POWERFUL AND POWERLESS: POWER RELATIONS IN SATYAJIT RAY'S FILMS

BY

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Abstract

Scholars have discussed Indian film director, Satyajit Ray's films in a myriad of ways. However, there is paucity of literature that examines Ray's two films, *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* (*Adventures of Goopy and Bagha 1968*) and its sequel *Hirak Rajar Deshe* (*The Diamond King 1980*). Even when discussed by Indian or western scholars, these two films have been considered as children's film or fantasy films with very little discourse on the social or political elements. In both these films, the economically and socially disadvantaged groups are depicted as particularly vulnerable to cultural, political and economic imperialism, violence, exploitation and powerlessness. This thesis demonstrates the relationship between the powerful and the powerless. The films are examined within the framework of Foucault's conception of power. Different roles and interpretations of power relationships between humans through kingship, class, caste, religion, gender, technology and knowledge are analyzed in the thesis in order to investigate the historical, social, and political background that inspired Ray to make these films.

Introduction

Powerful and Powerless: Power Relations in Satyajit Ray's Films

Throughout the centuries, human beings have experienced power relationships through class, gender, and race. The powerless have been dominated or conquered by the powerful. Power has been defined by theorists in numerous ways. Critical theorist Neil Larsen wrote, "the conception of power implies that the wishes of those with more power will normally prevail over the wishes of those with less. Power as simple capacity suggests that there will be an unequal relation between those who employ power for their own purposes and those who are subject to its effects. Power in this sense may be used as an instrument of domination."[1] Professor Elaine Leeder, provides an alternate definition to power. According to her, "power is about control of resource, ownership of the means of production, and the ability to control others, which from those who have historically been dominant."[2] From these above quotes, a power relation not only work as a group to control others but also works within the individual as an instrument to show authority over the weak. For the purpose of the thesis I use Foucault's definition of power. Foucault describes power as being conceived to be rational; something that is exercised from a variety of points in the social body rather than something that is acquired, seized, or shared. Relations of power are not considered to be secondary to other relationships- economic processes, knowledge relationships, sexual relations.[3] According to Foucault there are highly individualized authority figures such as the king, the priest, and the father who are designated as the holders of power and to whom allegiance is owed.[4] Unlike the Marxist theories of power,

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[1] Neil Larsen, The Discourse of Power: Culture Hegemony and the Authoritarian State (Minneapolis: Institute for the Study of Ideologies and Literature, 1983). *2.*
[2] Elaine Leeder, *The Family in Global Perspective: A Gendered Journey.* (California: Sage, 2003).. 54.
[3] Barry Smart. Michel Foucault. (New York: Routledge,1985). 122
[4] Clare O' Farrell. *Michel Foucault*. (C.A. Sage Publications, 2005). 102

Foucault argues that power is not hierarchized from the top down, but is omnipresent.[5] That is, he emphasizes that every social relationship is a power relationship and resistance to power relationships is present at all stratification of power.

Film is a "system of representation" that both produces and reproduces cultural signification. Thus, power relationships have often been portrayed in films since the very beginning of film making.[6] Films are bound up with considerations of power relations related to issues of class, gender and race.[7] Similarly, the Indian filmmaker, Satyajit Ray, has represented a wide range of social and political power relationships in his films and depicted experiences of injustice and oppression of the certain groups, like the economically and socially disadvantaged, at the hands of the economically and socially privileged groups. Ray's motivation for directing the films that demonstrate power are discussed later in this chapter. Examples in point are two films directed by Ray. In the film *Hirak[8] Rajar Deshe* (The Kingdom of Diamond, 1980) the king of *Hirak* is a thinly disguised version of the modern political tyrant. His diamonds mines are manned with forced labor. His peasants are poverty stricken and cruelly taxed. In another film, *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* (Adventures of Goopy and Bagha, 1965) a cruel prime minister tries to use his military power to expand his country territories through war. I argue that in no other film of Ray's does one find the different roles and interpretations of power relationships between humans, through kingship, class, caste, religion, gender, technology, and knowledge, as apparent and creatively depicted as in these two films. In both of these films, economically and socially disadvantaged groups are depicted as particularly powerless against imperialism, violence, and

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[5] Susan Hayward. *Cinema Studies*: *The Key Concepts* (New York: Routledge, 2006). 77.
[6] For example, Sergei Eisenstein demonstrated hierarchical power of the Czars in his film "Battleship of Potempkin" (1925); D.W.Griffith's "Birth of a Nation" (1915) depicts the white supremacy prevalent during the time.
[7] Susan Hayward. *Cinema Studies*: *The Key Concepts* (New York: Routledge, 2006). 144.
[8] Also spelt as Hirok

exploitation. The following chapters of the thesis analyze how metaphors and symbolism in these two films construct and critique power relationships.

Before discussing the literature and the methodology of the thesis, a brief biographical sketch of Ray is in order to delineate the personal experiences that have inspired Ray to make the films. Ray was born in the family which adhered to *Brahmo* ideology, which believed in social and religious reform movements.[9] Thus, it is prudent to say that Ray's upbringing greatly influenced his desire for the reformation of the society. According to Maria Seton, Ray's first biographer, Ray was highly conscious of social and political issues just as his grandfather was during his time. Ray's consciousness was never expressed in direct propaganda terms. Instead, Satyajit depicts the "clash of values, old and new, in the pattern of human relationships."[10] Ray's perspective on the class system is visible in multiple sequences in his films. For example, greatly influenced by Italian neorealism, Ray's first film, *Pather Panchali* (Song of the Road, 1955), was a realist narrative on issues of poverty in Bengal.[11] In the films *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen*[12] and its sequel *Hirak Rajar Deshe*, Satyajit Ray demonstrates himself as a social and political narrator. His ideology is demonstrated in the films as the power of the upper class or the ruler; which prevails not only in Bengal but all over the world. As is established in chapter one, both of these films by Ray illustrate the change and demolition of the power he witnessed in the society around him. These films are political reactions which mirrored the social-political tensions of Bengal in the 1960s -1970s and are still visible today.

Purpose of the Thesis

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[9] Brahmo Ideology or Brahmo samaj--this community played a crucial role in the genesis and development of major religious, social and political movement in India from 1820 to 1930.

[10] Marie Seaton. *Portrait of a Director Satyajit Ray* (London: Dobson Books LTD, 1971). 297.

[11] Bengal was the eastern state of India before partition in 1947 and now it is divided in to West Bengal and the country Bangladesh. Both the story and the film were based on the land of Bengal so the word will appear numerous times.

[12] Also spelt as Goupi, Gopi, Gopy, Gupi; Bayne; Byne; Gayne, Gyne.

This thesis analyzes Ray's two films, *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* and its sequel *Hirak Rajar Deshe* in order to demonstrate how kingship, class, caste, gender, technology, and knowledge inform the roles and interpretations of power relationships between the powerful and powerless. In doing so, I investigate the historical, social, and political background that informed these films. It is important to consider the historical context of India's political system during British colonialism and particularly after independence during the postcolonial Naxalite movement in the sixties and the emergency that occurred in 1975 India[13]— when the two films were produced.

Satyaji Ray's films are mostly set in Bengal; describing its politics, its poverty, its landscape, its rulers, its people, its religion, its language, and its situation in particular time periods. Ray had witnessed India both in colonial and post colonial times. He had seen the citizens give their life for independence and also the chaos or instability of the government of India after the independence. Ray's first film, *Pather Panchali*, was his reaction to the existence of people living in their own land in the midst of much poverty and discomfort. Ray said in an interview that "I find politicians and their game of politics extremely dishonest and they change colors like chameleons."[14] The reflection of his words is presented in the two films *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen and Hirak Rajar Deshe.* These films are deeply engaged with the political conflict in Bengal at that time. According to Ray scholar Moinak Biswas, when *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* was produced, "a new political language appeared that showed a deep dis-identification with the discourse that built a bridge between pre and post independence political cultures."[15]

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[13] The Naxalite movements in the 1960's haunt the ruling powers of India from its vast and volatile rural hinterland - in the shape of Naxalism. And the late prime minister Indira Gandhi declared an Emergency in 1975 on the ground that a grave emergency exists whereby the security of India is threatened by internal disturbances.

[14] Karuna. S. Roy. "The Artist in Politics: Froma an interview with Satyajit Ray in Kolktat [Calcuttat] May 1970." *The Drama Review 15, No. 2* (1971): 310.

[15] Moinak Biswas. *Apu and After: Re-reading Ray's Cinema*. (Calcutta: Seagull Books. 2006), 2.

This was the period in Europe, Asia, and America, when new radical struggles were taking place. Across the world, 1960's marked the revival of the ideals that inspired individual courage and the readiness to sacrifice for a cause such as racial, gender, and ethnic equality. In India specifically, the Naxalite movement was a part of this contemporary, worldwide impulse among radicals to return to the roots of revolutionary idealism.[16]

Rationale for the Thesis

The literature on Satyajit Ray's work is already ample and voluminous. But the number of works examining these particular films, *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* and *Hirak Rajar Deshe*, is not large and there has been little written on the films itself. One of the possible reasons, as described by Darius Cooper[17], is that these two films are very rarely shown abroad. Even when discussed by Indian or western scholars, these two films have been considered as children's film or fantasy films with very little discourse on the social or political elements[18]. In fact, while social elements in Ray's films have been studied by numerous authors (such as poverty, unemployment, modernization, human relationship amongst others), there is paucity of literature that specifically examines the *political* or *social power relationship* in Ray's films, specifically power relationships due to differences in socially constructed distinctions such as kinship, class, caste, religion, knowledge, and gender. Professor Malini Bhattacharya wrote, Ray's films presented us with "diverse social formations seeking to transcend their difficult circumstances, caught in the contradictory pulls of tradition and modernity past and present individuality and

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[16] Sumanta Banerjee, Naxalbari 1967: The Naxalite Movement in India," *Asia Media,* N.D. http://venus.unive.it/asiamed/eventi/schede/naxalbari.html. (accessed May 10, 2009).
[17] Darius Cooper. *The Cinema of Satyajit Ray*: Between Tradition and Modernity (U.K. Cambridge University Press, 2000). 13-14.
[18] Example- Ben Nyce, Satyajit Ray: A Study of His Films (N.Y. Greenwood Press, 1988); Andrew Robinson, *The Inner Eye: The Biography of a Master Film-Maker* (U.K. I.B. Tauris, 2004).

communality."[19] This thesis fills part of that gap by examining the forms of power relationships

and how they interrogate the political history of the British era as well as the postcolonial

Naxalite movement in the sixties and the emergency that occurred in 1975 India).

This thesis departs from scholarship that claims Ray was unable to address contemporary

conditions in India as Ray critic, Chidananda Das Gupta suggests. He states that "Calcutta of the

burning trams, the communal riots, refugees, unemployment, rising prices and food shortages

does not exist in Ray's films."[20] However, *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* and *Hirak Rajar Deshe*,

are very much a reaction to the political situation of Bengal and India during that particular time

period. We do not see the burning of the trams in the film as mentioned by the critics, but we do

watch the burning of houses of the poor, the burning of the books of the village school master

and how the people are taxed and tortured. For instance *Hirak Rajar Deshe*, contains a scene in

which in order to hide the poverty before the foreigners' visit to the kingdom, the soldiers

destroy a shantytown of poor people. Ray himself has said that "this particular scene is based on

his own observation of the government's attempt to cover up scenes of urban poverty along the

route taken by Soviet leaders during a state visit in Calcutta."[21] Moreover, the poor people were

then put into a small prison by the soldiers-- an idea that Ray symbolizes by cutting to a shot of

birds in a cage.

Ray was misunderstood by the critics because he was an intellectual filmmaker rather

than a radical one. Ray discusses this philosophy in an interview with K. S. Roy. He says,

"people also complain that I have never treated a really contemporary subject, the sufferings,

poverty, and struggles of today. But I want to show, not just single aspects of our life today, like

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[19] Malini Bhattacharya. *The Changing Status of Women in West Bengal 1970-2000: The Challenge Ahead*. Ed. Jasodhara Bagchi,. (Sage Publications.2005).81
[20] Chidananda Das Gupta, " Ray and Tagore." *Sight and Sound*, 36:1 (1966-67): 72.
[21] Ben Nyce, *Satyajit Ray: A Study of His Films* (N.Y. Greenwood Press, 1988) 177.

contemporary politics, but a broader view of Indian history, which has not been explored properly in the cinema."[22] For example, Ray had witnessed the horrific violence of Bengal riots which still remains a black spot in Indian history. Hindus and Muslims coexisted for centuries but killed each other in the name of religion during the riots. It is true that Ray does not directly depict the communal riots between the Hindus and the Muslims in *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* and *Hirak Rajar Deshe.* Ray instead, in the town of Shundi (in *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen*), portrays the villagers wearing turban (symbolizing Hindus) and the cap (symbolizing Muslims) living peacefully together. Similarly the school in *Hirak Rajar Deshe* includes both Muslim and Hindu pupils learning side by side. This depiction of peace and harmony amongst two polarizing religions in India has led some to label Ray as a non-political filmmaker. As a youth born in 1921, Ray witnessed the times of Indian independence marred by partition and Hindu-Muslim conflicts. It was a time of distress for the people of India who believed in social harmony. Ray's Brahmo upbringing had taught him that Bengal was a land where Muslims and Hindus had lived together for ages. While many filmmakers had depicted the social and religious turmoil of the contemporary period, Ray, instead, sends a message through his films that the two religious groups can live together calmly as they had done in the pre-British rule in India.

Although some criticize Ray's supposed lack of representation of rising prices and food shortages, in fact, by examining *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* we understand quite the opposite. Food was one of the essential narrative elements in the film. Food is the cause for dissatisfaction and restlessness amongst the people of the state. It is possible that Ray's childhood experiences with the Bengal famine of 1943,[23] coupled with his experiences of the rising food prices and

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[22] Karuna. S. Roy. "The Artist in Politics: Froma an interview with Satyajit Ray in Kolktat [Calcuttat] May 1970." *The Drama Review 15, No. 2* (1971):*310.*

[23] One amongst the several famines that occurred in British administered Bengal. It is estimated that around three million people died from starvation and malnutrition during the period

food shortages, impacted him to symbolize the power of food for hungry and starved people in the film *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen.* To be able to obtain desired food simply by clapping their hands is the first boon that the two starved protagonists ask from the King of the Ghosts. Further, by the power of food the protagonists are able to stop the war between the two countries. In *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen*, the two protagonists use their boon to shower food on the hungry soldiers in the battlefield. Instead of following the command of their Army Chief to attack their neighbor state, soldiers run for the food and thus a war is prevented.

Methodology

Power is not only determined by the government or the capitalists (as Karl Marx proposed); but power exists between individuals, their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives. According to Claire's interpretation on Focault, "power is a relation between different individuals and groups and only exists when it is being exercised. It also refers to sets of relations that exists between individuals or that are strategically deployed by groups of individuals."[24] The thesis analyzes the phenomena of power and interweave Foucault's concept of power relationship such as "governmentality", "subject of power", and "space knowledge power" in two films directed by Satyajit Ray, *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen and Hirak Rajar Deshe.*

As depicted in the two films, and discussed by Foucault, power relations are not dependent only on official or "State apparatus" such as the government or the Church; they are also found in social relations that define self- identify and social norms. Many different forms of power exist in our society: legal, administrative, economic, military, and so forth.[25] In the thesis, I locate Foucault's conception of power in relation to kingship, gender, knowledge, class and

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[24] Clare O' Farrell. *Michel Foucault.* (C.A. Sage Publications, 2005). 99.
[25] Alec McHoul, and Wendy Grace. *A Foucault Premier: Discourse Power and the Subject.* (N.Y. New York University Press, 1993) 65.

technology to investigate the different modes by which human beings are made subjects. I examine the films in order to explain how these different areas correlate in the study of power relationship, highlighting how the political situation of Bengal critically informed the films.

For Foucault "power is nothing more nothing less than the multiplicity of force relations: the struggles, confrontations, contradictions, inequalities, transformations and integrations of these force relations. Thus we are positioned within any struggle only as a consequence of the existence of a struggle for power."[26] In these particular films, power is not only demonstrated as institution, or group, or elite, or class but also power applies itself to immediate everyday life of individuals that makes individuals subjects, like subject to someone else to control or dependence.[27] To bring to light the power relations, I locate its position, find out its point of application and analyze power from the point of view of its internal rationality.

Literature Review

Scholars have discussed Ray's films in a myriad of ways. But there is a little scholarship regarding these two films. However, scholarship on Ray has mainly been concerned with his biography and his artistic vision. For example, authors such as Maria Seaton, and Darius Cooper discussed Ray's films within the context of his history and biography. Other authors like Ben Nyce and Andrew Robinson give us the insight into the technical and artistic view of Ray and his films. Little scholarship focuses on issues on human subjectivity and the crisis of identity in post independence India as depicted in Ray's films

In his book, *The Cinema of Satyajit Ray: Between Tradition and Modernity* (2000), Cooper provides analysis of Ray's selected films and outlines political and social influences of the West on Ray's work. Cooper mentions that he was unable to discuss Satyajit Ray's five films;

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[26] Alec McHoul, and Wendy Grace. *A Foucault Premier: Discourse Power and the Subject*. (N.Y. New York University Press, 1993) 85.

[27] James Faubion. *Power*, Edited by James Faubion (N.Y.: The New Press, 2000). 331.

Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen (The Adventures of Goopy and Bagha, 1968); *Sonar Kella* (The Golden Fortress, 197*4); Joi baba Felunath* (The Elephant God, 1979)*; Hirok Rajar Deshe* (The Kingdom of Diamonds, 1980); *Pikoo* (Pikoo's Day, 1981). Cooper remarks*,* that he has not seen any of these films as they are very rarely shown abroad or, for that matter, even outside Bengal. He comments that it would have been worthwhile to examine the "theoretical framework to see what interesting insights they have to offer about Bengal and India, both through their mythical recreation of history as well as all the veiled allusions made to contemporary India."[28]

In fact, Seton was the first western author who discussed the pre- production of the film *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen,* in her book *Portrait of a Director: Satyajit Ray (1971).* According to Seton, "Ray embarks on his own story, his thoughts run along a philosophical track." Fascinated for years by his grandfather's fantasy, *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen*, by the time Satyajit had finished adding his own touches to it, the story evolved into a fantasy about the absurdity of war.[29] These thoughts are shared by Ben Nyce, professor of literature and film studies at the University of San Diego, in the book *Satyajit Ray: A Study of his films (1988)* in the chapter *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen (The Adventures of Goopy and Bagha:) A Children's Story*. Nyce wrote that this film is equally pleasing to adults and children, "functioning as it does as both serious commentary and pure fantasy."[30] As seen in *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen*, it is very true that Satyajit Ray has a dynamic vision on fantasy and he juxtaposes fantasy (he uses magic and other supernatural forms) with the power relation and reality for social change. Goopy and Bagha, with the help of the village school teacher, are able to muster common people, who have been suppressed and fearful of their king, to rise against their king.

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[28]Darius Cooper. *The Cinema of Satyajit Ray: Between Tradition and Modernity* (U.K. Cambridge University Press, 2000). 13-14.

[29] Marie Seaton. *Portrait of a Director Satyajit Ray* (London: Dobson Books LTD, 1971). 209.

[30]Ben Nyce. *Satyajit Ray: A Study of His Films* (N.Y. Greenwood Press, 1988). 113.

Similarly, Ajanta Sircar, in her article, continues to offer a peek into Ray's world of the imagination, his world of fantasy that he created for children, a world of magic and adventure embedded within a strong social footing. She argues that "the viewers live vicariously through the characters of Goopi and Bagha, who strive to overcome the forces of evil with a strong social, political and ideological message hidden within the fantastic imagery."[31] The people of Shundi lost their speaking power in the film *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen*. The prime minister instructs his magician to make a medicine which can banish the curse because he believes silence is much more dangerous for a ruler. Sircar's interpretation is that words provide people the "cathartic outlet for their anger or dissatisfaction."[32] However, this analysis does not hold true as depicted in the films. The demonstration of anger or dissatisfaction by the people is controlled ruthlessly by cutting of the throats in the land of Halla or by throwing the dissenter in the brain washing machine to keep things under control. Words help the ruler just to run the country smooth for their own sake rather than the people or citizens.

On a different note, in the article "Conditions of visibility: People's imagination and *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen*," Mihir Bhattacharya examines the role of women in the film claiming, "the effects of instituting a peasant gaze of the fairy tale *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen*, the politics of a plebian fantasy around food, music and travel, and missing of female characters, a question not considered important at the time of the film."[33] In fact the only female members in the film *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* are the two obedient, vulnerable princesses, who never speak or act on volition, and are offered as prize to the two male protagonists for their efforts in stopping the war between Halla and Shundi. Ajanta Sircar in her article *"An 'Other' Road to an*

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[31] Ajanta Sarkar, "An Other Road To An Other Ray" *Journal of the Moving Image*, no. 1 (1999): 53.
[32] Ibid 65.
[33] Mihir Bhattarya. "Conditions of Visibility: People's Imagination and Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne," in *Apu and Afer, Re-reading Ray's Cinema*, edited by Moinak Biswas (Seagull Books, 2006), 4-5.

'Other' Ray" supports this view. She finds it exceptionally surprising that "during the 1960s when feminist theory and a new wave of the women's movement globally were taking form, the women in Ray's film continued to be prize money."[34] However, I believe Ray casts his woman characters such to alert us to the fact that women continue to be treated as objects, even in the modern day society. He suggests that people need to come out from the stereotypical image that women are still depending upon men.

After reviewing the available literature on Ray and his work, my position most closely resembles that of Cooper. The unavailability of those films in the Western world inspired me to reexamine these films which Cooper was unable to discuss in his work. Even when discussing the two films, some authors give us the idea of Ray's making of the two films, *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* and *Hirak Rajar Deshe* while others focus on Ray's fantastic use of imaginary in the two films. Some authors help us to identify the psychoanalytical concepts of this film and some help us to identify the invisibility of woman. However, what becomes clear in surveying the existing scholarship is an odd gap in the literature; it lacks attention to the power relationships in Ray's films. While authors only slightly touch on the power of religion mentioning the Christian cross,[35] this thesis goes further and talks about the variation of power which was demonstrated in the two of Ray's films mentioned above. Thus, in contrast to Cooper's claim to study the films for their "mythical recreation of history", the thesis particularly studies the films, *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen,* (1968) and its sequel *Hirak Rajar Deshe,* (1980) because they, more than Ray's other films, clarify how power is created through kingship, caste, gender, and knowledge, and how the powerful dominate the powerless. Analyses of these films add to our understanding of Ray's perception of power relationships as well as his views on the

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[34] Ajanta Sarkar, "An Other Road To An Other Ray" *Journal of the Moving Image*, no. 1 (1999): 65.

[35] Ben Nyce, *Satyajit Ray: A Study of His Films* (N.Y. Greenwood Press, 1988) 113.

contemporary experiences of India. The following chapters analyze power relations that appear

numerous times in the two films. For example, the two "powerless", male protagonists, Goopy

and Bagha, who are ridiculed by their villagers, become "powerful" when they receive the three

boons from the fantastic King of the Ghosts.

<div align="center">Scope of the Thesis</div>

The thesis argues that *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* and *Hirak Rajar Deshe* are a political

reaction of the times that Ray grew up and the times that the films were made because they

interrogate the relationships and imbalance of power by analyzing different elements of

individual social and cultural fabrics in relation to the authority and individuals themselves. Ray

himself once said in an interview in Calcutta in 1970 with Karuna Sarkar Ray; "I was so

passionately interested in the cinema that I could not consider politics apart from film."[36]

According to Biswas, "in the wake of the Naxalbari movement and the Vietnam war, in that hour

of the youth, Ray seemed to be disconcertingly removed from the historical present."[37] In order

to make the argument that Ray was not "removed from the historical present", it is necessary to

provide a context when the films were written, when they were produced, and their relevance to

the particular time period of the films.

The thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter one examines the historical and political

context of India, and specifically Bengal, during the time when the two films were produced.

Two subsections discuss the two time periods; the period before the Indian independence in 1947

or the colonial India and political and social context of Bengal after the independence of India.

Goopy and Bagha was written by Upendra Kishore Roychowdhury when Bengal was ruled by

the British Empire. However, the film *Hirak Rajar Deshe* was more directly influenced by the

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[36] Karuna. S. Roy. "The Artist in Politics: Froma an interview with Satyajit Ray in Kolktat [Calcuttat] May 1970." *The Drama Review 15, No. 2* (1971):310.
[37] Moinak Biswas. "*Apu and After*: Re-reading Ray's Cinema." Seagull Books. 2006. 3.

emergency of India in 1975 and the Naxalite movement as radical social and political movements. Chapter two provides an introduction to the two films and a discourse on the power relationships. This chapter focuses on the power of the ruler or the power of the King using excerpts from the film to discuss misuses of power to dominate the people.

Chapter three examines the relationship between the powerful and powerless and the relationships through class, caste and religion. In this chapter, I discuss the power relationships between caste system in Hinduism, and how Ray sutures different religions into the same platform in his films by depicting them as living together in order to create an idealistic illusion of harmony. Locating sex and sexuality in relation of power, chapter four discusses the power of gender role, the power of male ego and female sex used in the film. The final chapter, chapter five investigates the importance of knowledge and technology in helping the state to control their people. It also illustrates how the power of knowledge helps the countrymen to dethrone a cruel king. Finally, in the conclusion I summarize the findings and provide suggestions for future research.

Chapter 1
Political Scenario of India and Bengal at the Time Periods of the Two Films' Production

This chapter discusses the political and social scenario of Bengal and India during two time periods; the period before the Indian independence in 1947 or the colonial India and political and social context of Bengal after the independence of India, specifically the Naxalite movement and the Emergency period. This is divided into two subsections: The Pre-independence India and the Period between the Indian independence and 1980's. These two eras in Indian history are particularly relevant because the story *Goopy Gayen and Bagha Bayen* which represents the war between the powerful and the powerless was written by Upendra Kishore when India was under British colonial rule. The sequel, *Hirak Rajar Deshe* (1980) was written by Satyajit Ray after the Indian independence, and also demonstrates the war between the powerful and the powerless.

The king or the ruler, for their own benefit, misuses their power to dominate the people or their countrymen through physical and mental torture. Similarly power was introduced by the rulers of the pre and post independent India mainly through physical torture against the rebellion. The discussion prepares readers for my analysis of the films, through familiarizing them with the linkage between the political scenario at that time, and how that influenced Ray, to make these films as a reaction against the authority who is in charge of power. The impact on Ray's films helps the society to judge between the good and the bad, the truth and the untruth, and the right and the wrong. Bengal's historical, social, and political background inspired Ray to make the two films, *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* and *Hirak Rajar Deshe*; specifically the history of Indian political system during the British era and after the Indian independence or the postcolonial India

namely the Naxalite movement in the sixties and the emergency that occurred in 1975 India. Ray had witnessed India in terms of both pre independence and post independent India.

<center>The Pre-independence India</center>

The natural richness gold, silver, precious stones, spices etc of India specifically Bengal tempted Aryans, Turks, Pathans, and the Mughals who came to pick the benefits of the land in ancient Bengal. Mughal Empire ruled India for about two hundred years. During the 16th century, the Mughal power declined and the British influence increased because of their diplomatic intelligence as well as their development of modern technology and arms. The internal conflicts between the multiple princely states in India further supported the rise of the British power in India. The British began to take control of the Indian princely states. According to Percival Griffiths, an Indian Civil Servant and a prolific writer of the Colonial times in India, "in 1857 the East India Company brought on the power of the entire British imperial government. The Indian colonies of the British East India Company became British Colonial India - and so began a new phase of colonial plunder from the sub-continent, a phase that saw constant challenges to British hegemony in the region. Hence, for almost 200 years, there was a systematic transfer of wealth from India to Europe." [38] It is true to say that the British Government was the supreme ruler of all India by 1858. The Indians suffered brutal actions at the hands of the British, being deprived of employment, food, and shelter. The British treated the Indian natives outrageously, torturing and imprisoning them without any reason. Any demonstrations or acts of independence were brutally suppressed.

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[38] Percival Griffiths, *Modern India*. Frederick A Praeger. N.Y 1965, 50. For more information on the topic, readers are advised to read the following works: 1.*The Naxalite Movement in India*, by Prakash Singh. Published by Rupa, 1995. & 2. *Tribal Guerrillas: The Santals of West Bengal and the Naxalite Movement*, by Edward Duyker. Published by Oxford University Press, 1987.

Upendra Kishore Roy Chowdury, grandfather of Satyajit Ray, wrote of the story *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen.* He was born in 1863 and died in 1915 the time when India was under the total control of the British Empire which dominated the Indian Maharajas. Frustrated with the imperialistic power of the British, Upendra Kishore took refuge in the idea that only fantastic power could rescue the poor, tortured Indians from British hegemony and free the country from their power. Upendra Kishore used the King of Ghosts as a savior of the two male protagonists, Goopy and Bagha giving them power to defeat the brutal prime minister of the land of Sundi. Thus, one could argue that in the writing of the story, Upendra Kishore lived his dream of the fantastical power coming to the rescue of the Indians.

Period between the Indian independence and 1980's

India got her independence from the British rule on 15th August 1947 through diplomatic involvement of political organizations, mass public movements, and some underground movements- both peaceful and violent. Indian leaders who forced the British to leave the country included Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Mohammad Ali Jinnah. However, before returning to England, the British gave in to the demands of some political leaders from Muslim League and the Indian National Congress, the two leading parties at the time. India was divided into two countries based on religious identity, India and Pakistan (East, West) to avoid a civil war in India between the Hindus and the Muslims.[39] The partition remains the single largest episode of the uprooting of people in modern history. Between twelve to fourteen million people left their homes to take up residence across the border from India to Pakistan and vice versa. As a child, Satyajit Ray had witnessed the partition of Bengal and the citizens who gave their life for independence during the chaos and instability of the post-

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[39] The province of Bengal was divided into the two separate entities of West Bengal belonging to India, and East Bengal belonging to Pakistan. East Bengal was renamed East Pakistan in 1955, and later became the independent nation of Bangladesh.

Independence government of India. Besides partition, the two other major political events that most directly impacted Ray's work were the Naxalite Movement in Bengal and the period of Indian Emergency.

Naxalite movement / Indian Emergency

The 1960's were marked by radical social and political movements across the world— the national liberation struggle of the Vietnamese people; the civil rights and anti-war movements in the USA; the student agitations in Western Europe; Che Guevara's revolutionary protest in South America. At this time India too was experiencing its homegrown socio-political movement. The Naxalite movement in India and specifically in Bengal was a movement for change led by the supporters of Maoist political sentiment and ideology and the extremist and radical. This group was led by a radical forces within the Communist Party of India (Marxist Leninist) (CPI(ML)). The Naxalite movement took place in May 1967 at a place called 'Naxalbari' in the state of Bengal. The initial purpose of this socio-political movement was the abolition of the feudal system in the Indian villages and to free the poor from the cruel landlords. The movement gained momentum with the anti right wing Indian National Congress (INC) party, in majority both at the central and state level politics at the time. INC realized the emergence of a new threat not only to law and order but to the very existence of the democratic structure of the country. The Naxalite movement attempted to bring about a change in the agricultural system by recommending an alternative system that would implement land reforms. Thus, the Naxalite movements appealed to the rural poor who saw in it a hope to free themselves from their current miserable conditions. Despite the rise in followers of the movement with rural India, the Naxalbari was crushed in 1972 by the police under the orders of the then government in Bengal, under the leadership of the chief minister Siddartha Sankar Ray. Naxalism has left an

unforgettable impression on modern Indian culture as indicated by the number major works of

fiction, theatre and films produced in different Indian languages that directly represented the

movement or used it as the background.[40]

With regards to cinema, Maria Seaton claims that in the late 1960s, many cinemas in

Bengal cancelled their night shows because people were fearful to be on the streets after dark.

Seaton believed that, "as the situation became worse, Ray's difficulties at that time, and those he

can incur in the future, are inevitably linked with the political and economic crisis within Bengal

and India."[41] Ashish Rajadhyaksha agrees, writing that, "in the 1960s and 1970s, Ray along with

the most Indian artists of his generation, shared a classic liberal nationalist discomfort…… when

the Naxalite Communist Party of India (Marxist- Leninist) appropriated for itself the voice of

radical change."[42]. Ray lamented that there is "a great distance between him and the present

generation", which believed in the radical social and political change.[43]

In the 1970s, the former Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi and her centrist political

party Indian National Congress, used military power to resolve conflict with their political

opponents. When the opposition parties had held rallies and demonstrations demanding her

resignation, Gandhi declared an Emergency on June 26, 1975 on the ground that the security of

India was threatened by internal disturbances. Gandhi's government arrested well known

opposition politicians and activists, and cut off electricity connection to major newspapers from

printing their papers carrying the news of the arrests. By the time the connection was resumed

and they could bring out their papers, censorship had already been promulgated under the

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[40] Sumanta Banerjee, "The Indian Emergency of 1975-1977," *Asia Media,* N.D.
http://venus.unive.it/asiamed/eventi/schede/naxalbari.html (accessed August, 15, 2009).
http://venus.unive.it/asiamed/eventi/schede/emergency.html. (accessed May 10, 2009).
[41] Marie Seaton, Portrait of a Director Satyajit Ray (London: Dobson Books LTD, 1971), 292.
[42] Darius Cooper, The Cinema of Satyajit Ray: Between tradition and Modernity (U.K: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 6.
[43] Karuna. S. Roy. "*The Drama Review*: Theatre in Asia (Spring, 1971)," The MIT Press, TDR, Vol.15, No.2, *310.*

emergency rules.[44] The emergency deprived Indian citizens of their fundamental human and

political rights. Freedom of the press was restricted through strict censorship; those who opposed

Gandhi and her followers were arrested. During the two years of emergency period, the common

people in India did not have any knowledge of what was happening beyond their own

neighborhoods and families had no access to information about their members who disappeared.

The Indira government imposed restrictions on journalists for their reporting of anything that

might bring into hatred or contempt or excite disaffection towards the government.[45] Naxalite

activists and supporters were held in jails all over India. More than 300 academics from all over

the world, including scholar/activist Noam Chomsky, signed a petition against the Indian

government's violation of prison rules.[46] Also Amnesty International released a report, listing

cases of illegal detention and torture of Naxalite prisoners in Indian jails.[47] Due to the global and

internal pressure, the Emergency period ended in 1977. The national elections were held in

which Indira Gandhi's Congress Party was badly defeated, and thus ended the 30-year

domination of the Congress party at the national level.

  This chapter referenced the two films by Ray and history of Indian political system

during the British era and the period after the Indian independence, specifically, the Naxalite

movement in the sixties and the emergency that occurred in1975. Naxalism revolution started in

the name of class struggle and fight against imperialism and feudalism. Satyajit Ray witnessed

the instability or misuse of power by the Indian politicians after independence. The power

relationships both at the national and the state level lay a firm foundation and created the

backdrop for Ray's two films, *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* and *Hirak Rajar Deshe*. The films are

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[44] Sumanta Banerjee, "The Indian Emergency of 1975-1977," *Asia Media,* N.D.
http://venus.unive.it/asiamed/eventi/schede/emergency.html. (accessed May 10, 2009).
[45] Ibid
[46] Ibid
[47] Ibid.

Ray's political reactions which mirrored the social – political tensions of Bengal in the 1960s - 1970s and are still visible today. The two films are about the war between the powerful and the powerless; about two supposedly powerless protagonists who receive fantastical powers to destroy the villains of the world. In the following chapters, I analyze and discuss the different roles and interpretations of power relationships between humans through kingship; caste, religion; gender; technology and knowledge. Description of the social/ political events presented above is necessary to understand the following chapters and my interpretation of Ray's depiction of the above power relationships.

Chapter 2

Power of the King / Ruler

There are highly individualized authority figures such as the king, the priest, and the father who are designated as the holders of power and to whom allegiance is owed. It is a power which operates via divine right, public ceremony, and by making examples of those who transgress authority. Foucault argues that forms of sovereign power began to become less and less efficient as a way of regulating the behavior of populations towards the end of the eighteenth century leading to the development of new techniques in social control.[48]

This chapter focuses on the power of the ruler or the power of the king using excerpts from the film to discuss misuses of power to dominate the people. However, before that, a brief synopsis of the narratives of *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* and *Hirak Rajar Deshe* is in order to provide context for my interpretation. The films were very popular with the audience in Bengal. Ray wrote to Marie Seaton, about six months after the *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* released, to say that "it is extraordinary how quickly it has become part of popular culture. There isn't a single child in the city who doesn't know and sing the songs."[49] They equally appealed to for the children as well as the adults, functioning both as a pure fantasy and serious commentary[50] on the contemporary socio-politic conflict related to lack of food, imbalance in caste and gender, and the misuse of power by those in power.

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[48] Clare O' Farrell. "*Michel Foucault.*" C.A. Sage Publications, 2005. 102

[49] Andrew Robinson, *The Inner Eye: The Biography of a Master Film-Maker* (United Kingdom: I.B. Tauris, 2004).182

[50] Ben Nyce, *Satyajit Ray*: *A Study of His Films* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988).114

Film Synopsis

Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen

   Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen (1968) was written by Upendra Kishore Roy Chowdhury, a well known children's fiction writer in Bengal and also grandfather of Satyajit Ray. *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* demonstrates the war between the powerful and the powerless, same as in the film *Hirak Rajar Deshe*, which was written by Ray himself. *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* (1968) is set in rural Bengal and revolves around the lives of the two male protagonists Goopy and Bagha. Goopy is a young villager with an unimpressive voice, but with great ambitions to become an accomplished singer. The villagers are unable to tolerate his singing and so decide to ostracize him. After being driven out from his native village, Goopy ends up in a forest where he meets Bagha, a drummer with a similar fate. At night, the King of Ghosts, is extremely pleased with their song, and grants them three boons - limitless food, boundless travel, and musical talent.

   Goopy and Bagha travel to the kingdom of Sundi for a music competition. The king of Sundi, pleased by their musical talent, appoints Goopy and Bagha as court musicians. The neighboring king of Halla, a brother of King of Sundi, under the spell of his wicked prime minister, plans to attack Sundi. Goopy and Bagha travel to Halla, stop the war with their magical powers, and each marry one of the King's daughters.

Hirak Rajar Deshe

   In *Hirak Rajar Deshe* (1980), the sequel to *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen,* Goopy Gayen and Bagha Bayen grow bored with their luxurious, but monotonous lives as crown princes of Shundi and Halla. Looking for a challenge in the form of an invitation to the land of Hirak they set out to demonstrate their musical skills that were acquired as a boon from the King of Ghost.

The image portrayed of the King of Hirak is that of a modern political dictator. His diamond mines are manned with forced labor. The citizens in his country are poverty stricken and cruelly taxed. The King with his minister and army, abuse poor farmers, diamond-miners, and even an old singer. However, the only overt enemy the king has in his land is a local school teacher who wishes to create awareness among the people of the king's injustices. The school teacher flees from the king's army to hide in the mountains. By coincidence, Goopy and Bagha meet the fugitive school teacher who informs them of the king's true nature. At the end, three of them, along with the people of the kingdom, dethrone the king through their magical power and trickery.

<center>Power of the Ruler</center>

The intensity, concentration, and the demonstration of power of the ruler has evolved over centuries. Kings around the world enjoyed unquestioned power in the 18th century. Penal torture and execution, a display of sovereign power, were aimed to publicly punish offenders and to set an example for the others by arousing and encouraging the crowd to participate by insulting and attacking the criminal.[51]   However, by the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century, physical punishment staged as a public spectacle started to disappear. Foucault acknowledges that the process of the punishment have changed through times due to the improvement of technology which helps new techniques of surveillance and social control. The changing power of the ruler is demonstrated in both the films. The public ceremony surrounding punishment started to vanish and in time to gave way to a short legal and administrative ritual. "Punishment became more reticent, no longer concerned with the infliction of horrible physical

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[51] Clare O' Farrell. *Michel Foucault.* (C.A. Sage Publications, 2005). 82

pains."[52] Thus the relation between punishment and the body of the condemned underwent a radical change.

Similarly, this difference and evolution in exhibition of power and punishment is very evident in the two films. *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen*, written in the 19th century, utilized this public demonstration of punishment as illustrated when Goopy was run out of his native village, Amloki, on the back of a donkey. The villagers gathered to see him be punished by the king- as they cheered and beat their drums. Applying Foucault, the ceremony functions as a display of the King's power to the public, making an example of Goopy so that in the future others would not defy him. Foucault points out, the public execution was a state occasion; it performed a juridico-political function. It was a ceremonial, equated to other grand rituals of royal power such as a coronation, by which strength of the king can be glorified.[53] The king was the source of all justice, and hence any violation of the law was an injury to the king.

Thus, in Goopy Bagha power is presented as operating via divine right, and public ceremony make examples of those who transgress authority. Foucault argues that forms of sovereign power began to become less and less efficient as a way of regulating the behavior of populations towards the end of the eighteenth century leading to the development of new techniques in social control.[54] However, *Hirak Rajar Deshe*, a film written and produced in 1980, utilized new techniques of machinery power such as "brainwashing machine" to control the people of the state. Thus, the character of King Hirak uses more modern techniques to control his dissenting subjects. Instead of slitting throats, Hirak Raja uses the brain washing machine to

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[52] Mark Cousins & Athar Hussain. *Michel Foucault* (St. Martin's press New York 1984). 169- 170

[53] Cousins & Athar Hussain. *Michel Foucault* (St. Martin's press New York 1984).171
[54] Clare O' Farrell. *Michel Foucault*. (C.A. Sage Publications, 2005). 102

control the rebellious citizens and change their views. The king also uses equipments like the "binoculars" to monitor the activities of his subjects from atop his castle.

According to Foucault, a king is only a king if he has subjects. "Powers are strategically deployed by groups or individuals. Institution and the government are simply the ossification of highly complex sets of power relations which exist at every level of the social body."[55] Further, "governmentality is the rationalisation and systematization"[56] of a particular way of exercising political sovereignty through the government of peoples conduct. Thus, focus of the government is not solely to rule over a territory but to govern a population to maintain their power. For example, in *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* the King of Halla, who was charged with the power to rule his kingdom, was in reality a puppet of the brutal prime minister. The prime minister controls the land of Halla by drugging the original king. The prime minister persuades the king to go to war by falsely telling him it is for the benefit of the kingdom and its people. The king, under the influence of drugs, decides to invade the land of Sundi to expand his country's territory.

Furthermore, Foucault describes power as being purely located in the state or the administrative and executive bodies which govern the nation State. The governmental services, such as the police or the education services can only be enforced because every individual is tied in to a whole network of relations. These services rely on the "cooperation of a whole network of local and individualized tactics of power in which everybody is involved."[57] It is important for every department in the government to work in harmony for the betterment of the country and its

[55] Ibid.99.
[56] Ibid.107
[57] Clare O' Farrell. *Michel Foucault*. (C.A. Sage Publications, 2005). 100

people. However, contrary to working for the benefit of the people, the heads of the departments can work in harmony for their own personal benefits as well, as is witnessed in both *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* and *Hirak Rajar Deshe*. The prime minister in *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* used his scientist to prepare a medicine which will help the Sundi people speak (they lost the ability in an epidemic), and thus enable him to rule the country. The people who fail to pay taxes are queued and imprisoned by the Halla king with the help of the military. In *Hirak Rajar Deshe* too the health minister; education minister; finance minister; broadcast minister are busy working in synchrony utilizing their power to rule the country. The finance minister forcefully, with the help of the state's military power, collects taxes from the poor. The Diamond King knows that gaining knowledge helps the school children to judge between right and the evil. Thus, he ordered the education minister to close the village school with the help of the state police forces.

In addition, Foucault mentions that power can only be exercised over free subjects. If a man is chained up, beaten, and subjected to external force exerted over him, then it is no longer "relationship of power but of limits."[58] "There is no power without refusal or revolt."[59] This has been portrayed exceptionally well in the film *Hirak Rajar Deshe*, where the King wants to silence an old singer Charandas, who's lyrics create awareness among the people about the king's exploitation and malicious behavior. Upset and angry, the Diamond king commands his armed forces to shut Charandas's mouth, tie him, and throw him in the well. Instead of holding his tongue and possibly save his life, Charandas continues to sing against the cruel king until his last breath. Charandas's final comments to Goopy and Bagha in the film are that he will sing this song as long as he is alive.

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[58] Clare O' Farrell. *Michel Foucault*. (C.A. Sage Publications, 2005). 100
[59] Michael Foucault. "'*Omnes et singulatim': toward a critique of political reason*." Quoted in Clare O' Farrell. "*Michel Foucault*." (C.A. Sage Publications, 2005). 100

Hirak Raja's other characteristics of power is his self glorification. He decides to install a giant statue of him towering over the people in a central place in his kingdom; symbolizing a central tower from which he would monitor the behavior of the people of Hirak like Bentham's Panopticon. The gigantic stature of the king of diamond metaphorically demonstrates the power of the king and suggests that the king is watching them at all times. Hirak Raja was extremely pleased with his own statue and the inauguration arrangements for his statue. Gloating with self-satisfaction, he comments in the film that after looking the statue people will say how powerful the king of Diamond is.

Both the films emphasize non-transparency and double talk in the creation and maintenance of power. The protagonists enter a diamond mine after fleeing from the village school master, Udayan. The King was trying to create an image of being a kind and benevolent king in front of the foreign visitors. When Goopy and Bagha say that diamond miners should not get diamonds because they belong to the king, the king slyly remarks that after all these are human beings and it was because of them that the king was able to mine the diamonds. The workers were in reality whipped and tortured by the king's military power and were punished harshly for the slightest of oversight in the mine. Similarly, the people of Sundi had lost their power to speak because of an epidemic. However, the prime minister of Halla wants the common people to speak in order to help the king rule the kingdom. Of course, in reality, the prime minister wants people of Sundi to have 'speech'—but no real 'voice' in political terms. What the greedy prime minister really means is to collect taxes and implement his power on the citizens and increase the king's treasury and his own wealth. Should anyone actually use speech to talk or plan against him, their throat would promptly be slit by the king's army.

Ray was greatly influenced by the prevalent political and social scenario of India, and specifically Bengal. In *Hirak Rajar Deshe* there is no brutality in the king of Hirak's actions. He controls his people by brainwashing, so that the citizens lose their power to think critically and do not bear any ill-will against the king. Ray mentions that one of the few violent scenes in the film was inspired by his own observation of the government's attempt to cover up scenes of urban poverty along the route taken by Soviet leaders during a state visit in Calcutta.[60] This violent act in the film occurs when soldiers destroy a shantytown of poor people. Before the coming of the outside delegates, the king's army cleans up the city by putting the poor citizens in cage-like camps and burning their little shanty houses so no outsiders could see the poverty, poor governance within.

The late Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, had called the emergency in 1975 on the grounds that the security of India was threatened by internal disturbances. With the emergency rule, long after the independence, the country India was not free. The bourgeoisie were the owners of capital, purchasing and exploiting labor power, using the surplus value from employment of this labor power to accumulate or expand their capital. These experiences had prompted Satyajit Ray to develop a Marxist approach to class. In both these films we can see difference between classes of people mainly bourgeoisie and the working class. In *Hirak Rajar Deshe* the evil king uses his military power to dominate his countrymen and establish the dictatorship. As Robinson mentioned, some Indians sensed the political content of the film ground behind the fantasy. For example, Utpal Dutta, the Marxist producer, playwright and actor who played the king, in *Hirak Rajar Deshe* said that the film was out-and-out political.[61]

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[60] Ben Nyce, *Satyajit Ray: A Study of His Films* (N.Y. Greenwood Press, 1988) 177.
[61] Andrew Robinson, *The Inner Eye: The Biography of a Master Film-Maker.* (U.K. I.B. Tauris) 2004.

To conclude, the king or the ruler established and maintained their power in multiple ways. Self-glorification, physical and mental punishment and torture over subjects, reliance on the administrative units and executive bodies to exercise power, and non-transparency, have been cited as characteristics of power. As mentioned previously, power relationships can be experienced in groups, as well amongst individuals, as an instrument for domination. The synopsis of the two films presented in the chapter and the understanding of the royal and authoritarian power, sets the stage for the next chapter on the power of class, caste and religion.

Chapter 3

Power of Caste, Class, and Religion

Class is deeply embedded in the recesses of our cultural and political unconscious. In every crevice of everyday life we find signs of class differences and it plays a decisive role in social relations.[62]

Class and caste both intermingle with each other. Caste often represents the biological connotation of the expression but the term class signifies as economical connotation. Caste, is a system of rigid social stratification characterized by hereditary status, endogamy, and social barriers sanctioned by custom, law, and religion[63]. But the basic socially constructed class distinction is between the educationally and economically powerful and the powerless. In Marxist theory, social class is caused by the fundamental economic structure of work and property. In the holy book of Hindu religion, the caste divided into four major parts from top down; the priests (*Brahmins*), the warriors (*Kshatriyas),* the farmers (*Vaishyas),* the laborers (*Shudras) respectively.* In addition to the four named castes, another category of people, which is considered outside of the system, is called the Outcastes (*Chandalas).*[64]

B.R. Ambedkar, an architect of the Indian constitution in 1949, and belonging to the lower caste (*Shudra*) himself spent his whole life fighting against the social discrimination. He "counterposed the concept of nation as against the concept of caste, which was the pre-eminent mode of social organization in India" at the time [65] For Ambedkar, the idea of a nation was not just political sovereignty but people who were socially bound as one. He believed that religion,

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[62] Stanley Aronowitz. *How Class Works, Power and Social Movement*. (N.Y.Yale University Press,2003). 31
[63] "CASTE." Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. 2009.Merriam-Webster Online. 21 November 2009
<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/CASTE>
[64] Deshpande Ashwini, *Does caste still define Disparity: A look at inequality in Kerala, India*. 322.
[65] The Caste Notion & the Nation, chapter 4, Asian Human Rights Publication, 2001.
http://www.ahrchk.net/pub/mainfile.php/demo_and_hope/94/ (accessed Aug 2009)

social status, and property are all sources of power and authority, which man uses, to control the liberty of another. Thus, just economic reforms are not enough to bring social justice and equality in a nation. If the source of power is social or religious, then social reform and religious reform is necessary for edification of human rights and to bring freedom and equality to a nation. Even Gandhi who belonged to a higher caste took the side of the untouchables to bring equality and peace to humanity. In fact, the oppression and exploitation of the lower caste in the 1960's was one of the causes of Naxalism, as discussed in chapter one, and had an immense appeal among the deprived rural poor in several parts of India, who saw in it a hope to free themselves from their present miserable conditions. [66]

Alongside the power of the ruler, the conflict of caste and class and the interplay of the power between them have been depicted masterfully in Ray's films. Goopy and Bagha come from the lower economic class as well as low caste background. The film *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* begins with Goopy walking in the rice field with a tanpura[67] on his shoulder. He spots a farmer working in the field in a distance. Goopy loudly accuses the farmer of lacking any idea about classical music (*tumi chasa ami ostad khasa*'). Goopy uses the term '*chasa*', a derogative word for farmer, which can also mean one who is foolish. He also uses the term '*ostad*' which means the opposite someone who is intelligent or wise. Thus, in the first scene, the class difference is vividly represented in Ray's film through the language that the male protagonist uses. According to Sociologist Elaine Leeder, when it comes to relation between classes and cultures, a conflict perspective would hold that different groups have different values and that there is a hierarchy of cultures that defines who will be excluded and who will be assimilated

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[66] Sumanta Banerjee, "The Indian Emergency of 1975-1977," *Asia Media,* N.D.
http://venus.unive.it/asiamed/eventi/schede/emergency.html. (accessed Aug, 2009).
[67] Tanpura- An Indian musical instrument

into the dominant pecking order. [68] Thus there is major segregation in most societies that may lead to possible conflict amongst them.

Earlier in the film, to obtain a musical instrument *tanpura*, Goopy had tried to please his elderly uncle (*Josti khuro*)[69], by kneading his body and legs, fetching water from well and killing some big rats. But now, with the help of the king of ghosts he received treatment reserved for those in high economic class and caste. After they won the heart of the King Sundi, both Goopy and Bagha were boarded in the king's castle as court singers. They were treated lavishly. They now had a roof above their head, something that Goopy and Bagha had forgotten to ask for, as one of the three boons, from the king of ghost. They had lavish arrangements, which they had never experienced in their life before. Two servants fanned the two crown princes while they nibbled on fruits and admired the fountain in the middle of the room. They were the very important guests of the king and therefore they could have those unusual things which a common person could not imagine of in their wildest dreams. Ray uses other subtle ways to demonstrate the class differences. For example, in the film *Hirak Rajar Deshe*, the dwarf is seen holding the king's robe and doing menial chores. The small stature of the person is used to symbolize someone who is in low occupation job, and also emphasizes the king as powerful and of higher status.

Unlike Marx and Habermas, Michel Foucault distinguishes power from relationships of exchange and production and also from relationships of communication. Power becomes a way of changing people's conduct or as he defines it, "a mode of action upon the actions of others."[70] Some people exercise power and find pleasure in doing so; others find pleasure in resisting

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[68] Elaine J. Leeder. *The Family in Global Perspective: A Gendered Journey*. (C.A. Sage Publications, 2003). 54
[69] Khuro means elderly/uncle and Josti is the name of the person
[70] Clare O' Farrell. *Michel Foucault* (C.A. Sage Publications, 2005).99

power.[71] The exercise of power by the upper caste on lower caste or the weak to humiliate for pleasure is demonstrated well in *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen*. Goopy was walking down the village roads and meets the Brahmins sitting underneath the great banyan tree. The Brahmins demand that Goopy sings a song for them, not because they were charmed by his good voice but rather to humiliate him. They are the upper caste Brahmins in the Hindu society with the power to control people from other caste and thus found pleasure in exercising that power. Goopy declines to sing because the only song he knew was a morning raga, *Raag Bhairavi*, sung at dawn. But the Brahmins convince Goopy that morning was not gone. One Brahmin even claims that until the shadow of his walking stick touched the nearby rock, it was still morning. As Goopy begins to sing, the Brahmin moves his walking stick so that the shadow touched the rock, claiming that morning was over and time to stop the *raag*. This scene was Ray's critique of the power that the Brahmins felt they had—they could even control the planetary system. This scene was nothing but the demonstration of power relationship to control the subaltern class of people. Goopy was not so foolish as to believe the Brahmins, but coming from a lower caste, and having been subjugated by the upper caste for so many years, he does not have power or confidence to talk to them. Like other lower caste people, Goopy also accepts that caste system is the way to keep society from disintegrating to chaos. According to Foucault, "there is no need for weapons, physical violence, material constraints. Just a critical gaze- the weight of which will force the individual to observe himself and to "exercise this surveillance over and against himself."[72] The Brahmins similarly did not need any physical violence or materials constraints to demonstrate their power over the lower caste—just their presence and words were enough to subjugate the members of the low caste Hindus.

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[71] Clare O' Farrell. *Michel Foucault*. (C.A. Sage Publications, 2005).101
[72] Ibid.104

Utilizing the film form in an artistic dimension, Ray film scholar, Andrew Robinson critically analyzes the extraordinary and experimental style of the ghost dance Ray used in *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* in relation to the four caste system. The caste system in India involves the work that individuals do in a society- like – priests, warriors, farmers and laborers considered divided into separate caste in the rank order. Robinson correctly claims, "The six and half minute of the exotic dances of the ghost are definitely the four caste systems we have in India."[73]   Satyajit Ray effectively used the four castes and at the end of ghost dance, positions the priest in the lowest level and on the top are the farmers or the common people. Reacting to the evolving nature of power, Ray imagined the caste system as upside down.

Religion has continued to play a vital role in the lives of individuals worldwide and importantly in India. The power held by the religious leaders is not unknown to mankind. The religious power has dominated not only in Bengal, but all over the world. For example, the church in Italy was critical in organizing the intellectuals in providing a certain world outlook as well as "being a feudal landlord bound in a more direct sense to the preservation of certain socio economic relations on the land."[74] Foucault's work draws similar comparisons of the exploitation of power by the priests in Christianity. He conceives religion in primarily negative terms, as a set of discourses and practices that govern subjects and do not allow them to govern themselves. Furthermore Foucault shows "how the institution of the Christian practices of "pastoral power" paves the way for modern practices that seek to govern all conceivable aspects of living populations."[75] In his study of Ray, Ben Nyce, noted that in *Goopy Gayen Bagha*

[73] Andrew Robinson. *Satyajit Ray The Inner Eye* (London..I.B.Tauris & Co LTD). 2004
[74] Sally Hibbin, ed.. *Politics,Ideology and the State* (London,Lawrence and Wishart ltd, 1978). 25.
[75] Corey McCall, "Anatomy, Religion and Revolt in Foucault." *Journal of Philosophy & scripture*, 2004.
http://www.philosophyandscripture.org/Issue2-1/Corey_McCall/corey_mccall.html (accessed Aug 2009)

Bayen "the fat Brahmins carrying Christian cross represent the occupying of power."[76] This

representation seems to allude to Foucault's another characterization of religion that is a set of

externally dominated practices that give rise to modern discourses of governmentality[77].

Satyajit Ray did not claim to be a religious person nor did he believe in gods. In a 1970

interview, Ray stated that "my own feeling is that man created god... I don't think that god is a

useful thing to believe in, I don't see the necessity of that at all. I think it's more important now,

in view of what has been happening, to believe in scientific knowledge".[78] Ray was raised with

the principles of Brahmo Samaj, a reformist Hindu movement in India that believes in the

equality of all human beings. Followers of Brahmo Samaj detested the social injustices of the

caste system carried on in the name of Hinduism. Therefore an important early reform that the

Brahmos campaigned for was the abolition of the caste system. Many of the early Brahmos came

from the Brahmin caste, who wore a sacred thread around their body to signify their caste

superiority. Brahmo movement was a major religious, social and political movement in India

from 1820 to 1930. In this period an intellectual awakening developed in Bengal, similar to the

Renaissance in Europe during the 16th century. This movement questioned existing orthodoxies,

particularly with respect to women, marriage, the dowry system, the caste system, and religion.

From the 1850's onwards the rejection of the sacred thread worn by the upper caste Hindus came

to symbolize this break with tradition.

In 1964 Calcutta, the capital of Bengal was burning in the midst of the communal riots

between the Hindus and Muslims. However, in these two films we see Ray used two religious

groups in the same platform to show harmony, equality, and peace. In the film *Goopy Gayen*

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[76] Ben Nyce. *Satyajit Ray: A Study of His Films* (N.Y. Greenwood Press, 1988). 113.
[77] Corey McCall, "Anatomy, Religion and Revolt in Foucault." *Journal of Philosophy & scripture*. 2004.
http://www.philosophyandscripture.org/Issue2-1/Corey_McCall/corey_mccall.html (accessed Aug 2009)
[78] Bert Cardullo. *Satyajit Ray Interviews*. Ed.(M.S. University Press Mississippi, 2007).

Bagha Bayen, Ray shows Hindus and Muslims living in a peaceful set up in the country of Sundi. Goopy and Bagha after mistakenly going to Jhundi and Hundi, discover the beautiful land of Sundi. Ray uses the beautiful landscape of rural Bengal especially clear skies, hills, and coconut trees and golden paddy fields to demonstrate calmness, the natural richness of the land. Melodious music is coming from far away; Ray uses flute to give the mood of this particular scene. People are in a festive mood. We can identify the two religious communities living together as Hindus and Muslims. The Hindus are wearing turban (*pagris)* and muslims are wearing cap (*topis*), symbols of their individual group's identity. Sundi represents Bengal as the peaceful land or country. And the outer force Halla is representative of the British who come from outside and established their imperialism in India. In the film *Hirak Rajar Deshe*, Ray used religion in much bolder form; here he directly uses names which differentiate religion. The ethos of togetherness and peaceful living continue, but Ray now uses names to identify the groups of people.

Thus, the power amongst the people has been utilized over centuries to subjugate subjects through the socially and economically constructed boundaries of class, caste, and religion. Satyajit, raised in social reformist Brahmo ideology, was acutely aware of the malice of caste, class, and religion and has critiqued it in these two films. The understanding of power created due to class, caste, and religion segues us to another form of socially constructed power amongst people, that is, power that one gender can have on another.

Chapter 4
Power of Gender

Locating sex and sexuality in relations of power and knowledge develops and complements the analyses of modes of objectification through which human beings have been made subjects by introducing a series of hypotheses and observations on amongst other things, the way a human beings turns him of herself into a subject.[79]

This chapter focuses on the female identify and domination of women by males in the two films. The thesis argues that in Ray's films, *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* and *Hirak Rajar Deshe,* women have been treated with indifference as puppets in the hands of the more powerful male members of the family. Particularly, in *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* women are used as sexual objects for males that can be won as prizes or gifts. Ray specifically emphasizes in his indictment of Indian patriarchy, the authoritarian and powerful role of the father under whose hegemony the Indian women, in all their different roles are expected to function—as obedient slaves[80]. However, before discussing the two films, I set the stage below, of the position of women in historical and contemporary India.

Nineteenth century Indian reformers like Raja Rammohan Ray and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar campaigned for the abolition of the burning of the widow at the husband's funeral pyre (*Sati)* and child marriage and fought for widow remarriage.[81] These reformers sought protective forms of legislation in trying to eliminate these evil customs and practices perpetrated

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[79] Barry Smart. *Michel Foucault* (New York: Routledge,1985). 94.
[80] Darius Cooper. *The Cinema of Satyajit Ray: Between Tradition and Modernity* (United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press, 2000).108.
[81] Sati- In Hindu custom in India, the widow was burnt forcefully to ashes on her dead husband's pyre

on women. In the writings of Bengali literature in this period, too, we observe the emergence of the spirit of individualistic rebellion against established social norms.

Across the world, 1960's marked the revival of ideals that inspired individual courage and the readiness to sacrifice for a cause such as racial, gender, and ethnic equality. During the sixties in India, in the intense struggle for change in the balance of political power in the state, women students and teachers, and women's groups played a significant role. During this time Naxalite movement attracted a sizeable number of young people including women, from different sections of society.[82] Women took a proactive role to bring about a change in the political and social scenario of India. In fact, the severe hardships caused due to the partition of India and the raised hope of the citizens of independent India by their national leaders resulted in the growth of mass organization and mass protests movements among all sections of the people, including women, across class, caste, and religious boundaries. Like the feminist movement in the sixties in the USA, women in India played a big part in the movement to demand recognition of prisoners as political prisoners and the release of those imprisoned without trial.[83] Many of the women prisoners joined in prolonged hunger strikes in various prisons. In June 1954 the first post-war all India organization of women, the National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW), was formed with the objective of bringing together the women of all sections of society on a common platform to tackle the impending socio-political issues.

Satyajit was influenced by Brahmo ideology which campaigned against prejudices like widow remarriage and supported womens' education. Traditionally, education had been primarily considered as appropriate only for the men. The attitude of the Brahmos started to change and education was encouraged among the Brahmo women. In fact, many young men of

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[82] Vidya Munshi. "The Changing Status of Women in West Bengal 1970-2000: The Challenge Ahead." Ed. Jasodhara Bagchi,. Sage Publications.2005.81
[83] Ibid.81

the Brahmo movement made a positive point of marrying widows. At the same time the equal status of women in society was emphasized by allowing women to pray with men at the prayer halls. [84]Along with Ritwik Ghatak and Mrinal Sen, Ray's contemporary film makers from Bengal, the films of Sayajit Ray were concerned with the recognition of women who were oppressed by the social structure. As professor Bhattacharya remarked, these filmmakers presented women as products of "diverse social formations seeking to transcend their difficult circumstances, caught in the contradictory pulls of tradition and modernity; past and present individuality and communality."[85] The three year period between 1963 and 1965, during which Ray produced *Mahanagar* (1963), *Charulata* (1964), *Kapurush* (1965), demonstrate that Ray developed new concern with women.[86] In Ray's film *Mahanagar* (The Big City 1963) or *Devi* (The Goddess, 1960), women are represented as powerful individuals with their own identity. For example, in the film *Mahanagar,* the female protagonist Arati, a middle-class housewife from a conservative family, is forced to take a job because of increasing financial pressure at home despite her family's passive resistance and discovers psychological and financial independence.

Thus, Ray seems painfully aware of the status of Indian women at the time and this predominant concern is visible in his films[87]. However, in contrast to his earlier films where Ray portrayed women not as a shadow of man but as an individual; in his two films, *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* and *Hirak Rajar Deshe*, Ray uses imagery to provide a lesson for society that

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[84] Sumit Chanda. "Social Welfare." Copyright 1999.
http://www.chanda.freeserve.co.uk/brahmoso.htm (accessed sept.09)
[85]Malini Bhattacharya. "The Changing Status of Women in West Bengal 1970-2000: The Challenge Ahead." Ed. Jasodhara Bagchi,. Sage Publications.2005.102
[86] Nalin Jayasena, *Contested Masculinities Crises in colonial Male identity from Joseph Conrad to Satyajit Ray*. (New York: Routledge. 2007). 161.
[87] Darius Cooper. *The Cinema of Satyajit Ray: Between tradition and Modernity* (U.K: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 75.

women are still treated as an object. Ray skillfully demonstrates how the principle figures in these narratives walk a tightrope between masculinity and effeminacy.

Foucault notes that specific form of power transforms individuals into 'subjects'.[88] He uses the word 'subject' in two senses; in the sense of being controlled by others and as a word being attached to an identity through awareness and knowledge of self. In *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* women are transformed into subjects. The only female members in the film *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* are the two obedient, vulnerable princesses, who never speak or act, and are offered as prize to the two male protagonists for their efforts in stopping the war between Halla and Shundi. The women do not have the power to oppose or make their own decisions. The two brides in the film are speechless and what the dominating power or male power will articulate they will agree without any hesitation. The audience gets a glimpse of princesses of *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* when they lift their veils, startled by the magic change of costume Goopy and Bagha undertake. The women do not speak nor do they act. They appear obedient to the strict coding for women in Indian culture. They do not, in fact, look at anyone including the grooms with whom they will spend their future life.[89] The princesses exhibit an exaggerated measure of modesty, shyness, humility which is common in a young maiden when she hears her own marriage discussed. Lowering head or look down obedient signifies the emotion of modesty, shame, humility. As Foucault emphasizes when discussing women's power, the princesses are simply the effects of power, mere 'docile bodies' shaped by power.

Similarly, when the male protagonists successfully avert the war and return "victorious", the king of Sundi offers his daughter, Manimala's hand in marriage to Goopy. Bagha, the shorter of the two protagonists, and even shorter than Monimala, cannot be considered an appropriate

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[88] Clare O' Farrell. "*Michel Foucault*." C.A. Sage Publications, 2005. 110.
[89] Mihir Bhattacharya. " Conditions of Visibility: People's Imagination and Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne," in Apu and Afer, Re-reading Ray's Cinema, ed. Moinak Biswas (Seagull Books, 2006), 140

groom for Monimala. The physical height and stature of a woman matters so much that a man cannot consider marrying a woman who is taller or even the same height as him. King of Halla offers his own daughter Muktamala as Bagha's wife. We see in the movie that Bagha was deprived when the king of Sundi assigned his daughter to Goopy considerations to relative height. But we see Bagha was privileged because the Halla king has a daughter who is appropriately shorter in stature matching that of Bagha. As the two veiled princesses stand in front, Bagha is restless to see the face of his bride. The object of investigation becomes to "uncover the truth of sex, to reveal individuals (their causality, unconscious and truth)"[90] This analysis is similar to Foucault's contention that the power of women reside in the body and is driven by cultural contexts. However, feminists have argued a distinction between the biologically represented sex and socially constructed category of gender. Women need their own identity. But, women continue to be symbolized and treated as weak and helpless.

Further, prejudice based on women's skin color is very evident in the film's dialogue. When Goopy and Bagha first catch a glimpse of a woman far above in the balcony of the fortress, Goopy remarks that it might be a maid. But Bagha has sharper eyes. From that very far distance he can see the color of the woman, and remarks, "no doubt she is a princess because her skin is fairer than the maid." Fairer skin color was conventionally associated with upper-class people (princesses) and those without fairer skin were thought to belong to the lower-class (maids, in this instance). The long shot of Monimala, the princess, as she is viewed on the high balcony in the palace literally positioning her higher, glimpsed by Goopy and Bagha standing humbly on the ground, looking small, emphasizes the class and color distinction. The spectator has to share the point of view of Goopy and Bagha both physically and psychologically. Ray placed the princess of Sundi so far--her value is marked by the fairness of her skin, the dazzle of

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[90]Barry Smart. "Michel Foucault."Routledge,1985. 98.

her dress and placement far from their reach in a guarded palace. Feminist and cultural theorist Luce Irigary articulates "the impasse of feminine subjectivity, showing the resistance that feminity and subjectivity present to one another. The right to be man is equated with a desire for mastery; a fetishizing ideal of independence atomism of the self adheres to a concept of law that cuts off political and psychical inheritances from the mother."[91] Still today, it is prevalent in the Indian culture for parents of the would-be-groom to look for the fair skin colored woman when arranging for the marriage of their son. Similarly, the parents of the bride-to-be want their daughters to appear fair skinned. If she is fair, like Monimala, it is easy to arrange her marriage.

In the film *Hirak Rajar Deshe* there are no representations of women other than one shot of a female character when king's soldiers comes to the village schoolmaster, Udayan's house and burns his books. The woman inside the house, whome we assume is Udayan's mother, has an expression of suffering, holding Udayan's father in her arms. . She appears only for few seconds but is speechless like the princesses in *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen*. She has no clear individual identity. When leaving, Udayan addresses his father, not the woman, who is supposedly his mother.

In conclusion, an analysis of power relations at the micro level is central to the feminist project of understanding the nature and causes of women's subordination. The literature on gender differences in social influence reveals that men and women do differ in their ability to influence others and that these differences correspond to gender differences in power. Gender differences in power have real consequences for women. The relative inequities in social power between men and women are symbolized in various, satirical ways in the two Ray films. Typically Ray portrays his women as trapped within the sociological ideals who have to fight for

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[91] Maria Cimitile & Elaine Miller. Ed. "Returing to Irrigaray." State University Press. N.Y. 2007.176

what is her right as a woman. However, unlike his other films, Ray depicts his women in *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* and *Hirak Rajar Deshe* as being oppressed and used as an object of pleasure in the male dominant society, a society where there is no room for women. For example, Goopy and Bagha have choices in marriage, but the women do not have any choices on who they will marry.

Ray casts his woman characters to alert us to the fact that women continue to be treated as objects, even in modern day society. The question of social reform that revolved around the position of women is articulated through references in both films' overall satirical theme of unquestioned convention and orthodox beliefs that impact the lives of women[92]. Ray's using of women in these films speechless, veiled princess, their height and skin color, are make Women become symbolic of tradition and the reworking of tradition is largely conducted through debating the rights and the status of women in society[93]. He challenges the viewers to come out from the stereotypical image-- that women still depend upon men. Women need their own identity. Thus, this chapter helped us to link the previous chapter which looks at the power relationships of class, caste, and religion at the group level and the next chapter which focuses on technology and knowledge of power and their inter-relationship with science which have human beings, the individual, as their object.[94]

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[92] Nalin Jayasena, *Contested Masculinities Crises in colonial Male identity from Joseph Conrad to Satyajit Ray*. (New York: Routledge. 2007), 158}
[93] Ibid, 148}
[94] Barry Smart. "Michel Foucault."Routledge,1985. 76.

Chapter 5

Power of Knowledge and Technology

There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of

knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at

the same time power relations.[95]

This chapter illustrates the crucial role that knowledge and technology play in relation

with power in the two films under examination. The power of technology and knowledge are

analyzed in order to inform the roles and interpretations of power relationships between the

powerful and powerless. Herman Nilson's interpretation of Foucault aptly summarizes the link

between power and technology. Power of technology determines the conduct of individuals and

submits them to "certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject."[96] The kings in

both films, *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* and *Hirak Rajar Deshe* use and misuse knowledge and

technology in order to maintain their power and control their states. On the other hand,

knowledge helps the people of the two lands to resist the power of the ruler. Power of knowledge

and technology is more clearly emphasized in the film *Hirak Rajar Deshe* than in the film *Goopy*

Gayen Bagha Bayen, which I maintain, has more to do with when the film was made, that is, at

the end of 1970/early 1980s, a time of major change in the technology field, primarily due to the

proliferation of home computers. These films demonstrate power of knowledge and technology

for the purpose of good as well as evil.

Knowledge from education helps us to judge between good and bad, truth and falsehood,

right and wrong. If common people, irrespective of which class, caste or religion they come

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[95] Barry Smart. "Michel Foucault."Routledge,1985. 76.
[96] Herman Nilson. Translated Rachel Clark. "Michel Foucault and the Games of Truth." St. Martin's press. N.Y. 1998.97.

from, are educated or get knowledge, then they can use their knowledge to blemish the evil doing of the King or the ruler as well. According to Foucault, knowledge can be accumulated by "methods of observation, techniques of registration, and procedures for investigation and research."[97] Foucault argues that power and knowledge are inseparable, as each strengthens the other. Thus, Foucault writes of a single concept- power/knowledge. Power/knowledge is connected to particular forms of education or institutions such, as schools and universities, which have validity in all societies. In fact, there are no pockets of freedom which escape power relations.[98]

In *Hirak Rajar Deshe,* the Diamond king closes down schools, burns books, and tries to capture the only teacher the school has by announcing to the students there is "*no end to acquiring knowledge, thus it is futile to even try*." Of course the ulterior motive of the wicked king is to stop people from gaining knowledge for the fear that if people will receive education, they will gain knowledge, and question and distrust the king. Further, the king also understands that whoever controls education controls future generations. Therefore, the village school teacher, Udayan, is the only enemy of the king because he is the only person who has the power of knowledge and thus has the ability to judge the good as well as the evil works of the king. The school teacher also wishes to share this knowledge with his pupils and train them to judge the good and the evil for themselves. Before the king can get to him, Udayan runs away and takes refuge in a nearby cave in the mountains.

Foucault maintains that the power of technology is "aimed at keeping the bodies that are ruled under surveillance, controlling their conduct, their behavior, their aptitudes."[99] Technology attempts to improve the performance of subjects and multiply their capacities for *their*

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[97] Barry Smart. "Michel Foucault."Routledge,1985. 80.
[98] Clare O' Farrell. "*Michel Foucault*." C.A. Sage Publications, 2005. 99.
[99] Clare O' Farrell. "*Michel Foucault*." C.A. Sage Publications, 2005. 103.

usefulness *and* benefit of the ruler. However, the Diamond King's sole aim was to benefit

himself and his treasure. The power of knowledge or invention of science is beneficial for the

ruler. With a powerful ally by his side and an understanding of the psyche of the people, it is

easy for the king to rule the state or the country easily. Foucault claims that "in the seventeenth

and eighteenth century the ruler exercised disciplinary power over bodies or people through a

system of surveillance and via a network of material coercions which resulted in an efficient and

controlled increase in the utility of subjected body."[100] Thus, the result was that with the

minimum expenditure on the part of the ruler, they were able to get maximum return – a

fundamental component of industrial capitalism. The Diamond king often attempts to keep the

company of the educated and woo them by paying them well with lavish gifts. The Diamond

King's advisors are yes-men, whom he keeps in line by giving or withholding diamonds. The

prime minister of *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* provides mouth-watering food to his head army

staff to keep them happy, even though the country is starving for food.

      As mentioned in Chapter two, the divine power of the ruler in all aspects of the governing

of the kingdom, is also exercised in choice of punishment and discipline for their subjects who

fail to abide by the power. Further, up until the end of the eighteenth century crimes were

regarded as offences against king and the society and the criminal, as a result, became the enemy

of society.[101] This authorized the king to take his revenge by making examples of selected

offenders. This belief is reflected when the king in the film *Hirak Rajar Deshe* announces that

whoever does not listen to the king is the one who is the enemy of the Land of Diamonds. Thus

dialogue or voice of the people that does not resonate with the voice of the king is not tolerated.

The scientist in *Hirak Rajar Deshe* named *Gobeshok Gobochondro* is a close ally of the king and

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[100] Ibid. 80.
[101] Ibid. 104.

uses four adjectives after his name: to describe that he is knowledgeable (*Gyanotirtho*), educated (*Gyanorotno*), skilled (*Gyanambudhi*), and an expert in his scientific inventions (*Gyanochuramoni*). The King of Hirak, with Gobeshok Gobochondro, runs a ministry of propaganda and disinformation called the "mumbo jumbo" room in which a brainwashing machine attempts to control the thoughts of his subjects through the use of rhymed couplets. [102] The scientist has also invented the binoculars which help the king to watch from distance without anyone realizing that they are being watched. These inventions supposedly help the king to rule the state smoothly without worry. Not only does Gobeshok attempt to please the king with his inventions, he also makes paper flowers to woo the king with their fragrance and beauty. Similarly in *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* the closest ally of the prime minister is the magician, who invents the medicine which can cure the epidemic in the land of Sundi restoring the people's ability to speak.

Foucault provides an insight into the exercise of power when he mentions that in post-industrial rule, a space was organized which included a principle of enclosure to lock people away into an institutional space: criminals into prison, children's into school, workers into factories.[103] However, Ray suggests that with the invention of the brainwashing machine it is easy to rule the country; we do not need to kill or torture or put the prisoners in the prison or put children in the schools. All we need to do is implant the voices of the king or the ruler into them. Thus, Ray's introduction of a round shaped small room, called brainwashing "machine", was a new development in the Indian film industry. It is a singular space for the farmers, mineworkers, children's and the free-thinkers and dissenters like Udayan, the school teacher.

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[102] Ben Nyce," *Satyajit Ray*: A Study of His Films." N.Y. Greenwood Press, 1988, 176.
[103] Clare O' Farrell. "*Michel Foucault*." C.A. Sage Publications, 2005. 103.

The use of knowledge and technology allows for specific techniques and procedures of power to be economically and politically useful.[104] Barry Smart argues that the impositions of power, knowledge, and the body are "not situated at the level of social institutions; instead they focus on the individual as their target."[105] For example, Hirak King's diamonds mines are manned with forced labor. His peasants are poverty stricken and cruelly taxed. He bans the dissenting voice of one of his singer poets. With the help of the scientist and the brainwashing machine, the king controls the thoughts of his subjects through the use of rhymed couplets. These couplets are implanted in the subjects head. For example, the farmers recite: "*I shall miss a meal a day/ so my taxes I can pay*"; or the miners recite: "*Miners must be underfed/ Miners fat are miners dead*". Ben Nyce argues that the reference here is to the government's control of the press and the other media during the Indian emergency in 1975.[106] Under the emergency rule, the government under the leadership of Indira Gandhi deprived Indian citizens of their fundamental rights; their freedom of the press was restricted through strict censorship; those who opposed the political view of Mrs. Gandhi and her followers arrested and ruthless police actions followed; and the governmental system assumed arbitrary powers. Ray crafts these scenes to describe the political situation of the time. Ray had witnessed those sinister cases in which the power to control the thoughts of others is used against the interest of its victims. Brainwashing in the film *Hirak Rajar Deshe* would be one example. Through the use of brainwashing of the farmers and the mine workers, power is directed not so much at individuals but rather at socially structured and culturally patterned behavior. Hindes argues that in the early stages of the process, the victims do not comprehend that power is being exercised over them.[107] This kind of exercise of

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[104] Barry Smart. "Michel Foucault."Routledge,1985. 79.
[105] Ibid. 76.
[106] Ben Nyce," *Satyajit Ray*: A Study of His Films." N.Y. Greenwood Press, 1988, 177.
[107] Barry Hindes. "*Discourses of Power: From Hobbes to Foucault.*" Blackwell Publishers.1996. 68 .

power will often not be recognized by those who are subject to its effects. Through the action of knowledge and technology, it affects the thoughts and desires of individuals.[108]

One of the conceptions of power is the resistance of power by the powerless against the powerful. Ray's films, particularly *Hirak Rajar Deshe*, end in the resistance of power and in the "victory" of the individuals hitherto considered powerless. Udayan resists the King of Diamonds by continuing to teach the school children to counsel and advice with wisdom (*Hitopodesha*)[109] despite warnings from the king's soldiers. With the help of the school master, the young school students of the Land of Diamonds explore the power of learning. They produce knowledge and use it to effect change. Knowledge from the teacher Udayan helps them understand, identify, and raise consciousness of the problems the people of the Land of Diamonds are facing and to resist against power exercised over their mind. The farmers, mine workers, and children, with the help of Udayan, Goopy, and Bagha, successfully dethrone the king. The film ends with the king and his yes-men being brainwashed to recite "*pull the rope to bring down the king.*" All, including the king and the yes-men, pull at the large statue of the king in the city center until it crumbles to pieces. The fall of the king's statue, which had surveyed the activities of the people from its tall stance, symbolizes the evil king's downfall and victory of the people.

To conclude, knowledge is inextricably associated with networks of power. Power and knowledge directly impact one another. Power functions as an apparatus of knowledge as well as apparatus for transforming individuals.[110] Thus, the village school teacher works as an apparatus, transforming his pupils to revolt against the king and bring about the change through

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[108] Ibid. 68 .

[109] Hitopadesha has been derived from two words, Hita and Upadesha. The term 'Hitopadesha' is a joint effort of two terms, 'Hita' (welfare/ benefit) and 'Upadesha' (advice/ counsel). The author of Hitopadesha, Narayana Pandit says that the main purpose of creating the Hitopadesha is to instruct young minds in a way that they learn the philosophy of life and are able to grow into responsible and mature adults.

[110] Barry Smart. "Michel Foucault."Routledge,1985. 85.

the action of knowledge. Thus the power of technology and knowledge are analyzed in order to

inform the roles and interpretations of power relationships between the powerful and powerless.

Conclusion

Every stylistic feature contributes to the poetics of fun, but it is simultaneously politics... the fun talk is also freedom talk. [111].

There is very little scholarship that examines Ray's two films, *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* (Adventures of Goopy and Bagha 1968) and its sequel *Hirak Rajar Deshe* (The Diamond King, 1980). Even when discussed by Indian or western scholars, these two films have been considered as children's film or fantasy films with very little discourse on social or political elements. In the last few chapters, this thesis demonstrated the relationship between the powerful and the powerless. The films were examined within the framework of Foucault's conception of power. In doing so, the thesis has investigated the historical, social, and political background that inspired Ray to make these films. Over the last several chapters we have taken an in-depth look at the two films in an attempt to analyze how the powerless have been dominated or conquered by the powerful, as demonstrated in Ray's particular films. In order to answer the questions, we first looked at political and social history of the time period during which the films were made. None of these events emerged out of vacuum; they each had grounding in the past and thus helped to more fully understand the presented narratives. I think these two films offer us a better understanding of not just the film medium, but of the social andpolitical movement of the time.

I found that the logic of Foucault's analysis bears a strong resemblance as depicted in the two films. As discussed by Foucault, power relations are not dependent only on official or "State apparatus" such as the government or the Church; they are also found in social relations that

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[111] Satyajit Ray in an interview. This quote is taken from Meenakshi Mukherjee, *Politics and Children's Literature:A Reading of "Haroun and the Sea of Stories". A review of International English Literature,29:1, jannuary 1998.*

define self- identify and social norms. "Many different forms of power exist in our society: legal, administrative, economic, military, and so forth."[112] In the thesis I established Foucault's conception of power in relation to kingship, gender, knowledge, class, caste and technology. To bring to light the power relations, I located its position, found its point of application, and analyzed power from the point of view of its internal rationality. In order to do so, I set the stage for the historical and political context of India, and specifically Bengal, during which the two films were produced; provided the readers with a brief introduction to the two films and the power of the kingship; examined the power relationships through caste, religion, gender role; and finally investigated the importance of knowledge and technology in helping the state to control their people. The layout and the order in which the chapters appeared was purposeful to gradually move from a macro-level to a micro-level of discourse. Thus, by beginning with the power relationship of the ruler and ending with the power of knowledge and technology, I tried to converge internally from the power of state to power of the groups like class, caste, and religion, and then to the power of gender to show the power of individual in micro level. Finally, the chapter on power of knowledge and technology helps us understand the power within oneself.

Another aspect of power that has not been mentioned in this thesis so far, but is apparent in Ray's films, is the power of food or hunger. There are several incidents in the film *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* where food plays a significant role. The first boon Goopy and Bagha ask from the King of ghost is food. The question then is, why has food played such a significant role in Ray's films? Food matters because it is something you never have a sufficiency of at the lower reaches

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[112] Alec McHoul, and Wendy Grace. "*A Foucault Premier*: Discourse Power and the Subject." N.Y. New York University Press, 1993, 65.

of life. Satyajit Ray has witnessed the Bengal famine.[113] Bengal, unlike other provinces of India, had to undergo a traumatic period in the nineteen forties, during the WWII. Three million people died between 1942 and 1945. Nobel laureate Amartya Sen has demonstrated quite convincingly that the famine deaths were caused by British policies and not by drastic slump in food production. [114] To give it more depth it will be worthwhile discussion in future study.

To conclude, I have analyzed Ray's two films for their political and social form and narratives, their reception by scholars, and critics as well as in context with the historic events that inspired them. I want to end with Cooper's comment, "It would have been worthwhile to examine how different these films are reported to be and an adequate theoretical framework to see what interesting insights they have to offer about Bengal and India, both through their mythical recreation of history as well as all the veiled allusions made to contemporary India." With this question in my mind, I hope with my research and investigation, I provided some "interesting insights" into the world of Ray's contemporary experiences and vision of India.

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[113] Ray made a full length feature film on Bengal famine, known as *Asani Sanket* (Distant Thunder 1973).

[114] For more detailed information on Sen's work, readers are requested to review the following works: Amartya Sen, Starvation and Exchange Entitlements: A General Approach and its Applications to the Great Bengal Famine, Cambridge Journal of Economica, NO. 1, pp 33-59, 1977;
Amartya Sen, Famine mortality: A Study of Bengal Famine of 1943, in Hobsbawm et al Peasants in History: Calcutta, Oxford University Press, 1980.

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