

# **MediaWatch Volume 4 (1): Special Issue 100 Years of Indian Cinema**

## **The Changing World of Satyajit Ray: Reflections on Anthropology and History**

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### **Abstract**

*The visionary Satyajit Ray (1921-1992) is India's most famous director. His visual style fused the aesthetics of European realism with evocative symbolic realism, which was based on classic Indian iconography, the aesthetic and narrative principles of rasa, the energies of shakti and shakta, the principles of dharma, and the practice of darsha dena/ darsha lena, all of which he incorporated in a self-reflective way as the means of observing and recording the human condition in a rapidly changing world. This unique amalgam of self-expression expanded over four decades that cover three periods of Bengali history, offering a fictional ethnography of a nation in transition from agricultural, feudal societies to a capitalist economy. His films show the emotional impact of the social, economic, and political changes, on the personal lives of his characters. They expand from the Indian declaration of Independence (1947) and the period of industrialization and secularization of the 1950s and 1960s, to the rise of nationalism and Marxism in the 1970s, followed by the rapid transformation of India in the 1980s. Ray's films reflect upon the changes in the conscious collective of the society and the time they were produced, while offering a historical record of this transformation of his imagined India, the 'India' that I got to know while watching his films; an 'India' that I can relate to. The paper highlights an affinity between Ray's method of film-making with ethnography and amateur anthropology. For this, it returns to the notion of the charismatic auteur as a narrator of his time, working within the liminal space in-between fiction and reality, subjectivity and objectivity, culture and history respectively, in order to reflect upon the complementary relationship between the charismatic auteur and the role of the amateur anthropologist in an ever-changing world.*

As part of the centennial celebration for the 100 years of Indian cinema, this paper returns to the life and work of the visionary Satyajit Ray (1921-1992). It highlights Ray's realist cinema and world vision, in order to reflect upon the complementary relationship between the charismatic *auteur* and the role of the amateur anthropologist in an ever-changing world.

This essay focuses on the authorship of the visionary Satyajit Ray (1921-1992) reflecting upon the complementary relationship between the charismatic *auteur* and the role of the amateur anthropology in an ever-changing world. Ray's unique amalgam of film-making fused the aesthetics of European realism with evocative symbolic realism, which he based on classic Indian iconography, the aesthetic and narrative principles of *rasa*, the energies of

*shakti* and *shakta*, the principles of *dharma*, and the practice of *darsha dena/ darsha lena*, all of which he incorporated in a self-reflective way as the means of observing and recording the human condition in a rapidly changing world. Ray's humanism offers a direct critique of a 'western' concept of 'modernity', associated exclusively with the European Enlightenment. By 'a 'western' concept of 'modernity', I will be generally referring to the historical process of the transition from agricultural and feudal economies which were based on collective types of 'mechanical solidarity', to nation states which were based on types of capitalist economies on the basis of 'organic solidarity' (Durkheim [1893]). The transition from agricultural to industrialized societies was parallel to the processes of ocular-centrism (Levin 1993: 1-29), 'disenchantment' (Weber [1904, 1920]), nationalization, industrialization and urbanization, and 're-enchantment' towards a new kind of 'dream world of mass culture' (Walter Benjamin in Buck-Morss 1991: 253-4, and Comaroffs 1993). Arendt (1958) defined this transition as a way of thinking, on the basis of three events: the discovery of America (the collective vision to satisfy the *wanderlust*); the Reformation as the means of morally understanding and categorizing the 'self'; and 'the invention of the telescope and development of a new science that considers [...] the universe' (1998: 248) as the means of morally understanding and categorizing the 'world'.

Amartya Sen (1996/1998: 121-138) argued that Ray's sense of humanitarianism challenges such pre-conceived ideals of a European humanitarianism in the form of a 'progressive' modernity. He pointed out that Ray's films: '[...] share, to varying extends, a well-articulated "anti-modernism", rejecting, in particular, "Western" forms of modernization... [i.e.] "our modernism"'. Ray's film-making, set on the margins in-between his Bengali identity, European education, and Indian culture, opens the channels of communication between presumably 'opposite' cultures, questioning the Orientalist distinction between 'East' and 'West'. For Sen: '[...] the issue can be discussed only in *dialectical* terms. The characterization of an idea as "purely Western" or "purely Indian" can be very illusory. The origin of ideas is not the kind of thing which "purity" happens easily' (*Ibid*). The rigid opposition between 'East' and 'West' in terms of the European Enlightenment echoes anthropology's legacy as its by-product, with morally ethnocentric dichotomies such as 'primitive' and 'civilized', 'authentic' and 'hybrid', 'modernity' and 'tradition', 'history' and 'myth', and so on<sup>1</sup>. In this polarised context, modernity, with its humanistic ideals, professional practice, and political correctness, is misconceived as *exclusively* European (i.e. 'western'), i.e. defined in terms of "'civilization", "social progress", "economic development", "conversion", and the like' (Comaroffs 1993: xxx). Yet, as early as 1919, Weber's discussion of post-war European society questioned 'progress': '[...] because death is meaningless, civilized life as such in meaningless [...] "progressiveness"' (1968: 299). In Ray's films 'modernity' is not visualized as a static condition that separates 'Us' from 'Them' in terms of 'progress'; 'progress', scientific or otherwise, without a collective appropriation of humanist values, is simply *not* progress.

This essay pays a tribute to Ray's film-making by critically examining modernity as an impersonal, alienating, fast-moving, process of rapid change. It examines particular aspects of modernity in relation to Ray's films: ocular-centrism (*Pather Panchali* 1955), disenchantment (*Devi* 1960), private alienation (*Charulata* 1964) and social alienation (*Pratiwandi* 1970-1), through his symbolic use of objects of modernity: the train, the

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binoculars, the book, the mirror, the forbidden love *prem*, tourism, imported cigarettes and Mercedes cars, among other objects of science and desire. In this way, the essay will be reflecting on the historical predicament of anthropology as a colonial by-product of European modernity, focusing on Ray's caricature of the 'anthropologist' in *Agantuk* (1992): the lost, long-forgotten uncle returning to a 'home' that does not belong to him anymore.

### The Stranger

*Agantuk* (translated as 'The Stranger' or 'The Visitor') was Satyajit Ray's last feature, produced in 1991 and 1992, the year of the director's death. The film was based on Ray's short story entitled *Atithi* ('The Guest'). It completes his life and working cycle, stretching over four decades: from the declaration of Independence (1947) and the period of industrialization and secularization of India in the 1950s and 1960s, to the rise of nationalism and Marxism in the 1970s, followed by the rapid transformation of India in the 1980s. *Agantuk's* opening sequence depicts the arrival of the protagonist of the film, Manomohan Mitra (played by Utpal Dutt), a lost uncle, returning to Kolkata on a train after thirty-five years of absence. He is an experienced, clean-shaved gentleman, who confidently places his feet on the wagon seat. He is wearing polished shoes, but has no etiquette manners. At 'home' nobody remembers or recognizes him, and he is treated suspiciously even by his own family. Following the constant interrogation by his niece Anila (played by Mamata Shankar), and her suspicious husband Sudhindra (Deepankar Dey), the uncle explains his long absence by portraying his outcast condition as that of an 'anthropologist'. He disappeared for four decades because he wanted to satisfy his curiosity about the world: first, in terms of understanding what is thought to be 'primitive' and 'civilized'; and second, to satisfy his '*wanderlust*', the urge to travel, to learn, and to question. He is the caricature of the lost 'anthropologist', a modern Odysseus returning to his long-forgotten and unrecognizable Ithaca. This caricature is never confirmed or renounced, but throughout the film the Stranger remains an ambiguous, *liminoid* persona, in-between the unrecognizable 'home' and the 'world'. Only in the end of the film, he finally rests in the back garden, the only space that survived the rapid changes that took place during his absence. Just like a Buddha, the Stranger finally finds rest under the tree of knowledge and wisdom.

This anthropological calling in many ways also refers to the *auteur* himself. The four decades of the uncle's absence echo the four decades of the director's work. For those familiar with Ray's films, the opening sequence of *Agantuk* feels as if the boy-trickster Apu, from the director's world-famous debut *Pather Panchali* ('Song of the Little Road' 1955), grew up into an 'anthropologist'. Ray's unique authority is aesthetically expressed with the observant realist style of his camera, the Apu's Eye (as I will call it), which he first introduced in his debut *Pather Panchali* in 1955. The Apu's Eye refers to a particular way of positioning the camera from the point of view of a child (famously adopted in Steven Spielberg's *ET*). Cooper (2000) exclaimed that the use of the Apu's Eye illustrates the aesthetic value of the epiphany of wonderment (*camatkara*) according to the classical Hindu aesthetical form of *rasa* ('flavours/ moods/ modes of affect'). These moods refer to the emotional 'comprehension of the directly experienced "inward life" that all art conveys', as 'a guiding principle behind the creation' (2000: 16-17, 26-31)<sup>2</sup>. The curiosity of the child is illustrated in *Pather Panchali's* train sequence (see Table 1 with 'Train Sequence' in Appendix), in which

while the arrival of the train scares Apu's older sister Durga (Runki Banerjee), Apu's curious eyes are wide open in wonderment, embracing the marvels of this fast-moving machine, whose metallic sounds rip the peaceful countryside apart. His curiosity is accompanied by an innocent, emotional detachment, as illustrated in the end of the film by his playful realization of his sister death.

In *Agantuk*, the Apu's Eye point of view is given to Satyaki (Bikram Bhattacharaya), the Stranger's nephew, who remains indifferent to his parents' worries about his uncle's sudden appearance to a 'home' that is not his anymore. This old uncle and the young nephew share a paradoxical alienation from, as the means of engaging with, the world. This self-alienating condition is affine to the alienation of the ethnographer in the field. Similarly to the ethnographic eye, Apu's Eye has to remain distant and detached, amoral and creative at the same time, *distanciated*, in order to function as a higher (a)moral force that allows the viewer to enter this world from an insider's perspective. It is distant, ethnographic, neo-romantic, 'innocent eye' of a visionary fieldworker; the observant 'seer' (as in Grimshaw 2001: 45), filled with childlike curiosity, and playful indifference. Ray's detached, realist point of view allowed him to critically reflect upon the world in his respective historical time. His 'Strange', paradoxical condition, being part of the same world (i.e. 'Calcutta') from which he is alienated, echoes discussions of the artist as an ethnographer and vice versa (Clifford and Marcus 1986, Foster 1996, Gell 1999, and Grimshaw 2001, among others).

In *Pather Panchali*, Apu's detached perspective exposes the hypocrisy of village life, by juxtaposing dreamy scenes from the life of the two children in the forest, enchanted with the amazing music score of Ravi Shankar, against cruel dialogue in scenes portraying everyday life, gossip, corruption, cruelty, accusation, jealousy, social suffocation, isolation, and desperation. In this dialectical way, Ray highlighted issues of poverty, lack of education, and religious superstition. In front of this misery, human relationships, particularly between Durga and Indira, and Apu and his mother, feel like oasis in a world of suffering, from which, however, Apu's innocent perspective remains detached. In this suffocating world, the appearance of the train in Apu's life is also the means to escape from it. The Train, the most recognizable object of modernity associated with urbanization and rapid industrialization, is used throughout Ray's film-making as a carrier of internal and external changes, both on the personal level of his characters, as well as, in Bengali society. In *Pather Panchali's* train sequence (see Table 1 with 'Train Sequence' in Appendix) the appearance of the train anticipates Apu's move from the countryside to the big city, and his transformation from a curious child to a responsible father. Apu's upbringing is contextualized within the changing *mise-en scene* of the film, from village life of absolute poverty to the crowded apartments of the new Calcutta. In a parallel manner, Ray portrays the internal transformation of the boy to a man, along with the historical transition from an agricultural and religious state, supported by a feudal economy, to the new democratic India. As Ganguly pointed, the trilogy generally reflects positively on Nehru's modernization project, which began following the Indian Independence in 1947. Ray's 'emphasis on English, science, and geography is a vindication of the values of Bengali Renaissance, which are also the values of Nehru's modern India' (2000: 24). The latter was 'characterized by an ethos of citizenly solidarity with the poor, middle-class Indians were cast as the agents and overseers of industrialization and developmental schemes for rural communities, and also as the guardians of the normative morality that preserved the social fabric of the modernizing nation' (McGuire 2011: 120). This collective optimism is illustrated in the final scene of the

third film, *Apur Sansar*, in which the middle-aged, bearded Apu holds his son on his shoulder, as they both stare at the future in the bright sunlight.

This optimism was challenged in the second film of the trilogy, *Aparajito* (1956), in which the train becomes a symbol of dislocation, separation, and a vain hope for reunification. In this film, the train contains a new set of problems in family relationships that rose because of the rapid urbanization of India, with the new generation of educated Bengalis leaving behind their families and village poverty for a new life in the big city. Ray's disillusion with Nehru's modernizing project continues in *Nayak* (Hero 1966), in which the train becomes the static mechanical setting, juxtaposed to a rapidly passing landscape seen from the carriage's window, as the constructed image of the protagonist film star, is gradually exposed until his ultimate alienation is revealed. Similarly, in Ray's adaptations of Tagore's short stories (as in *Charulata* 1964 and in *Ghare-Baire* 1984), the sound of the train off-screen anticipates sudden and often cruel and unpredictable change, becoming a source of anxiety. Finally, in *Agantuk*, the forgotten uncle returns to Kolkata on a train, to an unrecognizable and alienated 'home'. In sum, in Ray's films, the train is a 'gift' of modernity to the world, in the sense of Marcel Mauss's 'gift': 'on the one hand, a gift, and on the other, a poison' (2002/1954: 81): an object of modernity which connects the home to the world, the village to the city, different individuals to each other, their memories, their intentions and expectations, while carrying the collective hopes and painful disillusionment of an entire nation.

Ray's unique artistic authority was the result of his cosmopolitan upbringing. His family was relatively wealthy, with a reputation in the arts and literature, going back to fifteen generations (Banerjee 1996: 6, 7-9). His grandfather Upendra Kishore Raychowdhury, and his father Sukumar Ray were illustrators of children's stories in their magazine *Sandesh*. From an early age, the young Ray came in contact with Indian mythology, as well as, various different forms of narration (epic stories, biographies, and comedy). He was well-educated, with studies in arts and music, as well as, a degree in Economics from the Presidency College in Calcutta, followed by further education and in British and American institutions. In his trips inside and outside India, he came in contact with various intellectuals, including the film director Jean Renoir, son of the famous Impressionist painter, and Jean Luc Goddard, who was a major influence on Ray's political films in the 1970s. His debut 'Apu trilogy' (*Pather Panchali* filmed in 1955, followed by *Aparajito* in 1956, and concluding with *Apur Sansar* in 1959) acknowledged the influence of European neorealist cinema of Jean Renoir and Vittorio de Sica, using amateur actors, long semi-improvised takes, a multi-vocal and multi-layered script shot on location, and using natural light when possible, while also introducing the cinematographer Subrata Mitra's bouncing light: the use of white sheets and mirrors to imitate natural light (Banerjee 1996: 14, Ganguly 2000: 3, among others). The director pointed out in an interview that the realistic depiction of the forest was exclusively imagined in nostalgic ways as a lost Bengali past [*Satyajit Ray*, Channel 4 UK 2/5/1991]. Despite its manufactured realism, *Pather Panchali* won the first prize for the 'Best Human Document' in Cannes in 1956, instigating Ray's 'humanist' reputation for being a 'Bengali Renaissance Man'.

The trilogy consolidated, very early in his career, the nature of Ray's humanism. Living in an emerging Marxist intellectual ambience in Bengal, Ray held on to his Tagorean beliefs and rejected the methodology of Marxism. The crux of this social

philosophy lies in the importance of the growth of the individual mind and the influence idealism exercises, through religion and art to prevent it from extreme self-seeking at the cost of the welfare of others. The goodness of the individual, in this view, is the basis of social growth (Dasgupta 2001: 52)

Ray's humanism shared the aesthetical values found in Rabindranath Tagore's music, paintings, prose and poetry, as acknowledged in his commissioned documentary produced in 1961 in honour of the poet's centennial (1861-1941). Tagore's influence on Ray's films can be felt both aesthetically, in the music and rhythm of his early films, as in *Devi* (Goddess 1960), and in narrative terms, in his adaptation of Tagore's short stories that focus on the emancipation of women in 19<sup>th</sup> century Bengal, in *Teen Kanya* (Three Daughters 1961), *Charulata* (Lonely Wife 1964), and *Ghare Baire* (Home and World 1984). Both Tagore and Ray wrote about an imagined melting pot, a fast-changing multicultural 'Calcutta', used as an everyday arena in which heterogeneous cultures communicate with, and/or contest against, each other. They were both travellers, motivated by the *wanderlust*: the internal urge to travel, to question, and to learn, as expressed in *Agantuk* by the caricature of the lost uncle. During his life, Tagore visited more than thirty countries, and came in contact with several intellectuals, including Ezra Pound, Thomas Mann, George Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells, and Roman Rolland, scientists such as Albert Einstein, the Persian mystic Hafez, and even with the fascist Mussolini (Dutta and Robinson 1995: 315, and 374-376). The experience of travelling for both Tagore and Ray thus, not only engaged them with other peoples, ideas, and habits, but also resulted in keeping a distance from their own Bengali culture, while still living in Calcutta. Their sense of alienation from 'home' enabled them to observe and record the impact of the social, economic, and political changes brought by the Train of modernity on the personal lives of their fictional characters, and to critically reflect upon the historical and sociological issues of their respective times.

### **A Study of Disenchantment: *Devi* (1960)**

Both Ray and Tagore were members of the Brahmo class, which was 'founded by Raja Rammohan Roy, an eminent intellectual of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, (who) rejected idolatry and caste; the Brahmos were interested in social reform and in changing of existing social systems' (Banerjee 1996:7). In this context, they were eager to express a distaste (and sometimes pity) for the caste system and the inherited inequalities of feudalism. Ray portrayed the disintegration of the *zamindar* system with *Jalsaghar* (Music Room 1958) and *Devi* (Goddess 1960). While *Jalsaghar* takes a rather pitiful view of the delusional *zamindar* Biswambhar Roy, whose music room is an imagined remnant of a nostalgic past, *Devi* is a much more forceful film in exposing the hypocrisy of the old elite through the character of Kalinkar Roy (Chhabi Biswas), a *zamindar* father-figure of the village, who dreams that his daughter-in-law Doyamoyee (Sharmila Tagore) to be the reincarnation of the goddess Durga. His superstition (*andhvishwas*/ 'blind belief') is materialized by imprisoning her in a temple and making her a public spectacle. *Devi* is based on Mukherjee's story, written in the 1890s. The original story takes place in 1790s, but the film is set in 1870 in Chandipur, rural Bengal, in order to highlight the issues regarding the social reforms of the time the novel was written: 'Uma's pride in his English education, which he calls "new learning" as opposed to his father's "old learning," based on studies of Tantra and Shakti' (Basu 2004).

Doya is the young wife of the open-minded Uma (Soumitra Chatterjee). The film begins with Uma's departure to Calcutta to study, leaving Doya alone in the house with her father-in-law, and her brother-in-law (Purnendu Mukherjee), his wife (Karuna Banerjee) and their young boy Koka. Following Kalikinkar's vision of Doya as *Ma*, the possessive *zamindar* lord displaces her in the village's temple as *his* holy Mother, who will perform miracles and protect *his* village from destitute, illness, and death. However, the death of an ill child on her lap exposes Doya as a symbol of womanhood rather than a 'Goddess'. In the end of the film, Doya tries to escape from the masculine world that imprisoned her, disappearing in a field of wheat that leads to a lake. At first, her act looks as irrational, as she ignores her husband's efforts to move together to the big city; neither has she adopted her uncle's abusive point of view at any point of the film. She might submit to his vision, as she is conventionally meant to, but she never fully identifies with it. Doya's final disappearance forms the central paradox of the film: it is an act of denial, as well as, an act of acceptance, that echoes several myths regarding the Mother Goddess, for instance in the form of Uma: 'Shiva's gentle wife and the daughter of Menaka and Himalaya, who, standing in for the missed daughters of youth, evokes real longing' (McDermott 2011: 76), and/or in the form of the ascending Parvati, who 'went to the mountain and laid aside her ornaments and put on garments made of the bark of trees' (O'Flaherty 1975: 256).

Furthermore, Doya's final exit is identical with the closing ceremonies of Durga/Kali's celebration, which are depicted in a documentary style in the opening sequence of the film (see Table 2.1 in Appendix). The opening credits of *Devi* begin with a close-up of a faceless white statue of *Ma*, evolving into a sacred mask, and finally to a statue of Kali on a tableau, becoming alive in a temple through public worship, songs, and decorations, before it is thrown in the Ganges at the end of the festivities. This ethnographically abstract portrayal of the rite of passage of the persona of the *Ma*, a masculine archetypal symbol of Motherhood, Creation and Destruction, portrays the evolution of the abstract faceless form of the symbol into a ritual mask and then into a social persona becoming alive through ritual. It echoes Mauss's essay on 'the notion of the person' and the 'notion of the self', in which he drew the evolution of the 'persona' from the sacred use of masks in rituals to the legal constitution of the Roman person, and through the Christian moral person to contemporary psychological ideas of the 'self' (1985/1938: 1-25). In similar terms, *Devi* portrays the evolution of the archetypal symbol to the *liminal* mask, and from the mask to the temple, where she becomes a living Goddess, disappearing in the muddy waters of the sacred river.

The evolution of the mask to a social persona anticipates the rite of passage of Doya from a young innocent girl to a living goddess, adorned and worshipped by a male crowd. In the film, she is made to wear the social mask of *Ma*, unwillingly transforming herself into a material manifestation of her father-in-law's vision; thus, becoming a living extension of the mask. Similarly to the opening credits, Kalikinkar's dark vision (see Table 2.2 in Appendix) begins with a slow zoom-in and close-up on the face of Doya, which gradually transforms into the luminous face of Durga/Kali. A strong white light highlights the face of the archetype of *Ma* contrasting to the black background of Kalikinkar's vision. For both Jung and Durkheim ritual life was above all a matter of personal *experience*, opening the way to connect to the wider collective (i.e. 'society'), both in the form of consciousness or in respect to the unconscious, through the luminous experiential concept of 'numinous' (Otto 1958: 5-11, and Paganopoulos 2010: par.1, 3). Kalikinkar's vision idealizes Doya's face,

visualized as a luminous *Imago Dei* in Jung's terms, or in Hindu philosophy, a mirror of the illusion of the 'inner self' (*Jiva*), which is 'only revealed by intuition, by revelation, when it is understood to be one with the universal spirit (*atman, purusa*)' (Morris 1994: 78). By contrast, the dark Shadow of Kalikinkar carries: 'an emotional nature, a kind of autonomy, and accordingly an obsessive or, better, possessive quality' (*CW Vol. 9 Part II*, 1968: 8-11). Gradually, this luminous image of the sacred ideal of *Ma*, dissolves into the sad face of Doya. A zoom-out reveals her positioning, sitting in the centre of the village's temple at daylight, and being the focus of attention by her devoted and desperate spectators. A series of juxtapositions of gazes further reveals the extent of the collective devotion attributed to her alleged healing, protective, and forgiving powers. A reverse angle then reveals Doya's/Durga's gaze, facing this collectively irrational situation from which she is alienated as a result of being the sacred focus of attention. Her higher position in the frame, looking down at those worshipping her, illustrates the intimacy of the visual exchange between goddess and worshippers.

Bhatti and Pinney defined the exchange of looks in the context of *puja* (worship) as *darshan dena* and *darshan lena* ('giving and taking' *darshan*, 2011: 226). In a Durkheimian, moral sense, the good 'energy' of *darshan* is seen as collective. On this moral basis, it is opposed to self-interest, envy, greed, and egoism, which are the sources of *nazar lagjani* ('evil eye'). This moral opposition of *darshan* and *nazar* echoes Durkheim's contrast of 'religion' to 'magic', the former defined in terms of common good (collective), the latter in terms of self-interest (*Ibid.*: 238). However, although Kalikinkar's paternal gaze superficially takes the form of *darshan*, this is accompanied by his envy (i.e. *nazar*) towards his incompetent son. In the sense, *Devi* offers a dynamic moral reverse of the Durkheimian model of the sacred community, as Ray does approach 'religion' as then unifying, external, and *a priori* 'sacred' force (1912) but as an arena of contestation, change, and competition between individual actors. This competition takes place through the juxtaposition of gazes, which illustrates Bhatti and Pinney's concept of 'opti-clash': giving and taking *darshan* is understood in terms of reciprocity, a kind of a 'gift' in Mauss's terms, referring simultaneously to cure and poison (from the Greek *pharmakon*, *Ibid.*: 228, 238).

In this context, Kalikinkar's vision is a false one; it is not a divine revelation, but rather a symptom of his own Freudian sexual frustrations (Cooper 2000: 108, 164-6). These are manifested in the antagonism towards his son, and the way he gazes at his daughter-in-law, accompanied by several sexual innuendos throughout the film. These details constantly reveal his selfishness as sexual obsession. Yet, the film is about female *Shakti*: 'within herself (every) woman contains *Shakti*, the tension between cohesion and disintegration, often translated as "energy"' (Caplan 1996: 280). It is because of the sexual oppression and selfishness of her father-in-law that her *Shakti* is repressed, and leads her to the tragic end, as she disappears into the river. Doya does not act in her husband's rational terms and move with him to the big city, but disappears in a dream-world, liberating her imprisoned gaze in the dark waters of the abyss of the soul. This kind of suicide allows her *Shakti* to find full and total expression in a world that has been repressing it. In this dynamic context, Doya's disappearance is not a passive act of suicide, but an intentional break that results to the social marginalization of Kalikinkar and to his public exposure for his greed and envy.

In his much later film about male *Shakti*, entitled *Sadgati* (Deliverance 1981), which was a re-adoption of a Hindu novel by Premchand for the TV, Ray further attacked the inequalities inherited within the feudal system, in the face of another hypocrite and self-

indulgent priest-landlord, who like a blackmailer uses his traditional status to exploit his servant. The servant's name is Dukhi, meaning 'the one who is always in pain', and who belongs to the lowest caste strata of *Sudra* (the servant farmer/ cultivator). This late TV film production was a return to Ray's early neorealist aesthetic, and negotiated the caste system through the concepts of *Shakti* and the inert *shakta*, the lowest state of human existence (Cooper 2000: 189-197). As in *Devi*, *Shakta* refers to the blocking of the channels that allow *Shakti* to be expressed, to the point of death. Similar to Kalikinkar's self-piety in *Devi*, *Sadgati*'s opening sequences portray the landlord's rituals that demonstrate his absolute *bhakti* (devotion), as well as, his high status and authority. But his cruelty and exploitation of Dukhi and his family do not remain unpunished, as Ray reverses the concepts of *dharma* (moral duty) and *karma* (rebirth) in the context of death as *moksha* (transcendence) and *Sadgati* (deliverance): while the landlord is expected to transcend to a higher level of existence because of his 'pure' way of life that forbids contact in terms of food and touch, ironically, he is left with the dead and polluting body of Dukhi which he has to deliver and dispose, thus, wasting his own *Shakti*. In this way, the film anticipated current political discussions, by progressive writers such as Sukhadeo Thorat (2004), focusing on the rights of Dalits in a global context.

In sum, *Devi* and *Sadgati* offer *experiential* understandings of *how* the caste system works, focusing on the inequalities it inherits, with open-ending narratives that allow several interpretations of the content. Further, the two films show a society on change, with historical and political implications projected directly on the life of the characters. This offers a much more realistic and dynamic picture of the 'caste' system, rather than Louis Dumont (1972) for instance, who famously argued in *Homo Hierarchicus* that: 'equality and hierarchy are not, in fact, opposed to each other' but they are in a complementary relationship in daily life (1972: 306), thus, naturalizing the caste system as a way of social stratification. In his criticism of Dumont's approach to the caste system, Deliege (2011) associated this Durkheimian holistic view of Indian 'society' as 'akin to analyzing European society exclusively through the Bible', which excluded individual agency and historical change through the static 'lenses of hierarchy and purity' (2011: 45-6). By contrast, *Devi* and *Sadgati* challenged the ideal of a sacred village community, based on European stereotypes of purity and pollution as frequently used in anthropology in the 1960s and 1970s, focusing instead on stories of socially oppressed individuals, while exposing the self-interest and motivations of their feudal landlords. By using the openness and symbolic richness of photography, Ray readapted the three evolving Bengali images of the Mother Goddess within a contemporary context, in order to show *how* traditional ideas and concepts can be used and abused for personal interest, offering a modern moral tale of disillusion with the past and re-enchantment with the future.

### **Objects of Modernity**

Ray's adaptation of Tagore's *Nastanirh* ('Broken Nest' written in the 1880s) in *Charulata* ('Lonely Wife' filmed in 1964) offers another critical disillusion with the emancipating promise of modernity. In *Charulata*, this is expressed by the libido of Charu, a bored bourgeois wife played masterfully by Madhabi Mukherjee. *Charulata* is set in Calcutta in the 1880s. Charu is married to Bhupati (played by Sailen Mukherjee), the publisher of the progressive journal *The Sentinel* -similarly to Ray's grandfather-. He smokes a pipe, uses English phrases, and is totally devoted to the publication of his journal. However, he

completely ignores her presence, as she is left alone in her golden cage, just like her birds. Instead, he has hired an English teacher to educate Charu in English songs and good manners. But his perfect, bourgeois world is shattered in a kind of Penter-ian way, by the arrival of his younger cousin, the sensitive, carefree, and poetic Amal (Soumitra Chatterjee) with whom Charu falls in love.

The film begins with Charu walking around an empty, but heavily decorated house, surrounded by Victorian furniture, a French mirror, a clock, a romantic painting of Venus, and her closest companion: the binoculars, through which she looks at the world from her half-shut window of her bedroom (see Table 3.1 'Opening Sequence' in Appendix). The binoculars offer a new way of constructing knowledge about the world outside her room; a modern (i.e. 'emancipating') way of looking, recording, and understanding the world *from a distance*. They offer her the means of escaping the masculine world that has imprisoned her into this materially decorated -but spiritually empty- house, in which she is placed by her liberal husband. This urge to liberate the female self from the constraints of the masculine, bourgeois world is manifested as *prem*, or the 'forbidden love', which was one of the favourite themes of Tagore's stories. The imported mirror, upon which both Charu prepares for her husband, is a symbol of European adjustment, based on the internal and external world of male desire. The *prem*, seen as imported from the 'West' similarly to binoculars and French mirrors, is expressed as the secret feeling of Charu for Amal, and manifested in her gaze towards him. Ganguly (2000: 66-68) highlighted the power of her 'forbidden gaze' as the means of giving her agency. Charu's playful Eye subverts the norm of the submissive look of Doya in *Devi*. Yet, in the end of the film the promise of emancipation and equality is proved to be an illusion, just like the false promise of the romantic *prem*. It is this moral realization of the destructive powers of sexuality, which associates uncontrolled sexuality with 'animality', and conversely portrays women 'as constantly tempting men away from the path of reason and morality' (as in Seidler 1987: 87). This rationality morally subordinates women, by placing them in the house, in which they are meant to be controlled<sup>3</sup>.

Spivak discussed Tagore's short stories along with 'the constitution of the feminine subject in colonial vernacular literature', making a parallel connection of Tagore's use of the romantic motif *prem*, to teaching English to Indian students, which makes the use of English feel like a 'burden' (1993: 139-140). Charu's burden is visualized as an entrapment within the false premises of the modern age. Despite Ganguly praising Ray for taking the 'woman's point of view', he highlights Charu's 'precarious privacy': 'we sense how [...] *her space* is invaded constantly' (Ganguly 2000: 66, *my emphasis*). This emphasis on a woman's precariousness is in essence what stereotypically defines 'women'. In this context, despite the emancipating theme of the film, the 'forbidden gaze' does not give agency to Charu, but rather confirms the stereotypical division of space in terms of 'female', internal, and private spaces, and 'male', external, public spaces. This re-affirms the conventional framing of 'women' as representing 'the privacy of the group' on the cultural basis of sexuality and

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gender as manifested in terms of private and public spaces (as in Caplan 1987: 15). Ganguly expands on Charu's visual entrapment to the audience gaze:

In fact, all the ambivalences of Charu's position as gazer and being gazed at are encapsulated by the camera as it spies on her and defines her predicament as a woman –always under surveillance but powerless to retaliate [...] In our privileged position we feel empowered by the mere fact that we can see her –or rather spy on her- while she cannot (Ganguly 2000: 72)

Ray's framing of Charu illustrates the 'voyeuristic scopophillic' point of view in Laura Mulvey's terms, which characterizes the mainstream, dominant, phalocentric camera, in the context of pleasure and sexual politics (1975/2009: 18). Charu, as well as, other female characters in Ray's films, such as Doya in *Devi*, Labanya and Monisha in *Kanchanjungha* (1962), Arati in *Mahanagar* (Big City 1963) Sutapa (Siddhartha's sister in *Pratidwandi* 1971), and Bimala in *Ghare-Baire* (Home and the World 1984) are portrayed as entrapped by, and within, a masculine world divided by gender in terms of private and public, 'female' and 'male' spaces respectively. They are forbidden to enter into the public sphere, and instead, they are portrayed as being entrapped in the minds and eyes of their fathers, brothers, husbands, and even, within the scopophillic eye of the audience in itself. The precariousness of Charu and her entrapment in a world dominated by male vision is amplified by the binoculars which bring her close to the forbidden world, which however is not allowed to experience or touch. It is this paradoxical alienation from the world (i.e. a 'modernist' condition) that results to her absolute loneliness. This inner feeling is symbolized by the binoculars, an object of modernity and science, as the means of emancipating herself from the bourgeois world that confines her at home.

Charu's binoculars share an affinity with Malinowski's binoculars: Charu's alienation echoes Malinowski's alienation in the field, as expressed in the post-mortem publication of his diary in 1967. Infamously, Malinowski's diary contradicted his claim for a 'scientific' methodology and 'objective distance' rather revealing his emotional entrapment and social isolation from the Pacific world he studied (Clifford 1986: 7-14, and Paganopoulos 2007, among others). In the same, static way Charu watches the world moving outside from her top window, Malinowski stared at 'them' from the safety of his cabin<sup>4</sup>. Both characters, the real Malinowski and the fictional Charu, are entrapped by, and within, the modernist condition, ideologically misconceived in the exclusive terms of the European Renaissance: Malinowski in his cabin in fear of contact with the world, 'primitive' or 'civilized' no matter; while Charu in a masculine world divided by gender in terms of private and public, 'female' and 'male' spaces respectively, which she is forbidden to cross. Instead, she is entrapped within the 'scientific' minds and eyes of her husband, and through him, within the scopophillic eye of the audience in itself. Her en-framed social imprisonment further illustrates the impact of modernity as an ocular-centric process: 'increasingly reified, closed, restricted, narrowed, tightened, distorted, and destructively fixated in representations –of self, of others, of knowledge, truth, and reality- that interpret the visible world by imposing confrontations of opposition between subject and object' (as in Levin's reading of Heidegger, 1993: 5-6).

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Twenty years after filming *Charulata*, Ray filmed another of Rabindranath Tagore's *prem* stories, *Ghare-Baire* ('Home and the World', 1984). The two films share a common narrative plot and characters, but the historical and social context in which they were filmed is very different. *Ghare-Baire* narrates the life of another alienated young woman, Bimala (played enigmatically by Swatileka Sengupta). She is married to a liberal husband. Nikhil (Victor Banerjee) is more sensitive than Bhupati, as he actively wishes to liberate his wife from the feudal patriarchy, but as in *Charulata*, his optimism is shattered by the arrival of his older cousin, the passionately patriotic Sandip, who enchants Bimala with his fiery speeches. Significantly, both characters of Amal and Sandip are played by the same actor, Soumitra Chatterjee, however, with a twenty year gap between the two roles. Accordingly, although they are both patriots, the young Amal returns to the Bengali roots through his poetry, while the older Sandip through his rationalized ultra-nationalism as an active member of the Swadeshi movement.

As in other historical films made by Ray in the 1970s, such as Premchand's *Shatranj-ke-Khilari* (Chess Players 1977), Ray directly associates sexuality to politics, often connecting male impotence to political indecision and self-delusion of men who fail to take control of *their* history (Cooper 2000: 152, and Dube 2005: 154). In this context, both *Charulata* and *Ghare-Baire* offer powerful political allegories about the time they were filmed: *Charulata*, filmed in 1964, reflects upon the collective disillusionment with Nehru's project of modernization through the character of Bhupati, who fails by his own expectations. On the other hand, through the character of Sandip, *Ghare-Baire* makes a parallel association of the Swadeshi movement (1905-1908) with the rise of ultra-nationalism in the 1970s, along with the 'emergency state' imposed by Indira Gandhi in 1975. The Swadeshi was the first nationalist movement following the foundation of the Congress in 1885. The movement reacted to the British interference in Indian affairs, particularly regarding the division imposed on the local population in terms of class and religion, which they saw as responsible for the political unrest of the time, as well as, to the issue of poverty, that instigated a general social unrest. The Swadeshi promoted a 'return' to Indian culture, while calling for the massive boycott of all foreign products. Ironically, despite being a by-product of post-colonialism, the Swadeshi movement portrayed itself as anti-modernist. *Ghare-Baire* makes clear, however, that despite the movement's promises, the Indian people, and particularly traders, would not support such a move. They could not be separated from the modernist discourse.

Both Tagore and Ray felt Strangers at 'home'; *entrapped* in-between British colonialism and Indian nationalism; an imprisoned condition of Bengali identity, which Tagore elegantly expressed in his widely appraised essay on 'Nationalism in India' (Tagore and Chakravarty 1961: 182, and Dutta and Robinson 1995: 304). As Sen put it: 'The tragedy, as Tagore saw it, came from the fact that what "was truly best in their [British] own civilization, the upholding of dignity in human relationships, has no place in the British administration of this country"' (Tagore cited in Sen 1998: 107). In this context, Ray's last film *Agantuk* is a self-confessional testament of the director's marginality, set in-between the artistic tradition of his Brahma family and the so-called 'Bengali Renaissance', and on the other, his European education and bourgeois upbringing, which were seen either as contradictory, or as complementary, to his 'Indianness' (Dasgupta 1994: 7, Cooper 2000: 74 and 7-11, and Ganguly 2000: 1-10, among others). However, a rigid dichotomy between 'tradition and modernity as well as Indian and European modernity makes it impossible to

take full account of the contestations that animated the creative efforts to fashion a vibrant culture and politics of anti-colonial modernity' (Boise and Jalal 1997: 90). In this sense, Tagore's and Ray's fusion of Indian with European aesthetic values (i.e. the female gaze) and narratives (i.e. *prem*) challenges the misconception of 'authentic', traditional cultures, as opposed to 'hybrid', modern cultures, while strengthening 'the ability to contest Western colonial power in the arena of politics and the state' (*Ibid.*). Seen in its totality, the work of the poet Tagore and the film-director Ray articulates a kind of self-critical historical consciousness as the means of actively raising a collective self-awareness between the past and the future: 'between what is done and what can be done' (Ranciere 2006: 39)<sup>5</sup>. In this context, the study of history, instead of a passive, allegedly 'objective', narrator of the past, rather becomes a political agent of dynamic change; the moral means to think about a better future.

### Politics of Inequality

Ray further developed the feeling of entrapment in contemporary social issues, as portrayed in his 'Calcutta trilogy': Sunil Ganguli's *Pratidwandi* ('The Adversary', 1970-1), and Sankar's *Seemabaddha* ('Company Ltd', 1971), and *Jana Aranya* ('The Middle Man', 1975). *Pratidwandi* was produced four years after the Naxalbari uprising in 1967 in West Bengal. It anticipated a decade of political and economic turbulence, the wars with Pakistan and China, and the polarization of India in political extremes, from ultra-nationalists to Maoists. This period of terror culminated with the betrayal and assassination of Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards, who were fighting for a separate state of Khalistan, in October 1984 (Rashiduzzaman 1989: 128, and in Boise and Jalal 1997: 182, 185, Shah 2011: 333, among others). Ray's films portray these times of collective disillusionment with the unfulfilled promises of Nehru's project, democracy as political oppression, alongside the dismantling of old family structures, the increasing feeling of personal isolation and desperation in overpopulated, alienating, urban settings, and the rise of inequality, unemployment, street violence, and nostalgia for a lost imagined past (i.e. the imagined, magical forest in *Pather Panchali*).

Ray's angriest film, *Pratidwandi*, portrays the journey of Siddhartha, a young, passionate, modern Buddha, walking aimlessly up and down the streets of the new Calcutta in search for a job. Large sections of the film take place in the oppressive *mise-en-scene* of public offices, where slow-panning long-takes portray the desperate faces and tired bodies of silent, unemployed men, pointlessly waiting in the cue for a job. It is a collective form of castration, as their *shakti* is never revitalized, or set free; instead, it is socially and economically entrapped in the impersonal state of massive unemployment. This collective sense of alienation is felt by Siddhartha, who is portrayed as a dislocated wonderer, both from himself and from the world. This sense of dislocation is expressed in the sequence portraying Siddhartha's vision in a temple. As he aimlessly gazes at some American tourists, who are fascinated by a 'holy' cow while smoking weed, next to beggars dying of hunger, Siddhartha's gaze is lost in his own social invisibility. In this *liminal* state of mind, his visionary experience begins with a nightmarish vision of modernity in the form of exoticism: the caricatures of an aboriginal elder, a Hindu priest and an ascetic, an image of a young man wearing make up, dancers, another ascetic in make-up holding a cheap paper

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reproduction of Shiva's/ Poseidon's triton, other dancers jumping and dancing in exuberance, an image of a voodoo priest drinking from a bottle, an image of an old lady begging, and more images of exuberant dancers moving without rhythm, without aim, without reason. This is the exact vision, a grotesque stereotype of modernity, that Charu in *Charulata*, and Arati in *Mahanagar* (Big City 1963) also share [see Sequence 3.2 'Charu's Vision' in Appendix]. The second part of Siddhartha's vision slowly superimposes into the calm and lyrical view of the sea horizon, and then the countryside, the place where Siddhartha (and through him of India) yearns to 'return'; the forest of *Pather Panchali*. As in Ray's previous films *Devi*, *Charulata*, and *Mahanagar*, in *Pratidwandi*, Siddhartha's vision depicts the moment of his self-realization and enlightenment, the moment of 'individuation' in Jung's terms, referring to the process by which one becomes "an in-dividual", that is, a separate indivisible unity or "whole" (CW Vol.9 Part I: 275). In the end, Siddhartha realizes his dream and abandons the city for the countryside, which is a move that echoes a general feeling of disillusionment that instigated a process of 'decentralization' in India (see Brass 1989: 223-264).

In my recent trip to Kathmandu in April 2012, after I managed to break out of the sacred Hanuman-dkoka Durbar Square, a 'World heritage Site', in which the *Khumari*, an eight year old girl is exhibited to tourists as the 'living goddess' (as in Ray's *Devi*), I saw another Kathmandu burning in anger. Daily protests frequently take place, as in a majority of young people call for a more democratic system, but instead, they are dealt by riot police. Recently, in Kolkata there were protests and demonstrations over the eviction of people living in slums to be rebuild in the name of 'progress' [16/4/2012]. Athens, Cairo, London, Birmingham, Madrid, Paris, Delhi, Kolkata, Kathmandu, Tehran, Los Angeles, Buenos Aires, Johannesburg, and the other melting pots of a world on fire, where youth unemployment, criminalization of immigration, privatization of social services, the military and the health system, discrimination, violence, drug addiction, alienation, and poverty are all global, social deceases. For the youth today, like Siddhartha in *Pratidwandi*, the promises of a new world were broken, despite the enthusiastic celebrations of the 'beautiful world' in TV adverts bombarding them with fake smiles and false degrees.

In *Pratidwandi*, there are also other moments of sudden terror and violent disorder, such as the bombing of a cinema full of spectators. These events accompany long and endless takes of the young unemployed waiting in the cue for a job interview. In this nightmarish world, Siddhartha's visions are the only means of escaping poverty and inequality, set in the context in which life is limited, *Shakti* is blocked, and anger is let loose. There is a scene in the film that shows a mob attacking the owner of a Mercedes car, because the careless and rich driver had just hit a little girl on the street. Siddhartha joins the mob that tries to lynch the driver. But then, as he looks at the back of the car, he sees another little girl in shock and tears. She is the daughter of the driver looking at her father getting beaten up on the pavement. It is this kind of double perspective that makes Ray look as if he is a-political, meaning an *auteur* who never takes a political side, and rather chooses to keep a distance in the form of the detached perspective of the Apu-Eye. However, I would argue that Ray's a-political stand is a fusion of world-politics with the tranquil philosophy of 'Inaction' (Ganguly 2000: 113); a type of Aristoteleian politics that is both *personal and universal*. This personal philosophy is ethically reflected upon practical and social matters, including the importance of access to education (*Pather Panchali*),

gender equality (*Mahanagar*), access to jobs (*Pratidwandi*), and public health (as in Ray's adaptation of Ibsen's 'Enemy of People' in *Ganashatru* 1989).

### **Humanism as a Critique of Modernity**

Following Weber's writings on modernity as a process of wealth accumulation, Arendt highlighted a collective feeling of alienation from the world (as also illustrated by the characters of Doya in *Devi*, Charu in *Charulata*, and Siddhartha in *Pratiwaldi*). For Arendt, this form of impersonal alienation was the result of the rise of the capitalist economy in which the concepts of 'society' and 'social solidarity' (as in Durkheim 1893), with all its malice, poverty, unemployment, and social indifference, replaced the protective, traditional structures of family and private property (Arendt 1998/1958: 254-257). This sense of alienation and longing is underlying the motives of several characters, from Apu's mother to Charu's loneliness, and from Kalikinkar's sexual frustrations to Siddhartha's social alienation. Their visions and psyches, enriched with archetypal symbolism (Jung), reflect upon the collective consciousness (Durkheim) and the historical consciousness (Dilthey) of the respective time and place of each film. In this sense, the director *auteur* becomes a charismatic historian of a world history (Weber), whose vision consists of a series of juxtapositions of gazes (i.e. 'opti-clash', Bhatti and Pinney 2011: 228) as an epiphany of perspectives: from the childhood curiosity of Apu's eyes, to the sense of imprisonment from the perspective of Charu, or the frustration and disillusionment felt from the perspective of Siddhartha. In this context, Ray's films are similar to the child's play as in Bhaktin's definition of *polyglossia*<sup>6</sup>: they are multi-layered and multi-vocal open arenas, offering a number of subjective point of views, that articulate a paradoxical and heterogeneous history(ies) of change. In this way, Ray allows us to see *his* 'Calcutta', and through it, *his* world. His journeys taking place through the gaze of his characters, allow us to learn more about our political selves, and to relocate our universal emotions within a global, but at the same time, diverse cosmos of 'village(s)'.

This essay highlighted the feeling of *touching* and the pain of its absence as a result of the process of an impersonal modernity (urbanization, dislocation, separation, and alienation). The absence, need to control, and desire for, touching, become underlying motives in Ray's entire work. Nowadays, the Walls of professionalization and 'progress', based on automatic forms of non-communication and separation remain firmer than ever. In the spirit of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Sen (1992) shows how inherited forms of inequality support further categorizations, on the basis of which more separations (and discriminations) are built: '[...] the importance of the distinction between seeking equality in different spaces relates ultimately to the nature of human diversity. It is because we are so deeply diverse, that equality in one space frequently leads to inequality in other spaces' (1992: 117). New culturally naturalized categories of the mind, based on existing established categorizations, in terms of class, gender, ethnicity, religion, economic status, political party, color, political party, football team, car, house, profile, and style, are relentlessly born, reborn, evolving, revived, forgotten, mixed, fused, and discarded. In a world built on massive debt, the old and hateful ideals of purity are nowadays institutionalized, militarized, professionalized, and air-conditioned; for the entire world becomes increasingly cast-sized.

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This homogenization of world society into a gigantic supermarket is accompanied by the image of absolute poverty amongst children living in slums without access to clean water, breathing burning plastic, right next to luxurious temples and shopping-malls -from Delhi to Athens-. This 'Western' way of life is kept separately, protected even by recruiting the military for the indulgence of small elites, as if it is a sacred cow. On the other extreme, counter political ideologies (i.e. neoliberal capitalism, neo-Marxism, nationalism, neo-theocracy, and so on) echoing the two extreme poles as portrayed in Ray's takes on the Swadeshi and the Naxalite movements, equally contribute to a violently homogeneous 'modern world'. But Ray's humanism tells us that this world belongs to us, we are the world. In the mist of burning plastic rubbish, death and happiness walk hand-in hand; for human Touch cannot exist elsewhere but here. The Walls have been raised to protect 'us' from 'them', but the power of a smile tears them down in pieces.

## Notes

1. The juxtaposition of the concepts of 'modernity' and 'tradition' has been critically discussed in a variety of studies, including: Durkheim's juxtaposition of 'mechanical', agricultural systems to 'organic' forms of solidarity in industrialized large-scale societies (1991/ 1893: 85, 331; Weber's juxtaposition of 'traditional' to the capitalist economic impulse (2003/1927: 356); Said's juxtaposition of Occidentalism to Orientalism (1978). Criticisms of this rigid opposition are equally diverse, including: Fabien's criticism of the dichotomy between 'our time' and 'their', a-historical time (1983); also in Wolf (1982); Tambiah's re-evaluation of magic and science (1990); Asad's genealogy of 'religion' as the historical product of the discourse of a Christianized European modernity, published the same year with the Comaroffs' writings on modernity in Africa (1993); and writings on the re-invention of 'tradition' as in Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), and in relation to rise of world-occult movements (Comaroffs 2000), among many others. Finally, in cultural studies, Bhabha's critique of ocular-centrism/ ethnocentrism in terms of 'the visibility of the racial colonial Other' as 'a point of identity' (1994); and Appadurai and Breckenridge's (1995) concept of 'inter-ocular', referring to the complex relation between what is perceived to be 'local' and what is perceived to be 'global' via 'cross-referencing' are all critical takes of the *homogeneous* (i.e. 'Western') concept of 'modernity', as manifested for instance in popular culture (Breisach 2007/1983: 426, among others).
2. The wonderment as an inner motif in understanding the world is, above all, associated with philosophy. For Plato, 'the beginning of philosophy is "to *thaumazein*" [wonderment, admiration]'. The philosopher morally works 'in-between ignorance and truth, in search for true wisdom'. By contrast, 'the ignorant person is ignorant mainly because of his own ignorance, and that is why he does not feel the need for philosophy' (Kaktos Literature Group 1992: 30, my translation from Greek). In contrast to arrogant ignorance, the curiosity of the child, as well as, his emotional distance, are the means of understanding and adapting in this ever-changing world. On the other hand, Arendt highlighted the sense of wonderment in the Cartesian doubt, associating it with Descartes' *de omnibus dubitandum*, to develop a concept of 'modern doubting' that emphasizes perception and vision (Arendt 1998/1958: 273). Levin (1993) drew an evolutionary perspective of ocular-centrism, referring to the process of developing a particular rationality (i.e. 'science'), that supposedly began with the European Enlightenment on the exclusive basis of vision and perception as the means of understanding the world in terms of objective and subjective forms of knowledge and truth: from Descartes's and Husserl's return to Plato's Cave, to Habermas's 'ethics of communicative processes', and via the epic visionary experiences of Romanticism, to an increasingly nihilistic and en-framed view of humanity (Heidegger) driven by 'the violence of light' (Derrida). See also: Levin 1993: 1-29, and Tambiah 1990, Comaroffs 1993, Miller 1995, Bell 1997, among others).
3. 'The Goddess then entered the palace of the god who bears the moon as his diadem. When the three-eye god saw her he said, "Damn women", and she bowed to him and said, "You have spoken truly, and not falsely. This portion of Nature is senseless; women deserve to be reviled. It is the grace of men which brings release from the ocean of existence". Then Hara re-joined and said to her, "Now

you are worthy, and I will give you a son [...]” (Extract from *Skanda Purana* translated by O’Flaherty 1975: 260)

4. From Malinowski’s diary, on his arrival among the Mailu, New Guinea: ‘The Mayos stood on the shore; I watched them a long time through binoculars and waved my handkerchief –I felt I was taking leave of civilization [...] I looked at them through binoculars; they reminded me of the Saturday excursion to Blackall Ranged [...] I went to the cabin and felt asleep after an injection of Alkarsodyl. The next day was spent in my cabin, dozing with a bad headache and general numbness (1967: 5).
5. The concept of a ‘historical consciousness’ was first coined by Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911). It is rooted to Kant’s essay on the ‘Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose’ written in 1784. Nietzsche’s essay ‘The uses and Disadvantages of History in Life’ distinguished three categories of historical consciousness: on one extreme, the ‘unhistorical’ (as in early functionalism and structuralism); on the other, the ‘super-historical’ (intellectual, ‘couch-anthropology’ as that of Levi-Strauss); and in-between the two extreme poles Nietzsche positioned the ‘*historical*’ to which: ‘The unhistorical and the superhistorical are inextricable aspects of a truly vital, *self-critical historical consciousness*’. This tripod of knowledge is manifested in its totality in the ‘impersonal vision of the artist: “the outwardly tranquil but inwardly flashing eye of the artist”. Only when conceived as a work of art is history truly impersonal and this involves some superhistorical *detachment*’ (Bell citing Nietzsche, 1997: 32- 33, *my emphasis*). In this context, ‘history’ is a form of art, and vice versa, the historical is an artist: the charismatic prophet (as in Weber) of an entire generation, who reflects upon his time and history through this collective ‘fiction’. In Ranciere’s terms “History” is only made up of stories that we tell ourselves, but simply that the “logic of stories” and the ability to act as historical agents go together. Politics and art, like forms of knowledge, construct “fictions”, that is to say material rearrangements of signs and images, relationships between what is seen and what is said, between what is done and what can be done’ (2006: 39).
6. Bakhtin in the ‘Dialogic Imagination and Genre Theory’ analyzed the novelization of the novel as a ‘process of becoming’ and ‘coming to self-consciousness’ (1992: 5, 11). He incorporated this into open-ended texts, based on different voices, languages, and cultural values (*polyglossia*) contextualized within the novel’s *chronotope* (a sphere/ a world of meaning, ‘literally “time, space” Bakhtin 1981/1992: 84) seen within a process of *becoming* in-between the familiar and the strange, the past and the future, the local and the global: ‘by incorporating extraliterary heteroglossia and the “novelistic” layers of literary language, they become dialogised, permeated with laughter, irony, humour, elements of self-parody and finally –this is the most important thing- the novel inserts into these other genres an indeterminacy, a certain semantic openendedness, a living contact with unfinished, still-evolving contemporary reality [the open ended present]’ (Bakhtin 1992: 7). Appadurai and Breckenridge (1995) developed Bakhtin’s concepts of ‘intertextuality’ and ‘polyglossia’ of the text towards visual culture through the notion of ‘inter-ocular’ity’. The latter refers to the complex relation between what is perceived to be ‘local’ and what is perceived to be ‘global’ via ‘cross-referencing’. In the same way Bakhtin argues that a language makes sense only in relation to the languages, Appadurai and Breckenridge contextualized ‘public culture’ in South Asia as a heterogeneous arena (including public spaces such as the museum, the cinema, and TV) in which new ideas are formed and performed outside the modernist (often based on religious beliefs of purity and pollution) presumptions of ‘hybridity’.

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## Filmography

### **Novels adapted by Satyajit Ray**

Bibhutibhushan Bandopadhyay (*Pather Panchali*/Song of the Road 1955/1929, *Aparajito*/Unvanquished 1956/1931, *Apur Sansar*/World of Apu 1959/1931, *Asani Sanket*/Distant Thunder 1973), Tarasankar Bandyopadhyay (Banerjee) (*Jalsaghar*/The Music Room 1958, *Abhijan*/ Expedition 1962), Prabhatkumar Mukhopadhyay (*Devi*/ Goddess 1960) Parasuram (*Parash Pathar*/ Philosopher's Stone 1958, *Kapurush-O-Mahapurush*/Coward and Holy Man 1965), Premendra Mitra (*Kapurush-O-Mahapurush*/Coward and Holy Man 1965), Prabhat Kumar Mukherjee (*Devi*/Goddess 1960), Rabindranath Tagore\* (*Teen Kanya*/Three Daughters 1961, *Charulata*/Lonely Wife 1964, *Ghare Baire*/Home and World 1984), Narendranath Mitra (*Mahanagar*/Big City 1963), Saradindu Banerjee (*Chidiakhana*/Zoo 1967), Sunil Ganguli Aranyer *Din Ratri*/ Days and Nights in the Forest 1969, *Pratidwandi*/Adversary 1970), Sankar (*Seemabaddha*/ Company Ltd 1971, *Jana Aranya*/Middle Man 1975), Munshi Prem Chand (*Shatranj Ke Khilari*/ Chess Players 1977, *Sadgati*/Deliverance 1981) Upendrakisore Ray (Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne/ Adventures of Goopy and Bagha 1968), Satyajit Ray (*Sonar Kella*/Golden Fortress 1974, *Joi Baba Felunath*/ Elephant God 1978, *Pikoo/ Pikur Diary* 1980), Henrik Ibsen (*Ganashatru*/Enemy of People 1989)

### **Documentaries/autobiographies**

*Rabindranath Tagore* 1961 commissioned by Government of India

*Sikkim* 1971 produced by the Chogyal of Sikkim, Himalayan state

*The Inner Eye* 1972 commissioned by Films Division, Government of India

*Bala* 1976: National Centre of Performing Arts, Bombay and Government of Tamil Nadu

*Sukumar Ray* 1987 commissioned by Government of West Bengal: birth centenary of Ray's father

### **Script-based Films**

*Kanchanjungha* (1962), *Nayak/ Hero* (1966), *Chidiakhana/ The Zoo, or Menagerie* (1967)

*Aranyer Din-Ratri/ Days and Nights in the Forest* (1970), *Shakha-Prashakha/ Branches of Tree* (1990), *Agantuk/ The Stranger* (1991)

### **Children's Stories**

*Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne* (Adventures of Goopy and Bagha 1968), *Sonar Kella* (Golden Fortress 1974), *Joi Baba Felunath* (Elephant God 1979), *Hikor Rajar Deshe* (Kingdom of Diamonds 1980), *Pikoo* (1981)

*Note:* Ray contributed to the script of Spielberg's *ET* (1982) with an earlier script, though his contribution was not acknowledged. However, it is clear that the children's pov adopted by Spielberg's photography in *ET* is a direct re-adoption of Apu's point of view.

## **Appendices**

### **Table 1. Pather Panchali (1955) Train Sequence**

The first part of the sequence begins with the return of auntie Indir (played by Chunibala Devi) to Apu's house. The audience hears her walking-stick off screen, as she slowly enters into the frame, opening the old wooden gate of the garden with a big and warm smile on her old but gentle face: "Anyone at home?" she asks. Apu's mother, Sarbojaya Ray (Karuna Bannerjee), off-screen bitterly replies: "Why have you come back?" Following their argument over Indir's 'bad' influence on her daughter Durga, according to the neighborhood's malicious gossip, Sarbojaya remains cold, separately eating some nuts in a dark corner of their house while keeping her eyes away from Indir. With her warm smile the old Indir says: "I am not feeling very well. I'd like to spend my last days in the old home". Sarbojaya nervously replies: "What is the old home to you? The best thing you can do is leave". "Just a minute" Indir interrupts her sister-in-law's complains. Indir then slowly takes her usual place on the paved, dirty porch of the small house. She leaves on the floor her stick, her bangle of rags, her empty pot, and a bangle of hay, which she brought with her from the countryside. "What are you waiting for?" Sarbojaya continues trying to get rid of her. Indir replies: "Let me rest here for a while". The whole scene is watched by Apu's sister, Durga (Uma Das Gupta), as she bites off pieces of bamboo. Apu approaches behind her, and they both run playfully outside the forest into the fields. Apu's image (Subir Bannerjee), wearing his golden crown made out of paper cuts, echoes classical depictions of the young Shiva, as if he is playing with his sister Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge and music who is related to the mother goddess Durga.

Cut back to auntie Indir, who is struggling to fit in, under and because of the constant scrutiny of Sarbojaya. "Sister –in-law have you gone to sleep? Will you give me some water?" she asks. Sarbojaya's voice, again heard off-screen, smoothes and replies: "Your bowl is there; help yourself". As a result of Sarbojaya's somehow positive response, Indir rediscovers her beautiful smile. But her smile is not reciprocated by Sarbojaya. She does not pay any attention to Indir's warmth human touch. This saddens Indir's face as she duly pours water into her pot at the background of the screen. The framing of the scene is divided by the double lighting of Subrata Mitra, inventor of the 'bouncing lighting': the use of mirrors and white sheets to reflect upon and manipulate the 'natural' light of the film. In the dark foreground of the house, Sarbojaya remains cold, looking both indifferent and worried at the same time of an insecure future. The dark foreground of the wrecked house is juxtaposed to the brightly lit background of the garden, from which Indir tries to come in contact with her sister-in-law, in vain. The silence of the dialogue, accompanied by the tensed, repeated, and dissonant background note of Ravi Shankar's sitar that gradually comes to the foreground of sound, amplifies the ambience of alienation and isolation, which is contextualized within the poverty of the realistic setting. Indir waters a small tree, picks up her bangle and stick, and walks out of the garden. Sarbojaya stares at the empty space, bitter, angry, hurt. In the dark foreground of the wrecked house, a dog is searching for food amongst the junk. This shadow image of decay and Death is juxtaposed to Indir's stare at the house for the last time, as she walks off the screen to the brightly lit forest, to meet her death. Sarbojaya look at Indir for the last time, for a fleeting moment with sympathy, which is then immediately replaced by indifference as she drinks water from *her* cup.

The second part of the sequence continues on the double setting motif, with a cut to a long-shot that portrays Apu standing in the windy fields of hey at the background of the frame, juxtaposed to the parallel and static image of the electric wires that cut the frame diagonally in two. Apu is staring with wonderment at the electric bulbs at the top of the pillar standing against the moving clouds. In the next cut, Durga first looks at the wires and then at Apu in a suspicious way. Durga tries to distinguish the foreign sound of the electric wires, from the splashing sound of the two kids walking through the wet, muddy field, heard in the foreground. The scene is accompanied by the monotonous, disharmonious, electronic sound of a synthesizer, used to amplify the feeling of anticipation and insecurity of something foreign and alien arriving at long distance. But while Durga looks uncomfortable with the setting, Apu playfully places his ear on the electric column trying to hear the electric sound of the column. The two kids continue wondering around in the fields, and when Apu loses his sister from sight she smoothly throws at him a small stone, so that he can find her. Durga, like a mother to him, shares her bamboo stick, as they both sit in the shadow of long grown hey, blowing in the vivid wind. "Where are we? What are those?" Apu curiously asks pointing his finger towards the electric wires. Durga moves her head indifferently, but then covers Apu's mouth as she hears again the foreign sound of something approaching from a long distance, a mechanic sound within the natural sound of the wind. They both stand up to see where this new sound comes from, as gradually the sound of the wind gives away to the monstrous sound of a train. While Durga falls in her knees in fear at the sight of the train approaching, the excited Apu runs towards it, almost as if he wants to touch it. He runs along the railway, as the black figure of the train rapidly passes in front of the camera. As the train passes-by, Apu is left looking in wonderment at the black smoke the machine has left behind. Indir's death follows.

### **Table 2.1. *Devi* (1960) Opening Credits**

The opening-credits sequence of *Devi* is constructed in the form of a music piece, beginning in low pianissimo tone which gradually builds on a carnivalesque crescendo. The first shot depicts an unadorned, alabaster statue of the Mother Goddess *Ma*, staring at the camera with her enigmatically blank eyes and smile. The white head statue portrays her as the provider and preserver. In mythology, these mother qualities are manifested in three forms: as Shri-Lakshmi (the goddess of wealth and material fulfilment, often depicted as submerging from the sea, echoing images of the Greek Aphrodite and Roman Venus); Parvati (the goddess of love as power, spiritual fulfilment, often depicted with two arms in the companion of her husband Shiva, but with four arms in the companion of a tiger); and Saraswati (the goddess of culture, music and the arts, often depicted with a sitar in her arms). In particular, her manifestation as Parvati, who is the reincarnation of Sati, the first wife of Shiva and daughter of the Himalayas, and whose desire lured Shiva into the material realm. Parvati is also known in seven different names/forms, including that of Durga (the Mother Creator) and Kali (the Black Destroyer). As the music changes motif, from a dissonant suspense-note played by a violin orchestra, to the low sound of Ustad Ali Akbar Khan's sitar that opens the next musical sequence, Ray superimposes on the image of the enigmatic statue the mask of Durga. As the music increases its tempo and volume, with the introduction of a tabla and violins at the background, the *tabula rasa* of Durga's face is transformed into the statue of Kali, through a second superimposition of jewelry, black hair and make-up placed on the head of the white goddess. The music then explodes into a festive tone, with the ringing bells and tablas heard during Durga's and Kali's harvest festivals that take place in the autumn. In this way, the opening scene introduces the audience in three superimposed images to the main theme of the film: the transformation of young anonymous wife to an object of veneration kept and exhibited in public display for the desperate devotees. Furthermore, it contextualizes the image of the Mother Goddess in three different contexts: the head-statue is enigmatic, the simplicity of the marble symbolizing the essence of the masculine symbol of the Mother, textually referring to ancient mythological times; the second form *evolves* into the mask of Durga/Kali, used in everyday life to be seen in houses, theatre, and temples; finally, the third image of the ornamented statue of Kali is used in festivals and within a celebratory and violent sacred context.

The second part of the sequence opens the film with the ethnographic recording of Kali's annual celebration that takes place three weeks after Durga's more prestigious celebrations, 'on the dark moon-night of the month of Kartik' (McDermott 2011: 183). The ritual culminates at dawn with a firework display, followed by a ceremonial procession to the river bank where the disposal of the *tabula rasa* in the river takes place. In the film, the introduction of ringing bells and chimes carries the audience into the festival, as the director zooms-out from the close-up of the face of Kali to the full body of the statue covered by the smoke of incense, then further back showing the participants watching the ritual performance, until it reaches outside the temple where children are playing among the gathered crowd. At the same time, a subtitle introduces to the European audience (as there are no subtitles of superimposed in Hindu letters on the screen) to Kali: "the Mother Goddess is revered in Bengal as *Ma*, the Mother. Belief in the human reincarnation has been widespread in India. This story is set a century ago." Cut to a middle-shot of the two male

protagonists of the film, the *zamindar* devoted father Kalikinkar (played by Chhabi Biswas, who also played the *zamindar* in *Jalsaghar*, The Music Room 1958) next to his son Uma (played by Soumitra Chatterjee), both praying towards the heavily decorated statue. The father's eyes look reassured about himself and his faith. With a reverse-angle shot the camera reveals the eyes of the Mother Goddess focusing on *his* eyes, as he falls on his knees to piously perform his offerings to her. Then a series of jump-cuts follows that take place in the garden of the temple where a sacrifice is performed under the vivid sound of the participants' timpani. A close-up on the sword of the executioner as it falls on the head of an animal rapidly jump-cuts to the image of exploding fire-works in the sky.

In the third part of the opening sequence, the music changes from the live recording of the ritual to the sound of a European brass band, as the camera pans from the right to left first on the face of Koka (Arpan Chowdhury) carried on the shoulder of his uncle Uma. This is an image reminiscent of the final image in *Apu Sansar* of Apu also carrying his son on his shoulder staring at a bright future. But in this film, the light is artificial, produced by the fireworks, fleetingly burning for an explosive moment before they disappear into the darkness of the night sky. As the camera pans to the left, we see for the first time the image of his young wife Doyamoyee, or Doya (played by Sharmila Tagore) also staring at the fireworks with a shy smile in her sad eyes. As she turns to look at Uma's eyes the camera pans back to the left, following the calling of Koka to his uncle to look at the fireworks in the sky. The next shot dissolves to a second ethnographic recording portraying the morning mass procession of Kali's temple to the river, where her tableau is thrown in the water under the celebratory chorus of thousands of participants. The camera focuses for a final time on Kali's face, before she is thrown in the dark river, submerging into the dark abyss of the human soul. In the next sequence, Uma announces to Doya his departure to Calcutta to study, leaving her alone with his father Kalikinkar at home.

### Note

- 'Kali's festival follows Durga's by three weeks, on the dark moon-night of the month of Kartik. Durga's festival dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, while Kali's later to the 18<sup>th</sup>. However, since the 6<sup>th</sup> century, Kali was known to be 'like a daughter, a younger sister, or a helper from Durga's angry forehead to help her battle demons'. Despite her fearsome reputation, she is also associated to alms giving. Kali Pujas and the temples dedicated to Kali tend to be smaller and less formal than Durga's, and for this reason since the 1970s their numbers increased (McDermott 2011: 183-186).

### **Table 2.2. Kalikinkar's Vision**

The transformation of the Mother Goddess in the opening-credits in terms of narrative and structure, as well as, aesthetically, anticipates the sequence that portrays the vision of Kalikinkar Roy of his –daughter-in-law as the Mother Goddess. This sequence develops the central motif of the film, introduced in the opening sequence as described above, structurally similar to a musical fugue. Rhythmically, it builds up from allegro, through pianissimo, to fortissimo, accompanying a succession of dialogue, silence, leading to the final grand musical explosion: the first scene portrays the happy family life Doya enjoys. The scene takes place in Koka's bedroom in the evening, as Doya tells scary stories to the young Koka in the companion of his mother. This scene echoes old Indir's stories to the young Durga and Apu in *Pather Panchali*. This momentary happiness is manifested as a warmth form of communication between Doya, her sister-in-law and her nephew, which is then

interrupted by Kalikinkar's vision that takes place in his bedroom, alone, in the second part of the sequence. The second scene shows Kalikinkar piously praying, but then having a troubled sleep, until, he sees a vision in his dream just before he wakes up at dawn. In the vision, he first sees the drawing of the three white eyes of the Mother Goddess, appearing from the abyss of the dark background, the depths of the human soul. The director zooms into the drawing giving the impression that the eyes are gradually coming closer to the camera/ audience/ Roy. As the eyes become bigger, the third eye of the forehead begins floating, giving life to the mask, which is then superimposed on a close-up of the face of Doya, staring intensely at the camera/ audience/ Roy. Her face is covered in shadow giving the impression of a living black Kali. But then a bright light falls on her face and she is instantly transformed into MA. But unlike the traditional iconographies of the Mother Goddess, she takes the conventional position given to women at the time: shy, slightly bowing her covered head in understanding, or submission, smiling at the camera. A floating set of candles is superimposed on her face, which then dissolves onto Kalikinkar's shocked, anxiously sweaty face, who stares intensely at the camera. The clock sounds five in the morning, as he stands up in self-realization that his sister-in-law is the Mother Goddess, according to *his* vision. This second superimposition echoes the second transformation of the mask to the statue of Kali in the opening credits. As the recorded celebration of Kali that follows in the opening sequence, the third part of this sequence begins with the sound of ringing bells used to wake up both Kalikinkar and the viewers out of the trance state of his vision. Echoing the third part of the opening credits, Kalikinkar's vision is followed by the image of collective veneration of Doya by a group of male worshippers begging for miracles. Kalikinkar's vision becomes complete.

**Table 3.1. Charulata (1966) Opening sequence**

*Charulata* opens silently, almost indifferently, with English credits aimed to European audiences, as in *Devi*. But then, the beautiful sound of Ray's sitar, playing a Rabindranath Tagore slow-song, musically introduces the audience to the slow and elegant rhythm of the film. It opens the Hindu opening credits of the film superimposed on the foreground, and decorated with a close-up image of the hands of Charu (played masterfully by Madhabi Mukherjee) elegantly using a sewing-needle, crocheting a piece of white fabric stretched on a circular wooden frame, on which she has embroidered the English letter 'B', presumably for 'Bhubati', the name of her husband. As she cuts the thread with her mouth, the camera zooms-out to middle-shot that reveals her sitting on her decorated European bed in her bedroom. As the clock rings four, she calls for her servant without receiving an answer. She then begins to walk in the long corridor of the upper house, followed by the camera, while continues calling for her servant: "Brojo? Are you deaf? It's past four. Take the master his tea", in his office where he is working. She then turns around and walks towards the camera, as she tenderly holds, and looks at the embroider, on which the English capital letter of her husband's name is inscribed, looking as if she is thankful for the life he offers her. But then, the sound of a crow off-screen, a bad omen, interrupts her meditation. "Ay... Hush!" she shouts at it, moving toward the balcony to keep it away from the house. She then looks back at her husband's initial letter, tenderly held in her hands, but as she walks back to her bedroom and sits on her bed, she suddenly looks bored. Her movement in the house, contextualized within a slow moving series of tracking and panning shots, reveals the *mise-en-scene* of the entire setting, divided by separated spaces between *inside* and *outside*

areas, such as the inside bedroom of Charu, which leads through the narrow corridor to the outer area of the balcony, facing the internal garden. Accordingly, her husband has his own space, the office in which he spends most part of his day, while the servants live separately downstairs as in the English Victorian houses of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The architectural similarities to a European aristocratic house are further underlined by the heavy decoration of the rooms with European objects, the clock, a mirror, lamps, photograph frames, wall paintings, the square bed, the furniture, and a book left on her bed, which attracts Charu's bored attention. She picks it up and moves to another space, through the balcony to the living room situated opposite her bedroom, followed by the camera that takes the audience in a house that feels like a maze: a labyrinth in which communication and vision is blocked by a series of small rooms, bigger rooms, and heavily decorated corridors.

As Charu enters the living-room, walking towards a shelf with books, the camera zooms into a close-up of her face, and with a reverse angle shot a close-up of her fingers searching the book titles, while singing the name of the author she is looking for: "Bankim". She finds a book with its title written on its cover in golden letters, in Bengal "Kapaalkundala". She picks up the book and firmly holds it in her left hand, as with her right hand she equally firmly closes the glassy frame of the book shelf, which makes the viewer realize that her figure in the previous close-up was distorted because of the glass placed in front of the camera. By closing the frame, her figure becomes clearer, as she stares at the book, hesitantly wondering if she should pick it up. But then, a hypnotic and repeated sound of the small timpani, heard from outside the house, draws her attention. The sound instantly changes her demeanor, as if it is calling for her, convincing her of her intentions. The indecisive expression on her face is suddenly, but elegantly, replaced by a re-assured and confident smile, which is then settled into a concentrated interest in the contents of the book. She turns around in another reverse-angle shot, and the camera follows her as she moves along the rooms and the corridors of the house, but this time singing the Bengali verses of the book, opened in her hands and eyes. It is as if this book makes her forget of her complete surrounding isolation and loneliness, brilliantly acted by Madhabi Mukherjee, and masterfully framed by Ray.

She then slowly walks towards a shut window, to see who is playing the timpani. Like a prisoner, she uses a set of small binoculars, designed to watch European opera, to see through the shut window frame, which looks like an old wooden cage. With her binoculars, she can see an old blind beggar on the street playing the small timpani and holding two monkeys. As he walks off her limited vision of the narrow frame of the binoculars, her interest is then attracted by other street sounds from the other side of the small room, as she watches again through the shut window frame people passing-by. Her gaze follows a middle-aged man walking in the hot sun, carrying a closed umbrella like the stereotype of an Englishman, an image that makes her smile. But then, in a long-shot, she slowly turns around inside the living room, looking again unhappy and bored, in between the shut, front window of the house, and a Victoria couch accompanied by an old table with an expensive, but empty, vase on it. As she smoothly holds on the European couch, she turns around staring at the heavily decorated, but at the same time, empty room, while her finger nervously play with the binoculars. She looks at the lavish surrounding with a kind of soft bitterness that has replaced her previously reassured smile at the sound of the beggar's timpani.

Following Tagore's slow musical rhythm, she slowly walks towards a grand piano opposite the windows of the living-room. As the camera continues to track her movements in the house, she stops, elegantly taking the piano-stool, slowly opening the piano's cover, and then disinterestedly hitting two notes in boredom, before closing it again. The soft sound of the piano stops the slow musical theme of Tagore, and then, absolute silence follows; only to be interrupted again by more noise from the street. As Charu aimlessly wonders with the pair of binoculars in her hands, the frame of her husband hastily passes-by in front of the camera, fast and out-of-focus at the background. She looks quite upset because he does not even acknowledge her presence. She then angrily starts to follow him. Bhupati (Sailen Mukherjee) returns unaware of his wife's feelings, passing-by without even looking at her, a pipe in his mouth, wearing glasses and a long, academic beard, and reading from a book. She suddenly hears again the sound of the beggar's *timpani* outside from the street that gives her new confidence and brings back her smile. In the next sequence, Bhupati announces the visit of his cousin, Amal (Sumitra Chatterjee), the passionate and romantic patriot, whose visit will change her (and her husband's) life forever.

### **Table 3.2. Charu's Vision in Garden**

Following Amal's announcement that his papers have been accepted for publication, which also moved that he will move out of the house and Charu's life, Charu gets so upset that she shuts both her windows and doors to cry. Her crying behind doors is picked up by her husband, but for once more he cannot get through to her. The self-indulgent Amal also tries to find out what is wrong with her, while offering ice-cream in his playful manner, but also, completely, or willingly, ignoring the clear signs of forbidden love, or *prem*, that Charu sends to him throughout the film: "Look Charu, if I write something good should it stay in your notebook? Nobody else sees it. It never gets printed. That's wrong, isn't it?" "Of course" Charu replies while continuing looking at a book holding in her hands, shutting him out of her vision. "Then you must admit I write very well, don't I?" the self-indulgent Amal continues. "Of course" Charu repeats. "This is something that deserves respect, don't you think?" Amal patronizes. "Of course", the shut Charu enigmatically replies for a third time. "Then, I can hope for a little more respect in future, right?" As he walks out of the room with a self-assured smile, the music gets tensed, building on a dissonant chord played by a violin orchestra which reflects upon Charu's intense and angered internal world. As she hears Amal off the frame talking to her cousin about his plans for the evening, she angrily shuts her book, shuts her eyes, raises her chin, and tries to tolerate his complete ignorance and at times pretentiousness. In a conventional sense, she realizes that His (male) Mind cannot match Her (female) Heart, and this realization brings her to the self-realization of *her* submissive position in a man's world.

This moment of Jungian Individuation is illustrated through her momentarily day vision (day-dreaming) in the house's garden that follows. As Charu bitterly turns her head, she notices a copy of the journal 'Bishwabandhu' left on the bed. The opened magazine makes her to pick up a European ink-pen and her diary, trying to think of something to write. A close-up of her hand shows her trying to write something on an empty page, but only leaving a dot of black ink. She cannot think of anything. As she stares at the empty space in a close-up, the sweet slow theme of the music gradually comes in to the foreground, along with the change of her facial expression from bitter to thoughtful. She remembers how she happily used to sing the Bengali song about a Cuckoo in the garden,

and writes down the title of her story: "The Cry of the Cuckoo", which she indecisively changes into the more dramatic: "The Lament of the Cuckoo". But then, she has second thoughts about the title, the story, and in a way about her garden, her house, and thereby her imprisoned life between two incapable men, her husband and her flirt. The Cuckoo song is not the same anymore, because it signifies her moment of self-realization, individuation, and transgression.

This process of self-realization begins through her day-dreaming vision that takes place in the garden. A panning of the camera shows a close-up of autumn leaves on the ground, along with scrunched up papers, a carpet with a notebook, a pen, an ink bottle, and continues with an extreme close-up of Charu's figure and face as she sits immobile on her childhood swing. She intensely stares at the camera. The silent, almost-still frame is interrupted by the sound of a cuckoo, and the slight movement of the swing, as if pushed by the breath of the wind. A further close-up into her bright eyes reveals the life inside them. This image of Charu's face with her three eyes echoes the images of Doya in *Devi*, especially as the director superimposes an image of an open, calm sea, onto her eyes. A second superimposed image of fishing boats follows, focusing on as the sail of one of them that shows a painting of hunting and agricultural life onto her meditating eyes. Here, as in *Devi*, the director uses the technique of superimposition to directly connect Charu's internal world and thoughts to her external social life; in other words, what is inside her is outside, and vice-versa. The image of the sailing boat is dissolved back to the image of Charu staring at the camera, no longer in an intensive, but rather in a meditating and thoughtful manner that shows her self-realization. The vision then continues with the imposition of a third image of an old lady working on a spinning wheel, and a bird imprisoned in a cage, an image of destiny as self-realization (Carl C. Jung). The spinning wheel dissolves into an image of a children's round-about and festive fireworks. Further superimposed images of children playfully running through the fireworks take the viewer further into Charu's vision, which with a rapid panning of the camera develops into a nightmarish vision of exoticism: the caricatures of an aboriginal elder, a Hindu priest and an ascetic, an image of a young man wearing make up, dancers, another ascetic in make-up holding a cheap paper reproduction of Shiva's/ Poseidon's triton, other dancers jumping and dancing in exuberance, an image of a voodoo priest drinking from a bottle, an image of an old lady begging, and more images of exuberant dancers moving without rhythm, without aim, without reason. As the music gradually fades out, along with the vision of Charu projected on her face, a sudden zoom-out takes us out of her trance and back to everyday reality. Cut to a close up of Charu's hand, this time holding a pen and putting it in the ink bottle, before beginning to finally write the title of *her* novel: "My village". In the next sequence Amal is shocked by Charu's successful publication.

Charu's vision has direct relevance to Ray's previous and future work. The close-up images of Charu's face echo the images of the *Devi*; however, Charu's face shows more intention, as well as sense of independence. Furthermore, her vision through which she, as well as, the director and the audience meditate and reflect upon her status, as well as upon the social position of women in Bengal in the 19th century, is a vision of Otherness: a vision through which she realizes her fixed 'destiny', supported by the caricature figures of the Hindu priests, ascetics and pilgrims, mixed with images of exotic and on purpose stereotypical images of aboriginal and voodoo priests, which is the world that she then denies to submit to. Her female *Shakti* (as in *Devi*) is much stronger than the social reality

she has to confront in order to protect the purity of her Heart, manifested as *prem*: the 'forbidden' and true Love. It is important to note here, that this nightmarish vision has been used by Ray in other films which also portray the process of self-realization and transformation of his characters: such as with Arati (played again by Madhabi Mukherjee) in *Mahanagar* (Big City 1964) which also deals with Arati's social imprisonment at home and her effort to find work in the city; or with the rebel character of Siddhartha in *Pratidwandi*.

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