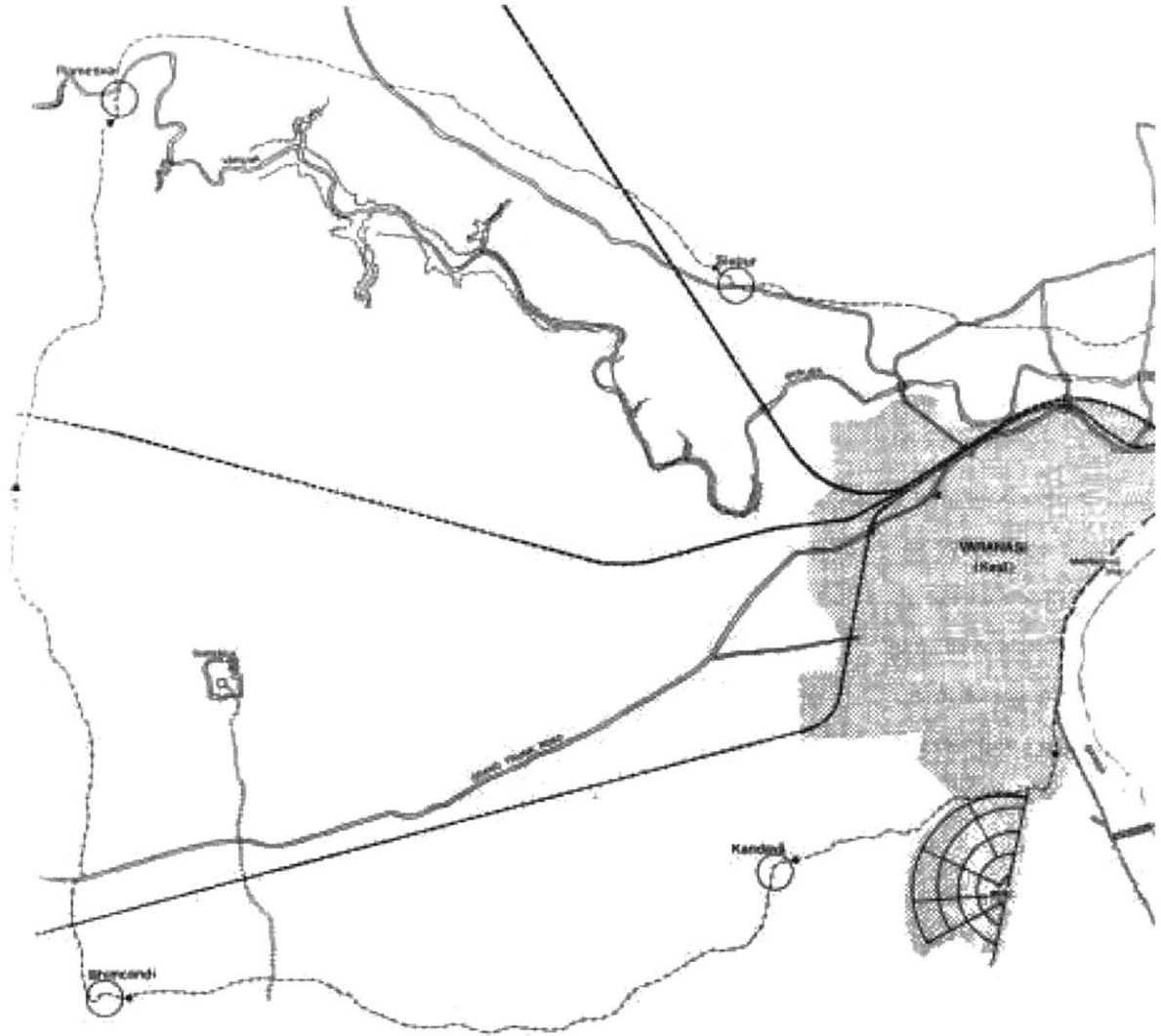
Apu's Thresholds

For Apu's threshold, Ray moves away from the clear, perceptual space of tradition. Apu's thresholds are articulated at incidental moments of play where the boy encounters and passes through traditional practices (pilgrimage procession, wrestling) and symbols of Hindu tradition (cow). Apu's unconscious confrontation with tradition, and the latent conflict between two realities (his tradition and modernity) that he must resolve in his moment of growth, becomes the context of his rite of passage. By embodying this psychological divide between two worlds, the spatial structure of the city (street walls/ *ghat*–river/ ruins-temple) sets up Apu's threshold. There are three moments when such thresholds are most clearly articulated.

The first threshold happens moments after Apu is introduced into the movie, chasing his friends through the street of Banaras. It occurs at the end of the chase before he comes back home to his mother. The threshold here is a cow that blocks a narrow alley. The condition of the walls that frame this street are in striking contrast from one another. One is peeled off, and worn out, while the other is completely plastered, detailed to show the plinth line. While the worn out wall is articulated with openings, the other side is a smooth surface. The walls by their different textures suggest a psychological divide that sets up the threshold. The shot ends with the view of Apu running towards the cow and going under it.

The camera then picks up the Apu's passage from the other side. Here the focus is on the ground, the cow literally becomes a gateway under which Apu has to pass. Apu gains his passage and freedom by scrambling under the cow. This seeming every day experience has potent symbolic effect. The cow as it is framed, literally becomes the weight of an imagined tradition, a gateway Apu needs to scramble on the ground and struggle through.

Apu's Threshold

Panch Koshi Pilrimage Path
Coute and Leger 1989, p.56

Apu's Threshold

The second threshold is formed when Apu goes to the *ghats* before sunrise to fetch water for his dying father. The shot brings together the *ghats* and the river in a diagonal composition. Two extended platforms protrude out into the river, and create a niche that shapes the river. The frame interlocks these two spaces, the solid stone platforms and the river, setting the condition of duality that forms Apu's threshold. Here Ray shows a wrestler exercising on one of the plinths and a number of *gadas* (exercise equipment) on the other plinth. The *gadas* create a dense vertical cluster on the lower right corner of the frame.

It is important to understand that wrestling in Banaras is a way of life and defines an important aspect of what Joseph Atler calls 'Banarasi ethos'.[7] The wrestler's body, according to him, becomes a medium of moral self-expression through the association with the iconographic physique of *Hanuman*, a patron deity of the wrestlers. Imaging a wrestler body thus connotes an expression of tradition and its perpetuation in opposition to any modernizing influence.

This space of the wrestler with the equipment thus forms a threshold for Apu. As Apu walks down the steps, he stops and looks at the metaphorical gateway created by the wrestler and his equipment. He passes the gateway, goes from land into the space of water and upon returning stops to look at the wrestler again, almost like the ritual followed by Harihar in his threshold. Tradition is engaged to reflect Apu's unconscious confrontation with it, and form his a rite of passage to self-emancipation.

Apu's last threshold is set on the edge of the city that marks the outer pilgrimage route and defines the sacred territory of Banaras. Called Panchkosi Yatra, this route is believed to define the sacred territory of Banaras as it relegates everything outside it profane. Apu's reality now lies on the outer side after his father's death.

Apu's Threshold
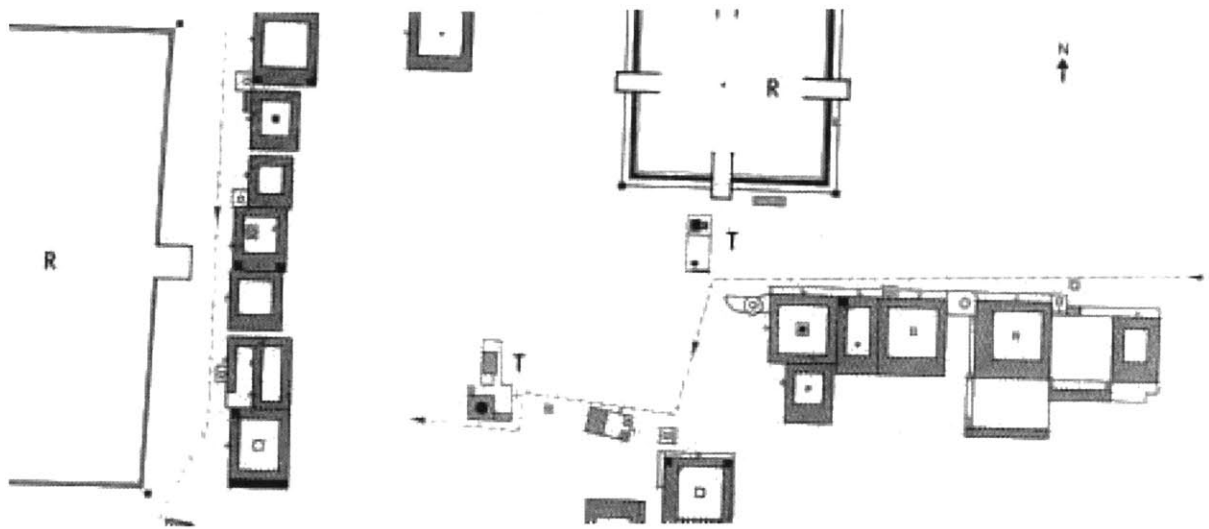
Panch Koshi Pilrimage Path
Coute and Leger 1989, p.61

Apu's Threshold

This threshold is made by the pilgrims (mainly widows). As they tread this sacred path, they mark this space distinct from what lies along the left side of the route. Excavated dirt ground that creates a dark contrast through its texture and the grayness, indicates the outside, 'not sacred' world. The diagonal composition once again sets up the encounters between two worlds, now clearly seen as the shot moves ahead and establishes the ruins as a counterpoint to the pilgrims and the sacred temple space on their right. It is from behind the ruin that Apu creates his own movement/line of force that cuts through the movement of the pilgrims.

That consistent spacing between the groups of pilgrims suddenly gains meaning.The space between the pilgrims metaphorically becomes another living, traditional threshold that Apu passes as he goes into scared space of the temple to feed monkeys. This threshold thus marks another rite of passage, which reflects the inherent psychological battles that need to be crossed as Apu treads his own sacred though unconscious path to self-emancipation.

When we collapse all the thresholds of Harihar, Sarbojaya and Apu, together one senses the subliminal structure of Hinduism within the representation of everyday life. The essential base of Hinduism is seen through the concept of *Brahman* (center) and the latent inner divinity (*atman*),[8] then the idea of rituals is the return to the primordial through the process of interiority. Then Harihar and Sarbojaya, based on social definitions and practices, perform these rituals within their thresholds. It is here that Apu's threshold is disjuncted and allows us to seat Apu's vexed persona.

As he passes through living traditions that are more encounters than a process of sacred revelation, he is still to find his ritual/ center within that space of duality Ray constantly engages Apu in. Does this duality represent the essential notions of center (sacred) and periphery (manifest reality) in Hinduism in which thresholds of tradition become necessary encounters for Apu to find his own sacred center. In following this line of argument one senses Rays effort in finding a sacredness that may yet be modern and emancipatory. The road to self-emancipation may in this context be seen as finding ones own center i.e. freedom from tradition may not necessarily mean a loss of sacredness. It is the ritual that then needs to be reconfigured and restructured.
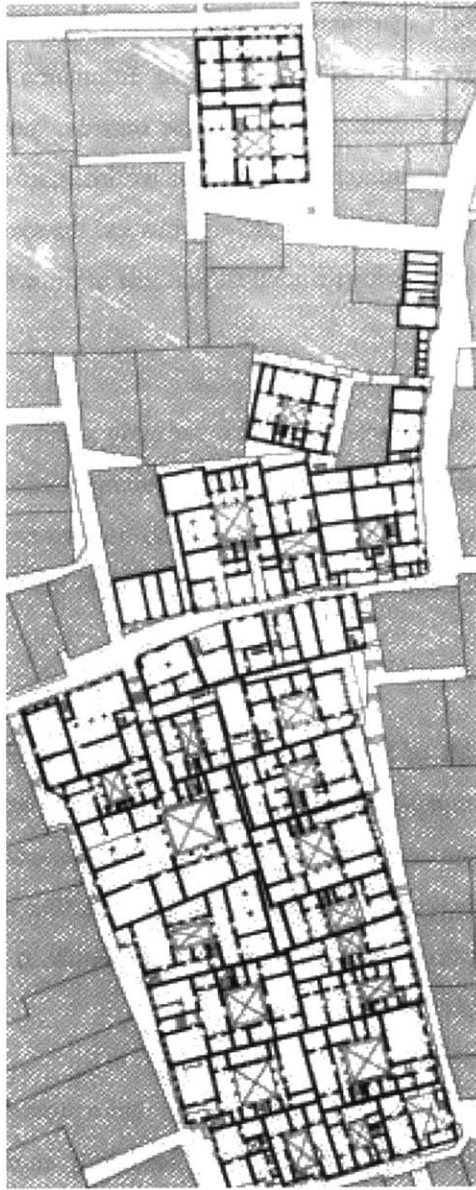
Cauk Fragment Plan, Banaras
Coute and Leger 1989, p. 24

Harihar's Street

Streets

Aparajito represents the streets of Banaras by activating the notion of community at an urban level. In her essay on *Mohalla's of Banaras,* Nita Kumar argues that Banaras is an urban structure based on systems of *mohalla's* (neighborhoods).[9] The city can thus be seen as an ensemble of local communities that maintain and project strong occupational/regional/caste identities in their environments. The common thread that links, but also determines these communal configurations is the network of narrow streets or *galis.* These *galis* are the central locus of activities, a public space that truly belongs to everyone. As Kumar states, "There is no clear or closed boundary between the house and outside. Almost all recreations –sitting and relaxing, drinking tea or having *pan*-take place in the *gali.* In practice this means that the lane or the street is 'taken over'. The circle of spatial boundaries in Banaras is *gali,* neighborhood, city and outside, and movement is free, easy and desirable from one to the other."[10]

As certain aspects of urban life in Banaras are revealed in the movie, we encounter the conceptual matrix that defines or problematizes the idea of a community (*jati*). The notion of community, at once specific but still conceptualized with a shifting definition of boundaries, complicates identity formation at a cultural as well as at an urban level.[11] Nationalist thought utilized this ambiguity in their definition of community and the nation (India) to form a distinct space away from the modernizing-colonial discourse.

In representing the environments of Apu and his family in a Bengali neighborhood in Banaras, the movie brings forth the idea of an organic identity that emerges through tradition and is above any specific historical formation. Ray characterizes two different notions of community in the personalities of Harihar and Aparajito. Through Harihar, he represents aspects of 'rootedness', while his treatment of streets viewed through Apu's exploration allows the notion of community as an organic entity to emerge.
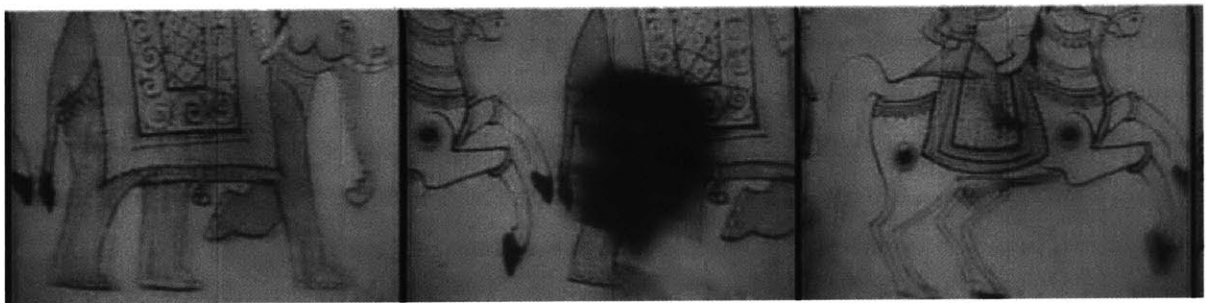

Harihar's Street

Harihar's Street

Apu's Street

56
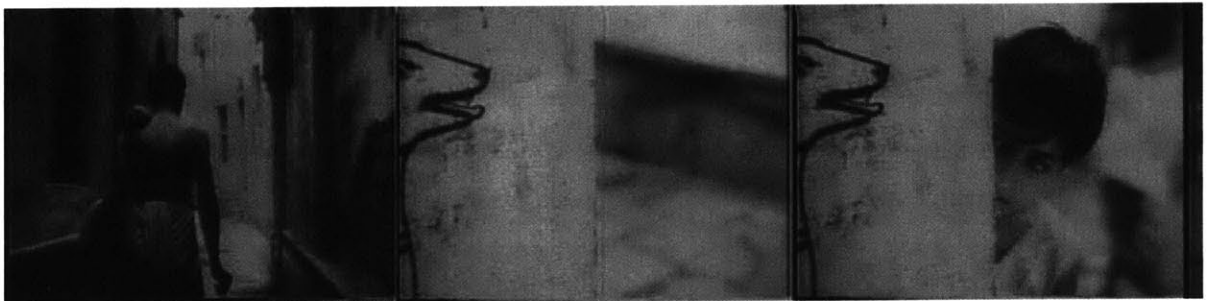
Ray is very consistent with the shot angles that he uses to visualize the space of the street with Harihar walking through it. Kept at eye level, the shots prioritize the plinths that form the street, engaging them with the idea of community and rootedness. The first street frame reveals occupational structures and different modes of interactions through two dominant edge conditions. On the right side, Ray images the space of a *dhaba* (street café). The main elements in focus are the platforms that are used for to seat people and as a space of display. On the other side, diagonally across the street, is another restaurant/ shop in a box-shaped structure with two openings.

As Harihar approaches home, a more private street is imaged. The emphasis of the shot is on the *otla* of a house, the semi-public space that marks the transition from the street into the house. This space is commonly used as a place where one can sit and interact with neighbors or perform certain household activities. Within the images that Ray creates, the façade as a totality is not prioritized. Instead the shots capture only bottom half of different structures that express the plinth and the ground they sit on.

The façade disappears in Ray's Banaras to show different modalities of interaction. As Ray indexes time (early morning), the absence of activity invokes in the imagination the street life of Banaras. Furthermore, at the time of Harihar's death different people carry Harihar back home through these very same streets to consolidate the idea of a community.

In the case of Apu, he is introduced into the movie with a friend. Both of them are framed as hiding at opposite ends of a wall. The frame also reveals partial figures of a rabbit and dog drawn on the wall[12]. This space of the wall, which supports different forms of craft traditions engages us in a 'new' notion of community and aspired identity, that Indian nationalist art sought to give the 'nation' through folk art. This is the theme that Ray explores as he follows Apu's movement through the streets of Banaras.

Apus's Street

While Harihar's movements reveal different forms of semi-public spaces that creates different relationships with street, in Apu's case the emphasis is on surfaces and the folk art they support. Ray partially reveals different artwork three times through different angles that capture these boys running through the narrow alleys. In the last case, his focus becomes the wall itself as he carefully pans the wall decorated with an artwork that shows a festive procession. As he recognizes folk art as an important aspect of tradition, Ray also starts to allude to the various communities of craftsman that are engaged in such art traditions.

Further, the method of representation itself changes, from the more static (rooted?) shots to close up, angles and pan shots (organic?), that allow us to re-think the emphasis in Ray's definition of community in the context of Harihar and Apu. From the space of crafts, Ray moves on to show Apu's movement into a square through a street that has a *madrasa* in it. As we are made aware of a different community's space, which Apu adopts, as his own, Ray reveals the playful interaction of the children in the *madrasa* with the children in a partially framed public square ahead. The romantic notion of an organic community is thus represented.
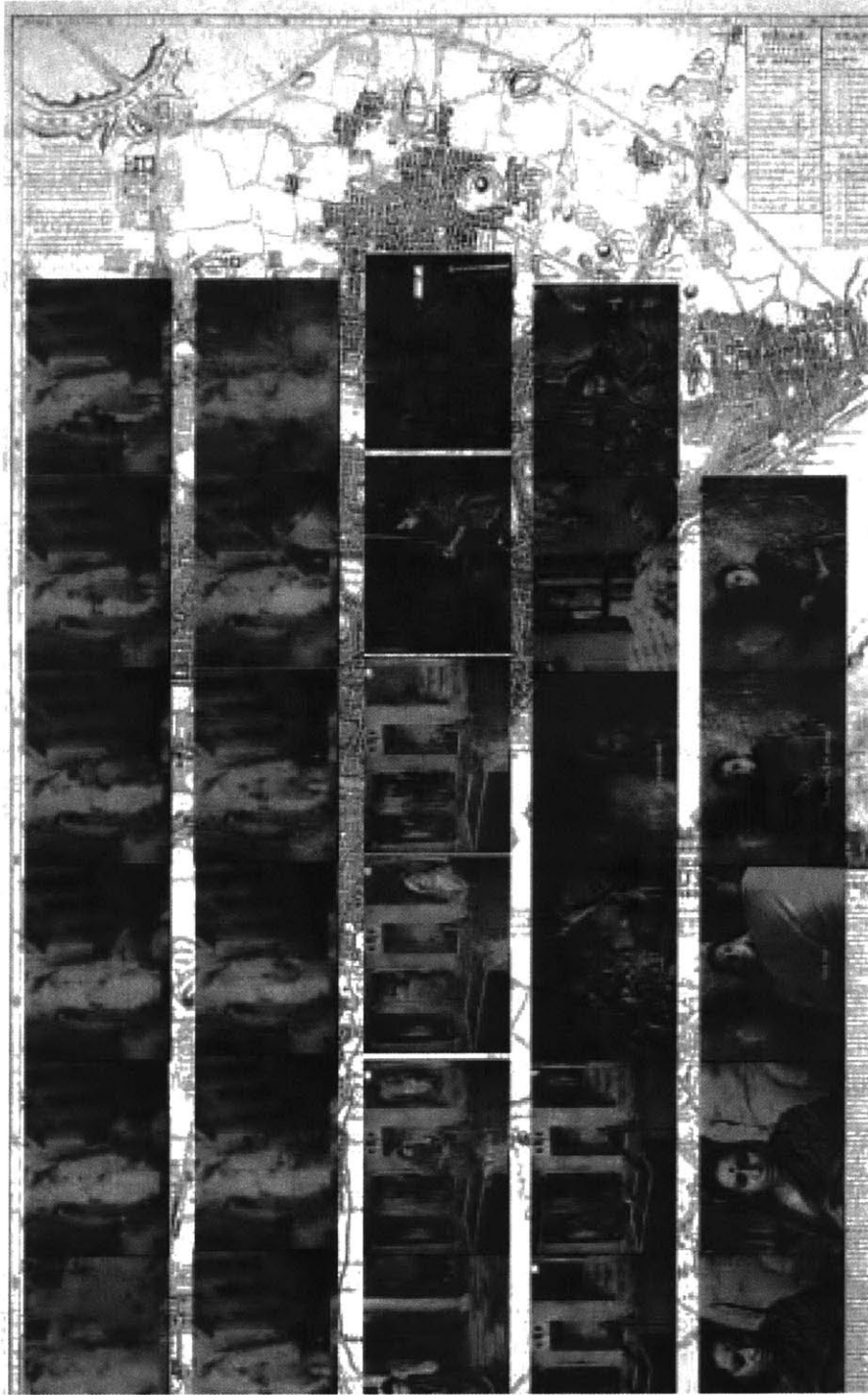
Chapter Three

Cultural Positions

Sacred Performances

In his movie Satyajit Ray establishes a hierarchy of priesthood. For example, consider the following two encounters that introduce us in turn to the lowest and the highest in the hierarchy of Banaras priesthood. The first introduction of different priests is in Harihar's encounter with the *ghatia* in *Chausathi ghat*, where Harihar bathes. The *ghatia* is the lowest ranked Brahmin in Banaras, who serves the needs of pilgrims and bathers in the *ghats*. By presenting the form of the relationship between the priests — the *ghatia* who serves Harihar— Ray starts to mark different categories and hierarchies of priesthood in Banaras. Ray presents us with a completely different layer of priests in the scenes immediately after Harihar's death where Ray shows Apu with the funerary priests of Banaras.

Harihar is shown as a Bengali Brahmin who reads sacred scriptures to widows in Banaras and falls somewhere between these two extremes. He is imaged mainly as a contrast to priests of the Vishwanath Temple, the primary Hindu temple in the city. I will show that in his representation of these two different forms of priesthood (Harihar, and the priests at the temple) Ray seems to be engaging in a subtle critique of aspects of sacred practices in Banaras (and perhaps endorsing one over the other). His critique is revealed in the manner he highlights the formal practices of the temple priests, even as he valorizes Harihar's occupation.

Reading scriptures

Harihar's occupation of reading scriptures has been an important part of life in Banaras for many centuries. Philip Lutendorf ascribes this form of oral exegesis to have special relevance to the city because of the 'book' or the Hindu epic *Rámcharitmánas* – commonly known as *Mánas* or *Rámáyan* was written by Gosvami Tulsidas in Banaras in the late 1570's. This book is generally acknowledged as the most popular text of north Indian Hinduism. In addition, the public performance of this text, through *kathá* (oral exegesis) and *lilá* (dramatic enactment), was first initiated in Banaras.[1]

Harihar Reading Scriptures

Manas as a text was written for common people and hence its simplicity had egalitarian appeal. Moreover, it had relevance much beyond its folk popularity, as it re-engaged mainstream, socially conservative Hindus to form a kind of nationalism.[2] In the late nineteenth centuries the religious and political elite of Banaras actively cultivated *Mánas* patronage and performance. This text invoked an idealized vision of a powerful and harmonious Hindu state and its patronage allowed the maintenance of the status quo in distinction from the colonial rule.

There are two characteristics of performances of *Mánas* in Banaras at the times that are of interest to us. First, despite this patronage of the elite, who tended to nurture relatively extreme conservative religious sentiments, *Katha* created an occupational structure that was seen as secular and inclusive. For example, Lutendorf finds that even at present there exist *vyases* (priests who read the scriptures for a living) who neither solicit nor desire lavish fees and who narrate the epic in the humblest of settings.[3] Second, as *katha* become more popular, the audiences' demands off their expounders also increased. Increasingly, the individuality of the speakers at their craft became an important differentiator between *katha* narrators.

The representation of Harihar's occupation emphasizes these aspects of the profession. The opening scene frames Harihar sitting on the *ghats* with the sacred text opened out in front of him. He is surrounded by widowed women and in between Harihar and the women lies a plate with a few coins in it. This frame images a dense concentrated environment with Harihar in the center created in the process of narrating the sacred text. As the camera moves away from this cluster, it reveals the enclosed space along the steps of *Munshi ghat* formed by Harihar and the women around him. The space of the *ghats* framed encompasses activities of a group of men in the background. This *mis-en-scene* sets up late-afternoon, everyday life in the *ghats* of Banaras. Harihar though steeped in a religious space, is shown as an extension of everyday secular activities.

Second group of Widows

Later in the movie, in the course of Apu's exploration of the *ghats*, Ray shows another enclosure of widowed women along the steps of the *ghats* near the river. In this frame, an umbrella marks the center around which the women are positioned. The camera then reveals a priest sitting under the umbrella narrating scriptures in his own idiosyncratic way. What is interesting here is the contrast Ray draws between the individual performances of Harihar and the other priest. While Harihar sits within his group of listeners, the other priest seeks to elevate his rank above his listeners by sitting on a platform, under the shade of the umbrella. In the film, Ray asserts an aspect of modernity in the occupational space of *katha*, by stressing the role of individuality of the speakers and their craft, as important parameters of success.

The manner in which the scripture reading session ends is important. Harihar's group is framed from a higher level that allows the imaging of other everyday activities on the *ghats* in the background. Boats on the river and people clustered around umbrellas in the other *ghats* re-affirm Harihar's practice to be an extension of, a part of, everyday life on the *ghats*. When Harihar completes the reading, he and the widows bow to each other and to the scriptures. After this, in turn, the widows get up and place money on the plate in front of Harihar.

Although Ray images this activity within the context of the overall happenings on the *ghats,* in the next shot he focuses purely on the plate. The plate with hands placing coins on it becomes the center of the frame. The priority given to the plate indicates his positive engagement with this particular traditional structure as a valid form of earning a livelihood and suggests possible modern trends within this tradition. In summary, by focusing on the individuality of the speakers (the priest complimenting Harihar's voice) and the depiction of the mutual respect between the narrator and listener Ray carefully re-affirms certain historically developed characteristics of *katha*.

As we will see in the next section, Ray contrasts *katha* performances with the rituals in the Vishvanatha Temple, rituals that articulate the absolute sacred authority and the stronghold of orthodox brahmanical tradition.

Harihar Reading

The Temple: enclosure and performance

The Vishvanatha Temple is the most important sacred point in Banaras, set in the middle of the tightly woven city. According to Diana Eck, this temple houses one of the most important icons of *Shiva*. Built under the patronage of Queen Ahalyabai Holkar of Indore in the late eighteenth century, this temple has witnessed a violent past of continuous destruction and desecration.[4] Yet it has constantly been re-constructed to assert the locus of sacred Hindu power and more importantly, an absoluteness that even today excludes non-Hindus from the aura of its sacredness. The representation of the Vishvanatha Temple in *Aparajito* alludes and critiques this notion of sacred power and centrality.

The first image of the temple in the movie is part of the well-articulated roof structure, *the shikhara*, which almost fills the frame. Starting from the bottom of the *shikhara*, the camera pans the roof of the temple, documenting a tapering form that finally ends with a religious flag strapped to the tip of the roof, set against a clear gray sky. This is the first temple structure Ray carefully documents. Ray introduces the temple by allowing the roof to first fill the screen, excluding all peripheral activities, and then panning the camera to clearly show the roof's vertical relationship to the sky. This image asserts the temples position as a sacred center.

The next image is that of Vishvanatha *gali,* one of the main approaches to the temple. The *gali* is a narrow, winding shopping lane that focuses on and around the dynamics of pilgrimage/religious activities. The street view frames Apu and Sarbojaya approaching the temple and reveals the highly articulated plinth of the temple structure and its main gateway from the street. Although the street is filled primarily with women, we see some priests and a vendor's basket heaped with garlands of marigold and jasmine in the lower left corner of the screen. It is also important to note the association of religious activity with women. Similar to the manner in which Ray presented the *ghats* with widows set around the priests, this street is imaged with a number of women on the street. Here we also see for the first time Sarbojaya outside her house.

Vishvanatha Temple

The next image is that the main entrance. Here the focus is on the detail of the entrance doorway that fills the frame up with its sacred aura, before streams of people entering the main threshold of the temple is shot. In the image, the articulated gateway of the temple is a permanent reference that alludes to the definition of sacred boundaries of the temple as different people, including Apu and Sarbojaya, move into the temple's sacred sanctuary.

The shot now shows the sacred enclosure of the temple where the main icon, set in a square solid-silver recessed altar, is imaged from behind. The camera looks down into the sacred enclosure and captures the ritual ceremony called *Arati*. Linda Hess provides us with a definition of this ceremony. She says, "*Arati is a ceremony done regularly in temples or homes for images of the Gods, or in honor of holy places or persons; lights are waved and offerings are made, often to the accompaniment of songs, bells and other instruments. ...it is the creation of locus, at specific points or geographical location...popularly it is believed to be a moment when, "the Lord himself is present. Whenever and from what ever angle you look, the lord himself is present.*"[5]

This invocation and the creation of the sacred locus lies purely in the hands of the Brahmin priests. Their space is set in a sacred sanctum, distinct from the space of common people. The camera then shifts from looking down from behind the idol into the space of common people where Sarbojaya and Apu stand. The sacredness in *their* space is through the sound of the performance and the smoke emanating from the incense. Ray then moves back into the shot to image the main priest who personifies the image of an arrogant Brahmin's self-assumed position in the sacred hierarchy. This splitting of the experience of sacredness into two images (one of the priests and the other of common people) is important in the manner that it indicates the orthodox Brahmin's position of authority and power that excludes common people. Indeed, until as late as 1956 (*Aparajito* was made in 1957), this temple was not open for the people of lower castes.

Entrance to the temple

The split in the space of the priests and the people situates us into another critique of the sacred power through the image of Sarbojaya. Ray here re-addresses the sacred equation as he engages in aspects of the Indian nationalist discourse that valorized the sacred feminine power, *Shakti*, as an image of nationhood/ motherland. The worship of the latent destructive and powerful feminine power in Bengali tradition was politicized to imagine the Hindu nation.[6] In the movie, Sarbojaya framed with her son, her face lit by the sacred lights and the suggested presence of the spiritual is imaged to represent one of the incarnations of mother goddess: the benign *Durga*. Tanika Sarkar frames the use of this goddess in nationalist literature in the nineteenth century. The image of *Durga* is grafted on to the image of bounty and nurture. She is an architypical Mother, powerful within (her image always shows her having just killed a demon) but overlaid with a final impression of domesticity and femininity. According to Sarkar, the Bengali nationalist appropriated this image and transformed the traces of militancy and sexuality into something more innocent, into an ideal mother figure of the presiding deity of the Bengali kitchen and sick bed.[7]

Part of Sarbojaya's character, as a Bengali mother and wife, was impregnated with the divinity of *Durga*. At several moments of introspection and concern through the film, and also here in the temple, Ray focuses on Sarbojaya to image certain essential traits of womanhood that the patriarchal nationalist discourse had laid out. This too was an engagement of tradition, the conjunction of a woman's everyday life with mythical images of divine femininity. Yet it was a role attributed to women to create a foundation for men. Sarbojaya's life entailed cooking, feeding and caring for her son and sick husband. This role allowed imaging the sacredness and purity of womanhood, in a manner that in her sacredness and purity would allow the imaging of the Indian nation.

In summary, Ray moves beyond the oppositions of tradition and modernity in the manner in which he images sacred practices by documenting and revealing different facets of the sacred in everyday activities in Banaras. The movie sets up a dialogue between various forms of lived traditions, engaging with it Indian nationalist definitions of womanhood and the sacredness associated with it. He thus constantly de-centers ideas sacredness in image/ iconography to reveal instead the individual and the characteristics of sacred in everyday practices.

Arati

Addressing Death:

In the representation of Harihar's inevitable death, there is a true singularity of Harihar's portrayal as he lives (consciously or unconsciously) with death in life towards death. From being a personality subjugated in tradition, Harihar is re-imaged and individualized in his moment of death. Ray creates a subtle paradox, by engraining a modern perception and representation of death in a traditional lifestyle. Modernity in the experience of death as Michel Foucault notes is a singular, individualized experience. According to him, the manner in which the clinic illuminated the interior of the body allowed individuals to understand and hence personalize the experience of their diseased body. [8] Harihar's illness further individualizes him in a perverse manner as it indicates another aspect of modernity, that of sickness and death no longer being caused by an epidemic. Indeed, in the past Banaras had a long history of epidemics, both seasonal diseases such as small pox and cholera, and more complex and deadly outbreaks such as the plague in1899-1901, that caused two thousand plague deaths in the city itself. [9]

Harihar's movement through the *ghats* has always encompassed him in a larger space. He is portrayed as an artifact of tradition, and his daily activities in the *ghats* often show him at the edge of the river and display his respect and belief in the purity of water. His image alludes to rituals that have coherent meanings in everyday practices in Banaras. Further, his movement is always formed *within* the space of the *ghats,* unlike in the case of Apu's movements, where the camera images the *ghats* to articulate the boy's movement.

This technique of representation, of making Harihar engrained in a larger, traditional spatial structure changes when Ray represents Harihar's in the *ghats* as he unconsciously faces death. The experience and the fatality of Harihar illness becomes individualized when Harihar is walking back up on the *ghats*. Ray shifts from his normal camera angle that views Harihar's walk through the array of massive steps that fill the frame and go beyond it, to view Harihar from the top of the *ghats*.

Harihar's Death

This important shift now privileges Harihar over tradition as death becomes his own experience. The emphasis is now on the steepness of the steps and its inner reflection of Harihar's biological/ mental struggle. The power of the steps is subsumed within this narration as Ray frames an enclosed, dominant image of Harihar (the first time he does this) against the turbulent river. The *ghat becomes* a space that contextualizes and makes evident Harihar's biological struggle.

No longer set within the rituals of tradition, Harihar, collapses infront of his threshold that forms the transition between the *ghats* and the city. As Harihar struggles to move into the space of transition, Ray images women in the threshold performing their ritual activities. Harihar however collapses on the boundary, on a new, individualized threshold realized by his diseased body.

Set against the river, Harihar's threshold gains presence along the edge that marks the gateway from the *ghats* into streets. In that shot, the gateway is cut into two distinct halves by the sharp shadow of an over-hanging structure. The split in the passage exposes one side to the sun and frames the turbulent river, while a shadow in its darkness captures the rest of the space, allowing with it the experience of the infinite. Is this darkness also a reflection of the space of death, an unknowable imagined space that is nevertheless a real entity and a psychological presence (the river) in Harihar's being?

Harihars collapse thus creates a threshold and an experience that defines the passage between life and death. It is here once again that Ray brings in aspects of tradition as he simultaneously pushes Harihar away from its clutches. The community gets activated again, as the street becomes a space of collective action and effort on part of different people to take Harihar back home. This same street that once imaged Harihars passage within an rooted imaginary community is actively realized with Harihar becoming an immobile, unconscious participant on whose behalf this performance takes place.

Harihar's Death

Modernity is injected once again as a doctor checks on Harihar. The image, inside the bedroom, situates the doctor, wearing a shawl, on one edge of the frame sitting on Harihars bed and Sarbojaya on the other side, behind the veil of her sari. Filling the space of the room are people from the community and fellow residents of the house. As Ray shows the community and their support in a moment of crisis, the shot focuses on the stethoscope and its movement on Harihars *invisible* body, literally and as a concept used by Foucault. For the frame only images Harihar's face, his own silent experience of the invisible disease *sensed* by the *Indian* doctor.

Here the movie represents a new form of medical gaze that through the stethoscope opens the interior of the body to medical perception. The medical gaze, embraces more than is said by the word 'gaze' alone. It contains within a single structure different sensorial fields. It is, as Foucault notes, a gaze that touches, hears and, moreover, not by essence or necessity, sees.[10]Here, the change involved the re-embodiment of the medical gaze, a reorganization of the medical eye, ear and touch to the art of listening to bodies, an art that is tactful, not straining to hear esoteric languages, an art that is direct and to the point. It is science that is embodied in the form of a doctor wearing a shawl and lungi. Ray further overlaps, the doctor's representation, allegorizing colonial medicinal reforms, with the traditional medicinal practices of Harihar.

Indeed, Harihar had first tried to heal himself through his knowledge as a *vedya*. Here the concept of medicine, according to A. l. Basham, is that of preserving health rather than curing disease through the deep understanding of the pharmacopoeia provided by the abundant flora and fauna of India[11]. Further, Banaras itself enjoys particular preeminence in the traditions of Aryuveda.[12] The overlap of the two is shown, through Harihar's faith in the herbs and his openness to see a doctor if his health deteriorated. Neither of the occupations is prioritized. They are set in the context of Banaras that finally subsumes Harihar.

Harihar's Death

The face of death is once again seen as a family's private moment of loss. Further, the focus here is on the experience of Harihar himself as he takes his last breath after sipping the water from the river. As Harihar's last breath becomes the focus of the shot, it leads the viewer to an image that sets the silhouette of a *ghat* against the vastness of nature. The fluttering pigeons conained in this landscape become the flight of the soul into the unknown.

Tradition is thus constantly reconfigured in Harihar's individualistic journey to death. Within this narration is the subtext of Banaras as a holy city to die in and the need to drink the water from the river is symbolic. It implies salvation and the attachment and worship of the river by Harihar. After Harihars death Apu is shown with funerary priests fulfilling what Parry defines as the traditional practices of death. He says, " *the father repays his debt to the ancestors by siring a son; the son repays his debt to his father by giving him birth on a new and higher plane, and this newly created ancestor in turn confers fertility and material prosperity on his descendants...Not only is the son responsible for the rebirth of his father, but there is also perhaps a sense in which he is himself reborn as his father- or at least as the bearer of his father's worldly status and responsibilities.*"[13] The first act in the making of this phenomenon is the cremation of the body, the ritual fire that extinguishes the life of the victim and releases the 'vital breath' of the deceased. Through this sacrifice a new life is born as the child is blessed by the deceased father. Was this death then also Apu's rite of passage?
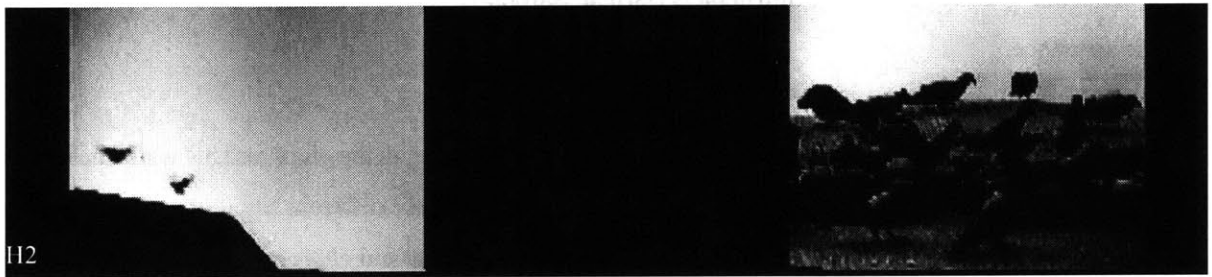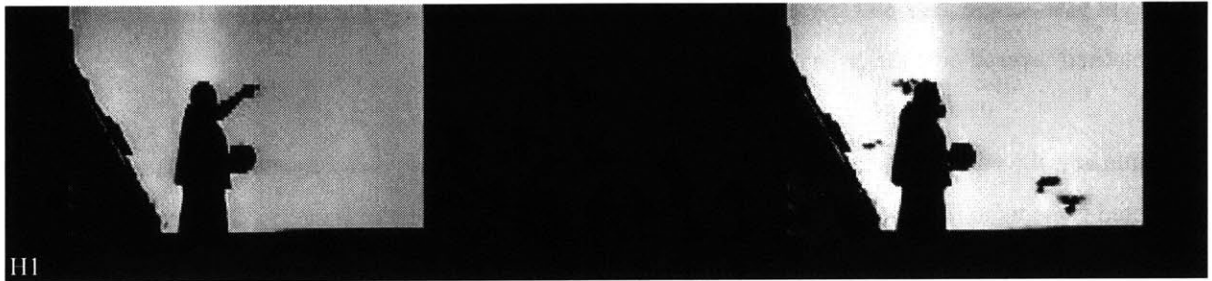

Harihar's Death

Conclusion

Implicit in my method of exploring Banaras through *Aparajito* was that the reading of the city and aspects of its culture were structured by Rays parameters. Within the limits of this framework, I explored multiple facets of urban life and cultural discourses that formed the film and lurked behind its surface. In this doubling of the distance, the city read through the film thus created a periphery of different discourses. This allowed my readings to graft an ensemble of knowledge and histories that emerged from the way Ray portrayed different practices, events and spaces in Banaras. Furthermore, my approach of making film stills lent itself to a clothed layered critique on Ray.

In summary, the parameters that formed the film, the cultural practices it represented and its aesthetics that depicted Banaras to ideological ends allowed for a successful interplay of Banaras, the film and 'the film'. Continuing the process of contextualising Banaras to *Aparajito*, I inhabited the film to reposition my analysis in it. The re-rendering the film depicts Harihar, Sarbojaya and Apu within a re-framed and re-edited movie sequence.

The movie divides itself into three sequels. First, is Harihar's morning in the *ghats* and his walk back home. Second is the depiction of Sarbojaya's activities in the courtyard and the different situations she faces in that space. Third is Apu's positioning through his exploration of the streets and *ghats* of Banaras. The aim of my movie is to create a spatial readings that reveals the psychologizing and positioning of various characters to each other as well as to the space of Banaras.

I use three methods to express these readings. First is the splitting of the frame to reveal hidden tensions or forms of relationships embodied in a given space. The black divide becomes the psychological divide, connoting different meanings in context to the event and the characters involved. Second is the simultaneous doubling or tripling of frames that contextualize a given character through the depiction of different spaces. Last is the exploration and revelation of different facets of a space that situates a given character. As details are brought out new spatial relations are seen that position the persons unconscious. Here, frames that simultaneously reveal different views of a given space are merged to re-articulate the space originally represented. This film thus extends Rays effort in re-situating Banaras into the psychology of the individual.
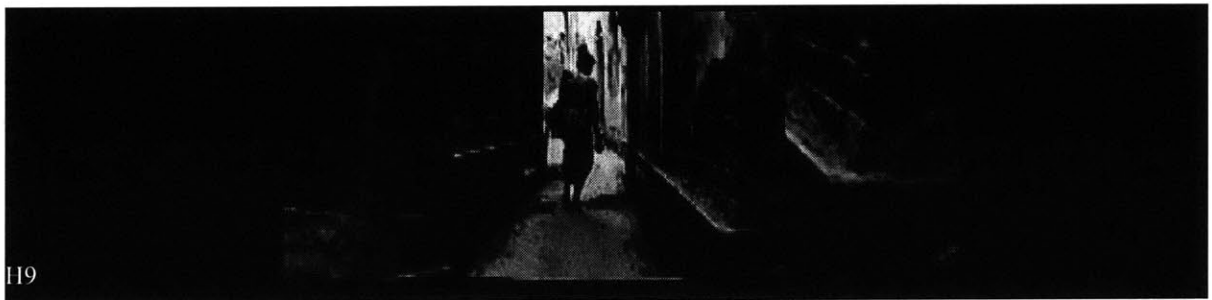
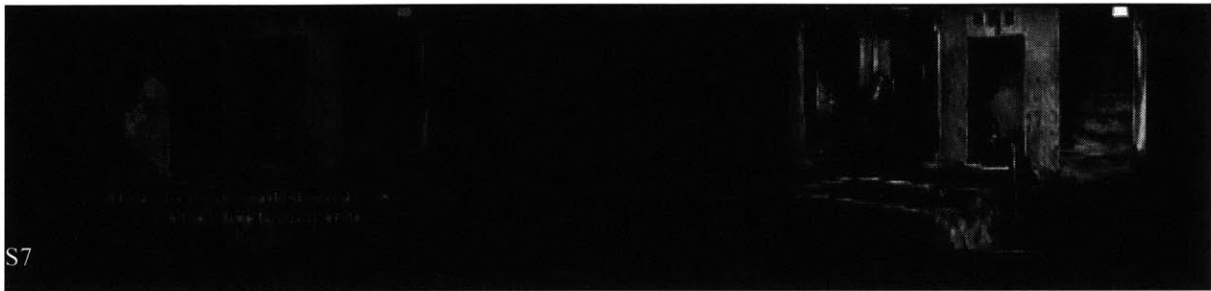# Re-rendered stills

H1

H2

H3

Re-rendered stills

H4

H5

H6

Re-rendered stills

H7

H8

H9

Re-rendered stills

S1

S2

S3

Aren't you ... in holy Ganges?

Re-rendered stills

S4

S5

idy has just arrived.

S6

Re-rendered stills

S7

A1

A2

Re-rendered stills
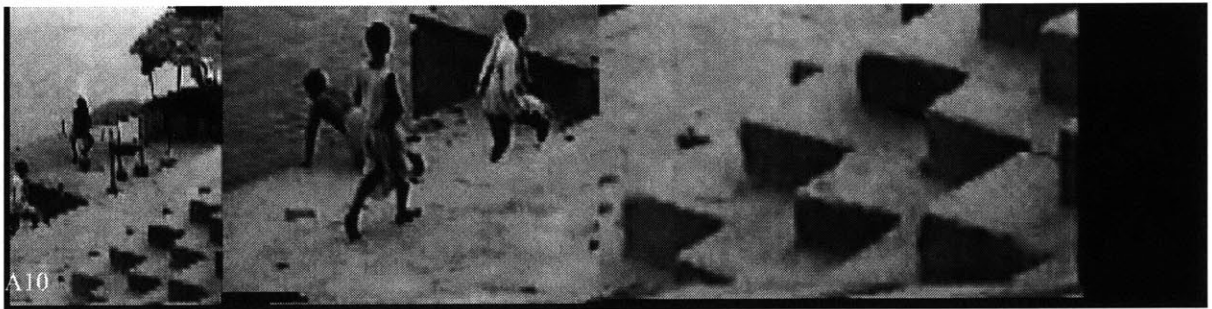

A3

A4

A5

Re-rendered stills

A6

A7

A8

Re-rendered stills

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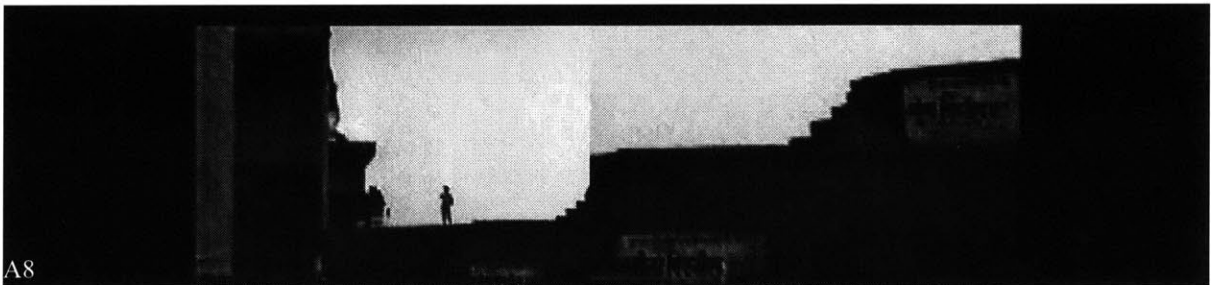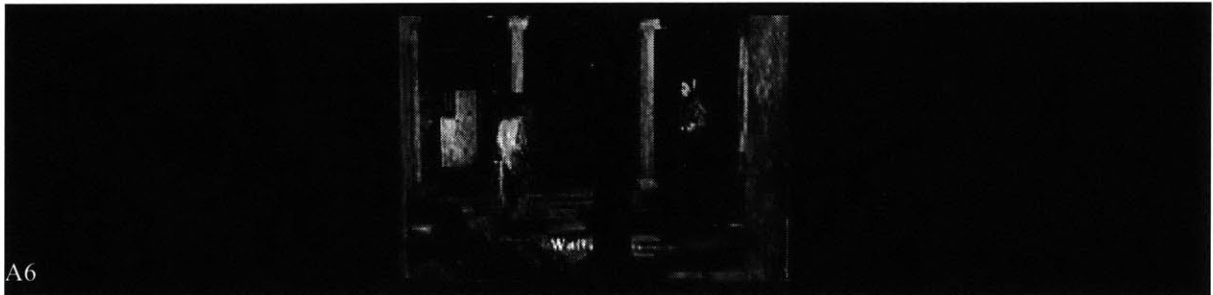
Introduction

[1] The entire sequel visualizes the Bengali novels by Bibhutibhushan Bandopadhyay (1929/1931) that narrates the history of pre-war Bengal through the story of a boy who's home is continuously displaced through tragic deaths in his family (first his sister, then father and finally his mother). He moves from his village to the city of Banaras, eventually coming to Calcutta and finally on a ship bound to South America.

[2] For further details see: Frietag 1989, pp. 1-22 and Parry 1994, 38-44

[3] The concept of Brahman can be defined as an abstract, unbroken continuum, which embraces and brings together the cosmos, nature and man into a synchronically interdependent, non-causal relationship. In Hindu mythology, Brahman is popularly defined as Omniscient, Omnipresent, Omnipotent, Everlasting, Timless, Changeless, Invisible and Incomprehensible. See: Bose, K.S. (1991) 'A Theory of Religious Thoughts: The Principles underlying forms of knowledge, behavior and social relationship in traditional societies' Sterling Publishers, New Delhi

[4] Havell 1905, p.2

[5] Ibid. p.84

[6] Ibid. p.90-93

[7] For example, new oriental writings such as that of Diana Eck (1983), Banaras becomes the 'city of lights', a *Brahminical* paradise that in its urban structure engages mythologies, sacred routes and centers that are beyond time and history. The sacred overrides and subsumes local practices, as she creates a similar if only a more precise and scholarly account than that of Havell's.

[8] Thakurta 1992, p.185

[9] Chatterjee 1997, pp.5-6

[10] Quoted in Rajadhyaksha 1993 p.10

[11] Bazin 1937, p.37

[12] Kapur 2000, pp. 224 - 228

Chapter One

[1] For further details, see: Eck 1982, pp. 220-247

[2] Havell 1905, p.90

[3] The *Linga* symbolizes the creative power embodied in Shiva, and as an icon it is literally formed to symbolize the erect phallus of this God. The icon is completed with a circular base, or the 'seat' on which the shaft is situated. This seat is the symbol of divine energy personified in Shiva's female half and is often called *Shakti*. The womb seat forms a wedge-shaped channel opening that extends the female symbolism and also serves in practical terms as a drain for the water offerings which are poured upon the *linga* by various devotees.

[4] Sited in Eck 1982, pp.108-109

[5] See: Ibid. pp. 211-220

[6] For further insights into the way local Banarasis used the river, See: Kumar 1988, pp. 83-110

[7] The most common ritual along the Ganges is to take the water of the river in ones hand and pour it back into the river as an offering to ancestors and the Gods. Eck 1983, p.212

[8] *Ghatias* are priests that render various services to bathers along the river edge. They normally squat on wooden platforms, under huge palm leaf umbrellas in the *ghats*.

[9] The King of Udaipur from Rajasthan (a state in Western part of India) renovated this *ghat* in apparently 1670.

[10] Bihar is a state in the eastern section of India, adjacent and north of Bengal.

Chapter Two

[1] Eck 1982, pp.184-185
[2] Coccari 1989, pp.130-146
[3] Chatterjee 1997, pp. 119-121
[4] See: Vatsyayan 1983, pp. 7-11
[5] Colomina 1992, p.83
[6] See: Engels 1996, pp. 16-23
[7] Atler 1993, pp. 134-143
[8] See: Lannoy 1971, p.283
[9] Apparently, during the mogul rule, many of the *mohallas* developed with the construction of out houses, dependents quarters and enclosed spaces around a rich persons mansion, recognized as the chief patron the neighborhood. These patrons were typically governors in different periods of the mogul history. In time, with the decline of the empire, the pattern shifted to cluster crafts or caste groups in specific spaces. The last half of the eighteenth century, Banaras attracted social groups from all over the country for a safe haven that at the same time allowed the prospects of prosperity. Many *mohallas* in Banaras are based on waves of settlements that formed Banaras. It allows the city to be mapped in terms of province or language of origin as community groupings name their localities to reflect the culture they come from. For example, Bengali Tola is essentially the neighborhood of the Bengali community as is *Nepali Khapra,* the locus of the Nepalese community. See: Kumar 1989, pp. 29-37
[10] Kumar 1988, pp.77-78
[11] Partha Chatterjee, reports extensive use of this term:
• *Jati* as origin, such as *musalman* by birth, *vaisnav* by birth, a beggar by birth (*jatite musalman, jatbhikari*)
• classes of living species, such as human jati, animal jati, bird jati, etc.
• *varna* following from classifications according to *guna* and *karma* such as Brahman, etc.
• *Vamsa, gotra, kula* (lineage, clan) such as Arya *jati*, Semitic *jati*
• Huma collectivities bound by loyalty to the state or organised around the natural and cultural characteristics of a country or province, such as English, French, Bengali, Punjabi, Japenese, Gujrati etc. See: Chatterjee 1997, p.221
[12] The craftsmen responsible for such decorations were known as *rang-saj*, while in special cases a *nakas* (designer) was involved for the initial layout of scenes and motifs. A few families of *Kumhars* (potters) who received training under under such master craftsmen may be credited with giving this art form a wide currency and infusing into it a definite folk vigor. The Hindu monarchs such as *Maharaja Udit Narain Singh* (1795-1835) and *Maharaja Isvari Narain Singh* (1835 –1889) were fervent advocaters of this art. See: Chakraverty 1989, p.120-121

Chapter Three

[1] Lutendorf 1989, pp. 34-60
[2] This was called the Santan Dharm movement: the self-identification of mainstream, socially conservative Hindus as adherents of an "eternal religion" It was a reaction to Hindu reforms and Christianity. The *manas* became their source of identity as it stood in the minds of many devotees at one at the same time for fervent devotional egalitarianism, the maintenance of social status quo, and even a kind of nationalism in that it countered the British colonial ethos with an idealized vision of a powerful and harmonious Hindu state. **Ibid.** pp. 47-48
[3] **Ibid.** pp.47-50
[4] Eck 1982, p.120-121
[5] Hess 1993, p. 95
[6] See: Engels 1996, pp. 23-35
[7] Sarkar 2001, p. 256-7
[8] Foucault 1994, p.170-171
[9] Arnold 1989, See: pp.248-253
[10] Foucault 1994, p.164
[11] Basham 1976, p. 23
[12] Arnold 1989, p.258
[13] Parry 1994, pp.151-152

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