CHAPTER 4

Contesting Spaces of Emotions and Desires

Historically, the advent of cinema in Calcutta can be traced back to 1896-97, a few months after the showcasing of Lumiere brothers *Workers Leaving the Working Factory*, in Bombay on 7th July 1896. The screening of the film was held in Calcutta, then the capital of India, and was exhibited by itinerant showmen at local playhouses. Calcutta, at this time also had a thriving professional theatre, mostly patronized by the *bhadralok* (respectable people). *The Cambridge History of India* describes *bhadralok* as small land-holders that have largely intermingled with the professional and clerical classes. The spread of western education and the advantages of the university education were readily accepted by the *bhadralok* of Bengal. The *bhadralok* community showcased a strong passion for the English education and they established English vernacular schools in towns and villages of Calcutta. At this juncture, the contemporary theatre received growing criticism for its crude costumes; make up, sets and growing complaints had propelled efforts to refurbish the entire structure. The repercussions of this criticism revamped the entire pattern and with new technology and innovation, portions of popular stage plays were filmed and were often integrated with the same play on stage. During the early years, cinema in Calcutta was an additional booster to the thriving theater ‘industry’. It was only in the decade of 1900-1910, that cinema acquired an individual identity as an expressive public cultural entity and became a vital part of leisure activity. The cinematic city of Bombay has received large attention from media, spectators; existing scholars and has largely represented India on the global stage. Although the language of Hindi is specifically restricted to certain areas in northern India, the viewership of Hindi cinema has transcended the regional and lingual barriers within the nation. The prevalence of Hindi cinema also digressed the attention from other cinematic cities of India and emerged as a solely preferred rubric of a national culture. This dominance of Hindi cinema caused the decline in viewership of Bengali cinema.

The Left movement originated in India in the 1920 and its proponents actively participated in the politics during the 1940s. The leftist intellectuals established Indian People’s Theatre Association (IPTA) in 1942, in the background of man-made Bengal famine of 1943 and the Second World War (1940-1945). IPTA later on transgressed itself from theatre to political cinema and Ritwik Ghatak turned out to be an active forerunner of portraying the leftist ideology in films. The medium of cinema in India was also highly under the influence of European avant-garde cinema-its formal stylistic pattern and storytelling
potential distinguished itself forcefully from the mainstream entertainment industry. Ultimately, Bengali cinema could not compete with the Bombay film industry, but it created a public space which resisted the construction of India as a Hindi speaking nation. Bengali films propagated the idea of cultured ‘Bengaliness’ and played a crucial role in construction of the middle class bhadralok community. The ideal of Bengaliness was crucial to Bengali cinema and the cultural practice of bhadralok became the mainstay for the greater part of the cinema of Bengal. The Bengali cinema emerged as an imaginary space that asserted its identity and resisted the domination of the Bombay cinema. In this process, it marked the supremacy of Bengaliness and Bengali culture. Bengal contested the idea of nation and therefore created its own style of regional politics. In this context Christopher Pinney in *Photos of the Gods: The Printed Image and Political Struggle in India* establishes that, “pictures were an integral part of history in the making and making the case for visual culture can be a key arena for the thinking out of politics and religion in modern Indian” (18).

Bengali cinema closely follows the decline and disillusionment of Bengali since the late colonial period. Bengal lost its national importance in regional politics and the post-independent Bengal witnessed refugee crisis, unemployment and shortage of basic amenities. This dystopic vision ruled the minds of middle class youth and they turned towards the radical politics of 1960s. This social condition was effectively represented in Ritwik Ghatak’s *Nagarik* (1952), based on the post-partition Calcutta. The film reflects the aspirations of a young graduate to secure a job and feed the family. The Bengali cinema during these times showcased an optimistic image of the protagonist and empowered them in different ways. The Bengali cinema also denounced the much dominated theme of the cultural differences within the bhadralok society and concentrated on realistic themes and problems of post-independent Calcutta. These themes were generally focused upon the city as a space of disillusionment, crushed ideals, unfulfilled dreams and growing unemployment. This collapse of the dreams of urban educated youth was contrary to the dream that the new nation had ushered to the educated youth of India. While Satyajit Ray chose realistic form to represent the crisis in an individual, Ritwik Ghatak preferred the course of creating mythic archetypes to articulate the themes of traumatic partition, deterritorialization and nostalgia.

The emergence of Satyajit Ray as a post-independence modernist artist brought the Indian cinema to the international stage. His method of representing the authentic Bengaliness in the cinema fundamentally influenced the overall making of the Bengali cinema. The time of the emergence of Satyajit Ray was very crucial in the history of Bengali film making. At this juncture Bengali filmmaking had become a regionalized project and with
*Pather Panchali* (1955), the Bengal film industry had transformed into a regional enterprise. Satyajit Ray redefined India in the international circuit and signified the nation in a way the Hindi popular cinema could never achieve. The films of Satyajit Ray countered the narrative and structure of popular commercial films. These films had failed to map and reflect the truth of Indian social reality. He believed that the realist art cinema is a part of the culture of the civil society. This cinema thematically preserves the traditional and modern practices that the individuals function within the society.

Satyajit Ray was an auteur and controlled many aspects of his filmmaking. He wrote the screenplays of his films and many of them were based on his own stories. Satyajit Ray’s books such as *Our Films, Their Films, My Years with Apu* and *The Chess Players: and Other Screenplays* give a brief glimpse of his fiction, non-fiction stories and screenplays. He designed the sets and costumes and since *Charulata* (1964), he started working on the cinematography as well. He composed the music of his films since the year 1961 and designed the advertising and publicity posters for his new releases. Satyajit Ray grew up in Calcutta, which in the 18th and 19th century was the seat of British Empire in India. The merger of East and the West gave birth to Bengali Renaissance and during these times, Satyajit Ray grew up and imbibed the humanistic fusion of classic Indian tradition and the Western liberal thoughts. *Brahmos*, a small minority within the Hindu community reacted strongly to both to Christianity, the Western literature and to the appalling social excesses of that time, such as *sati*. The Brahma Samaj founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, led the Hindu propaganda of rejecting caste system and other social taboos. In general, the Brahma Samaj was a movement of social reform and propagated the ideas of ‘simple living, high principles and perseverance’. In the late 1860s and 1870s the institution of Brahma Samaj was further divided into two sects, the Upper and the Sadharan (Low Church). The family of Satyajit Ray was associated with the lower Church in the 1880s.

Rabindranath Tagore was the guiding spirit of this renaissance and Satyajit Ray himself was once a pupil in Tagore’s school at Santiniketan. Andrew Robinson traces this particular phase of Satyajit Ray’s life in *Satyajit Ray: The Inner Eye*. He mentions that initially Satyajit Ray was reluctant to study at Santiniketan because he considered the graduates from Tagore’s university as effeminate, sentimental and second rate intellectuals. But when he met his art teacher his opinion changed. His mother’s wish and his objective of learning Indian art to be a successful commercial artist lured Satyajit Ray to Santiniketan. Ray adapted the stories of Rabindranath Tagore for his films and today if the world apart from the West Bengal knows Tagore, it is mainly by the virtue of Satyajit Ray’s
interpretations of Tagore in his various films. Satyajit Ray’s film Charulata (1964) was based on the autobiographical novella The Broken Nest (1901) by Rabindranath Tagore. The film is a powerful study of nineteenth century Bengali society, on the threshold of change. Another person that influenced the work of Satyajit Ray was his art teacher Binode Bihari Mukherjee, whom he regarded as the finest Indian painter of the modern period. When Satyajit Ray arrived at Santiniketan in 1940, he saw an entire ceiling painted, showing a gentle village scene in glowing colors, trees, fields, ponds, people, birds, nests and beasts. The painting Satyajit Ray saw did not bear any relation to the oriental arts he had studied or known. Mukherjee’s work enlightened Satyajit Ray and he started thinking intimately about the art of painting. Mukherjee’s influence could be seen in Satyajit Ray’s film Pather Panchali, where the film entirely focuses on a Santhal village. In December 1942, Satyajit Ray left Santiniketan without completing his five year course. He felt the tensions of the pre-independence times when Mahatma Gandhi had launched the Quit India movement and the fear that Japanese might bomb Calcutta at any time of the year.

After leaving Santiniketan, in April 1943, Ray took up a job in D.J Keymer, a British owned advertising agency in north Calcutta. He worked as a junior visualizer and was later promoted to the designation of art director. He remained there until 1956, and became a full time film maker after the success of Pather Panchali. The critical and commercial success of this first film was followed by the sequel of Aparajito (1956) and Apur Sansar (1959). The narrative of the Apu Trilogy follows the genre of bildungsroman and individually the films describe the childhood, education and mature experiences of young Apu. Satyajit Ray’s experience in the advertising agency gave a useful background for his films such as Mahanagar (1963), Aryanar Din Ratri (1970) and especially Seemabaddha (1972), the latter I shall discuss in detail. Satyajit Ray concentrated on the artistic aspects of his job that later helped him in many of his masterpieces. These fine masterpieces showcased each and every aspect of his life to the spectators and deeply reflected his vision, attitude and approach towards life. Satyajit Ray met his friends in the coffee houses, that he called adda, where they discussed everything under the sun. This adda or the small Calcutta coffee shop turned out to be the plot for his film Mahapurush (1965). Some of Satyajit Ray’s coffee house friends played an important part in his film career. His Kashmiri friend Bansi Chandragupta became Satyajit Ray’s art director; Chidananda Das Gupta, then in advertising, later became a film critic and is the father of actress and film director Aparna Sen. Kamal Kumar Majumdar, the post-war Bengali novelist gave a sense of artistic judgment to Satyajit Ray.
European films became rare after the post-independent period. So in 1947, Satyajit Ray and Chidananda Das Gupta founded the film society to fill in the gaps of the European shoes. Ray regularly went to the cinema and began to take ‘hieroglyphic’ notes on the various filmic cutting methods, particularly of the American film directors. He was a keen viewer of Frank Capra, John Ford, Billy Wilder and John Huston. During this time the Bengali cinema had improved with the arrival of Bimal Roy and Nitin Bose on the scene. But the *mise en scène* of this cinema was mainly theatrical. Despite the difficulty of membership and financial matters, the film society showed many interesting films. The society managed to get a print of * Battleship Potemkin* (1925) by Sergei Eisenstein and a print of episodic film *Un Carnet de Bal* (1937) by Julien Duvivier from a local distributor. Satyajit Ray and Chidananda Das Gupta also started a Calcutta Film Society bulletin and directors such as Jean Renoir and John Huston, Vsevolod Pudovkin were invited to speak at various times. In the year 1949, Jean Renoir visited Calcutta. Hari Sadhan Das Gupta (Co-founder of Calcutta film society) and Satyajit Ray assisted him in search of actors and locations for the film *The River* (1951). Andrew Robinson in *Satyajit Ray: The Inner Eye: The Biography of a Master Film-Maker* mentions the influence of Jean Renoir on the work of Satyajit Ray. His attitude towards life and film making changed Satyajit Ray’s life in an abrupt manner. Satyajit discussed with Renoir his prospective project of filming *Pather Panchali* and the idea appealed to Renoir in totality. In the year, 1950, Satyajit Ray went to London and exactly saw ninety nine films during his stay. After watching Vittorio De Sica’s *Bicycle Thieves* (1948), he decided to become a film maker.

The emergence of Bengali cinema had set up a discourse of difference with respect to the Hindi cinema that primarily emerged in Bombay and other parts of India. While Bengali cinema was inefficient in competing with the Hindi commercial cinema, Satyajit Ray set an example for the Bengali’s to follow. He turned the Hindi cinema on its head and created cannon of films that was not only an embodiment of a modernist vision, but also representative of the Post independent Indian nation. Visual culture theorist Sandria Freitag in “Visions of the Nation: Theorizing the Nexus between Creation, Consumption and Participation in the Public Sphere” (1995) points out that Bengali film differs from the mainstream Bombay Hindi films. The visual vocabulary of the Bengali films forges a sense of belongingness and a feeling of imagined community. This following of a singular culture unifies the community and mobilizes them to participate in the public sphere. The Bengali cinema became an imaginary place for the Bengali masses who could assert newer form of regional dynamism and Bengali culture. In the 1940s, the Bengali film industry’s loss to the
all India market and migration of Bengali film directors to Bombay created a subtext of Bengali cinema within the Bombay film industry. The Bengali film industry lost its Indian audiences to the Bombay film industry. Films such as Devdas (1955), Mukti (1977), Barididi (1939) were Hindi films of Bengali origin. The Bengali film practitioners in Bombay portrayed a regional flavor of Calcutta with the scripts that were influenced by the stories from the works of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay and Rabindranath Tagore. Bimal Roy moved to Bombay and set up his own Bimal Roy studio in 1953. Bimal Roy’s Film Biraj Bahu (1955), based on Sarat Chanda Chattopadhyay’s famous novel Biraj Bau was awarded the 1955 Filmfare best director’s award. In actual circumstances, the Bengal cinema of the post war era was losing its ground to the Bombay cinema. The cultured Bengaliness required a base to support its interests against the overwhelming presence of the Bombay film industry. The entry of Satyajit Ray in the 1950s completely resurrected the Bengali cinema. He not only gave a new national identity to the sleeping cinema, but also brought international recognition for his various productions. Moinak Biswas’s essay “Early Films: The Novel and the Other Horizons” (2006) mentions Satyajit Ray’s emergence as a film director should be necessarily seen against an established tradition of realism. Realism is often treated as a style, a sort of cultural intelligence that seems integral to the modern moment. Satyajit Ray’s character arrive at self knowledge by ridding themselves of morality that is neither traditional nor modern. Through his films he counters the popular genre of social, but at the same time he attempts to establish the larger field of the existing tradition and cultural aspirations of Bengal.

Before Satyajit Ray represented Calcutta in his City Trilogy, he had already explored a part of Calcutta in Mahanagar (1963). Satyajit Ray concentrates on the everyday struggle of livelihood for the lower middle class within the unforgiving city Calcutta. Mahanagar represents Calcutta as a space where social values clash between the older generation and the younger generation. The older generation does not support the concept of working women and no matter what the economic condition of a family, the women are suppose to work and stay inside the walls of the home. The film criticizes the behavior of the Bengali society and the false standard that this society has made for the judgment of women. Satyajit Ray in this film depicts the claustrophobic atmosphere of the family house that makes it difficult for the characters to live any sort of personal life. In this small space are crowded husband and wife, their son Pinto, ageing parents who are unable to support themselves and their fourteen year old sister Bani. The film opens with a shot of a working day in Calcutta and builds the fabric of the daily life of Calcutta’s everyday existence. The final shot of the film focuses on the
evening office crowd around the Dalhousie Square in Calcutta. Satyajit Ray takes a long shot of the luminous bulb of a street light and besides this is an empty holder, where the second bulb is missing.

Satyajit Ray’s *City Trilogy* is adapted from the novels of Sunil Ganguly and Mani Sankar Mukherjee. The three films that Satyajit Ray made in the 1970s, about the life in Calcutta were not intended by him as a trilogy, but they cohere well to fit them under the title of *City Trilogy*. The city presented in the film acquires a tangible, physical presence and depicts the world of work, the stressful life of Calcutta and how Calcutta changes the moral principles of educated young men. In fact this facet of the city dominates his trilogy based on Calcutta. Suranjan Ganguly in *Satyajit Ray: In Search of the Modern* (2000) mentions that Nehru considered Calcutta as a city of India’s future and the growth for modernity and the *City Trilogy* of Satyajit Ray is an allegory of the Nehruvian dream. The *City Trilogy* concentrates on the betrayal of this Nehruvian dream and represents how the ethos of a generation of Bengali dream collapses under its own expectations. Satyajit Ray chose Calcutta as a city for his films not simply because it was his own city, but because it was a city where modern was established and conceived. Satyajit Ray traces in his *City Trilogy*, the history of progress, scientific-rational thinking, and its cultural achievements. In the late, 1960s and 1970s, the political scenario of Calcutta changed drastically along with the political upheavals in India. This city of Calcutta was substantially different from the city in which Satyajit Ray had grown up. The Indian sub-continent faced wars with China, Pakistan and the Bangladesh war led to the inflow of large migrants into India. There was nationwide emergency and large scale government repression. The new generation that was under the tutelage of this climate were brought up on social and bureaucratic corruption. The communists had already captured the students union at Presidency College and the college was soon drawn into the conflict. In December, Calcutta University had to close down due to increasing violence and corruption.

In February, the United front government came into power in Bengal for the first time since the independence. This was dominated by India’s two communist parties, the pro-Moscow CPI and the CPI (Marxist). They formed the government in coalition for the first time in Bengal. The masses of Bengal expected social reforms from the new government in rural as well as the urban areas. Within next three months, the Naxalbari incident occurred by the shooting of nine villagers by the police. The main leader of the movement was Charu Majumdar, the educated son of a rich landlord, who later identified himself with the Chinese Maoists and left pro-Moscow CPI. The Naxalites called for an armed rebellion against the
defaced authorities and the city of Calcutta turned into a city of bloodshed, where everyday people were killed through bomb blasts and gun shots. Many of those who became Naxalites at this time were from Calcutta and were driven by the revolutionary ideology of the Naxalites. They were generally students in their late teens and early twenties, without the experience of politics. Satyajit Ray depicts this critical scenario in *Pratidwandi (The Adversary)*, where the younger brother of the protagonist Siddhartha, joins the Naxalite movement. Satyajit Ray remembers the city of Calcutta in 1970-71 as a nightmare city and in 1971 Calcutta received fleeing refugees from the new country Bangladesh. Arjun Appadurai labels this immigration as a disjuncture of global cultural flows and mentions the suffix *scape* (fluid irregular bodies). He defines the fluid world as ethnoscape and mentions that “tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers and other moving groups and individuals constitute an essential feature of the world and affect the politics (and between) nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree” (Appadurai 33).

The naxalite movement lost its old rigour and the CPI (M) government began to hand out temporary jobs to the erstwhile Naxalites. But instead of reforming the system, the Congress politicians actively encouraged mass copying in examinations to recruit new supporters. The authorities of Calcutta University cancelled a large proportion of examinations. This incident influenced Satyajit Ray to make *Jana Aranya* (1976), the opening sequence of the film depicts the similar incident of examination. The students are mass copying in an examination and the authorities are assaulted, if they try to intervene. Satyajit Ray’s belief in his culture and its ideological values crumpled under the hotbed of this volatile politics. The *City Trilogy* is his anguished response to the debasement of the whole culture. The first film of the trilogy, *Pratidwandi* and the third film of the trilogy *Jana Aranya*, focuses on the lower middle class of Calcutta, while the second film of the trilogy *Seemabaddha*, concentrates on the wealthy upper class of Calcutta. In these films, he portrays the intense anger, shallow morality and desperation of the middle class youth of Calcutta. His middle class protagonists in the *City Trilogy* are all young men and are the victims of the universal problem of the dehumanizing rat race. These protagonists throughout the films struggle to hold their inherited values and compromise according to their given situation. The films in totality portray the individual tragedies of people trying to survive in a city that is familiar to them, but at the same time the unfamiliar-familiar citadels of the city alienates them. The diluted diversity of the city is in a state of upheaval, and the citizens confront moral, cultural and intellectual dilemmas in the leading city of India. Ashish Rajadhyaksha in
his essay “Satyajit Ray, Satyajit Ray’s Films and Satyajit Ray Movie” mentions that Satyajit Ray:

Shared the classic liberal nationalist discomfort… when the Naxalite communist party of India (Marxist-Leninist) appropriated for itself the voice of radical change. Its student agitations and consequent state brutality informed his Calcutta films (Pratidwandi/The Adversary, 1970; Seemabaddha/Company Limited, 1971) (23-24).

Satyajit Ray’s inaugurates the City Trilogy with Pratidwandi (The Adversary), a film based on the novel Pratidwandi by Sunil Ganguli. The central character of the film Siddhartha, is closer to Satyajit Ray than any other character that he has created. Siddhartha is twenty five, educated and jobless. He is intelligent sensitive and frustrated. Siddhartha gives up his medical studies after the death of his father. He has a younger brother Tunu, who has revolutionary and violent ideas that were influenced by the then Naxalite ideology. His sister Sutapa is allegedly blamed by his boss’s wife for having an affair with her boss. These are the three characters around which the story builds and in a particularly distinctive way these characters present a microcosm of modern Calcutta. For Siddhartha, the home is a claustrophobic prison where he enters every night to suffocate himself further. In the films of Satyajit Ray, the Hindu home plays a major role in contributing to the male’s psychological position. This claustrophobic atmosphere of a Hindu home drives the man out into the streets, at all times of the day and this psychological jolt renders him incapable of functioning efficiently in the society. The only positive development in Siddhartha’s life is his friendship with Keya, who can relate to his sensitive nature. The film depicts relationship of the young man Siddhartha Chowdhary with the city of Calcutta and represents the city as an appalling adversary to a man wanting to establish his life in the city, hence the title of the film.

In the opening scene of the film, Siddhartha’s trauma and psychological dislocation is conveyed visually through the shot in negative. The shots in negative like an X-ray reveal his inner world of conflicts and emotions. The camera zooms on Siddhartha who is standing near the funeral pyre of his father and slowly this shot turns into positive. The shot in negative implies the degrading psychological condition of Siddhartha and the responsibility he has to take after his father’s death to support his family at the earliest. The camera pauses on the grieving widow and then on younger Siddhartha. This shot concentrates on his father’s death that had occurred a year or two before the opening of the film. The frame turns from negative to positive and the young man Siddhartha dominates the film. He looks for a job in the city, but at this time this city turns its back on him and now this city is his adversary. The
desultory nature of these events, speaks much about Siddhartha relation with the city. Although the words and facial expressions do not express much, the incidents that follow in his life symbolizes the essential character and his addiction with the city. Satyajit Ray has focused on jobless young men earlier also in his cinema.

Figure. 29. (a), (b) Introductory sequence of Siddhartha.

In *Aranyer Din Ratri* (1970) his centre focal point was crisis of post independence male. This film was made prior to the *City Trilogy* and deals with the corruption of urban culture, formation of new false hybridity and debasement of middle class male. In the film *Pratidwandi*, Ray, again concentrates on the generation of post independent men. This generation had the potential to bring about changes in the society, but they finally lose out to the economic survival that governs the roots and basic structures of the society. In the novel *Pratidwandi*, Siddhartha is a nineteen year old boy, but in the film because of some casting issues, Satyajit Ray turned the boy into a twenty five year old brooding, intellectual introspective man that often breaks out in flashes of anger. He is a vulnerable young man, confused and uncertain about his future and his inner contradiction regarding every aspect of his life symbolizes the condition of an entire class that has succumbed to this idealism- a combination of infantile childishness and mature sensibilities. In Calcutta, the film touched people as this was the depiction of the everyday face of the city. People in the city are negotiating and travelling in a hitherto unknown overcrowded bus. On the roads there is a semblance of order, inside the bus fuming Bengali’s jostle for air space and identity.
The films first long sequence of shots is that of an overcrowded bus carrying Siddhartha for an interview. This sequence articulates the experience of the thousands of the people in those desperate times. The passengers inside the overcrowded bus are driven at high speed through the crowded streets of Calcutta. The passengers are unaware of one another despite their close physical presence. The camera concentrates on the hands of various passengers hanging on for support, the difficulties encountered by the conductor in collecting the fares and the efforts a passenger has to make in getting in and off the bus. Siddhartha is just one of the thousand faces travelling in the bus. Just before the title sequence finishes, the bus reaches the end of Chowringhee. Siddhartha gets down and proceeds towards the office of the Botanical Survey of India in Madan Lane, where he has come for a job interview. The two interview scenes in the film reflect important aspects of his personality and project the nature of suffering of young men in Calcutta. Thus, Siddhartha after his second interview comes out of the shell of his paternal care and gradually recovers his sense of personal potency.

Figure 30. (a), (b), (c), (d) Screen shots of everyday congested bus ride in Calcutta city.
The State in the Marxist tradition is defined as a “force of repressive execution and intervention in the interests of the ruling classes” (Althusser 90). The sequence of two interviews in the film cements the argument of the functioning of Ideological Apparatuses within the state. The ideological apparatus within the interview is the board of directors and the “subject” here is Siddhartha. In the first interview scene, Satyajit Ray portrays Siddhartha as a humanist standing up for his own principles. Siddhartha, without any hesitation, replies to the interviewers that in his opinion the most significant world event in the last ten years was the “plain human courage” shown by the Vietnamese people rather than the historical event of moon landing. The paternal interviewing board instantly reacts by branding Siddhartha as a “communist” and none of the questions further asked had anything to do with Botany, the subject of his study. They reiterated the power bestowed upon them and rejected him for not fitting into the mandatory category of educated slave. Satyajit Ray through his character Siddhartha is speaking about his own true beliefs and values, and those of his giant predecessor Rabindranath Tagore.

This kind of radical thinking will keep him unemployed and later Siddhartha regrets as these moral victories do not pay in the long run. He is forced to accept this but is unable to change because of his continuous bad temper and a corrosive sense of grievance against the city and his home. Not willing to return to his claustrophobic home, he drives himself into the clutches of his two medical student friends who share a room in a noisy hostel. Siddhartha had been studying medicine too but due to the demise of his father he had to leave his study in the midst and this is the scene, from where the film begins. Siddhartha in a tea house meets a man who comes up to him and gives him a valid advice. In deep trustworthy voice, the stranger mentions not to waste his life in interviews and revert to the political party work that he used to do in college. Although Siddhartha does not say much or does not smoke in front of the man, as a sign of respect, he indicates his lack of interest in the elderly suggestion. What he right now, needs is a job to support his family. On hearing this, the party leader mentions a possible opening of a medical representative in a firm that Siddhartha joins eventually.

Siddhartha’s vacillating moods often reflects Satyajit Ray’s own doubt as he tries to examine and understand this post independence breed of youngsters. The city does not respect the sensitivities and potential of Siddhartha and the film grows out of this Hamletian dilemma of Siddhartha, to act or not to act. To justify this Satyajit Ray adopts a disruptive style that subverts the framework of the conventional narrative. The cinematography of Pratidwandi is influenced by French New Wave and is full of freeze shots, jump cuts,
ellipses and hand-held camera work. Satyajit Ray tries to see Siddhartha as a complex object that lives in his own memories, dreams and fantasies. The unconscious state of Siddhartha is not stable or rational. For Satyajit Ray it was a challenge to represent this through a new technique as it had to do away with the conventional camera or framework. Siddhartha plunges into the city, only to be met with the same circle of disillusionment and immerses himself in an air conditioned film theatre, The Lighthouse. The film being shown is ideally suited to the current political scenario. In between, the film also advertises the propagandist government newsreel about Indira Gandhi’s forthcoming budget that will provide a better sense of security for the lower income groups. This temporary relief of Siddhartha is shattered by a loud explosion of a bomb blast and everybody is out of the cinema. Moving out he meets his friend Adinath who offers him a Chinese meal, a glass of whiskey and after the meal takes him to a nurse cum whore. Siddhartha feels disgusted by the women and by the act of his friend. In a fit of rage, he again rushes out lonely towards the streets of Calcutta.

This sequence of the prostitute home is shot by placing the camera on a staircase of a squalid house, looking down on the balcony inside the main door. Siddhartha is hesitant, uncomfortable about the sordid place and the object for which he unwillingly accompanies his friend. The young woman who lets them into her flat is nurse by day and prostitute at night. Siddhartha is clearly out of place and unsociable at this alien place. He is rude to the woman who does not belong to the social standard of women as defined by the moral principles of the society. At this juncture there was a recurring trope of prostitution in the contemporary Calcutta. Satyajit Ray here reminds prostitution as a failure of humanistic principles, admission of man’s failure to become civilized and to stop the economic exploitation of female body.
In the 1970s there was rise in cabaret and a refugee girl from East Bengal, Miss Shefali who also played the part of nurse-prostitute in the film, created interest among the city dwellers. Siddhartha meets his girlfriend Keya while making an escape from the home of the prostitute. She calls him across the road to mend a fuse. Keya becomes a stabilizing factor for Siddhartha, as Satyajit Ray develops this micro plot of love relationship between Siddhartha and Keya. Keya is a virginal, innocent girl who is also melancholic due to the loss of her mother in early childhood. Siddhartha is depressed because of communication breakdown of his family and due to his everyday routine of futile search for job, where no success appears. The significance of this meeting is Keya’s embarrassment of ‘improper’ summoning of Siddhartha in the dark night. In contrast to his earlier experience with the prostitute, Keya is an ideal woman compatible with every rule that bourgeoisie society has constructed. Keya shares her plight of her father marrying younger sister of his late wife. This may be respectable for father and for the society but Keya disapproves of this relationship. Satyajit Ray does not end the film with Siddhartha and Keya together, he separates them to take up responsibilities of their lives and in a letter written by Siddhartha to Keya, he hints at the possibility of eventual reunion of the forlorn lovers.

Satyajit Ray has used several surrealistic shots to reveal the conscious mind of Siddhartha. These thoughts emerge from the lectures he attended as a medical student and reveals his uneasiness and estrangement from the society. The first sequence of negative shots captures Siddhartha waiting to cross a main road. Siddhartha spots a well built girl walking from the opposite direction of the traffic. Suddenly, Ray gives a flashback on Siddhartha’s past memory of a lecturer explaining the anatomy of the female breasts to the class of medical students. Satyajit Ray provides a second glimpse of this detachment while
Siddhartha is in Keya’s home with her aunt swallowing a pill for headache. He again escapes to a past lecture on physiology of the mouth and the act of swallowing. The most dramatic of the surrealistic shots comes at the culmination of the film when the applicants of the job are in a state of exhaustion because of heat and sweat in a claustrophobic hall. Siddhartha’s imagination runs backwards to the lecture on human skeleton and he imagines all the candidates turned into skeletons. The social, political meaning of these sequences not only contains the fractures between epistemology, education and experience— that Siddhartha is a science graduate poses threat to the liberal education system. There is so much of thought process going inside his head but he is not able to communicate this to anybody. Thus, Siddhartha is actually entrapped in the city, home. Apparently, Satyajit Ray through this flashback technique makes him escape into his inner space to find some encouragement and motif to constantly survive the day. This inner space of Siddhartha is an imaginary site where he can deliberately withdraw from the reality of life and strengthen his desire to abandon the unfamiliar that he is surrounded by in the city of Calcutta.

Siddhartha is presented by Satyajit Ray as an ordinary man lost and struggling within the crowd of Calcutta. The technique of hand held camera immerses Siddhartha totally in the local crowd of Calcutta and it is only the imaginary world that gives him solace in this unfamiliar familiar Calcutta. There is a constant question on his masculinity and his acceptance of castration that finally culminates into series of nightmare dreams. In his first nightmare, the sequence opens with a close shot of the muscular hairy forearms over his head and his neck is placed between the guillotines. The guillotine chops his head and there is a splash of blood that represents his death. This jerks off his sleep and he feels feverish and disturbed. Siddhartha after a moment feels agitated by the howls of the neighborhood cats and hurls an old slipper to silence them. He soon falls asleep and the second nightmare dominates his swift mind again. Satyajit Ray presents this nightmare in a montage of shots where his family and love are collided together in a strange surreal landscape. In this landscape, he sees himself as a passive male witnessing all the incidents. Along a deserted coastal beach, he sees in a negative shot the first picture of his interviewing board sitting behind the table on which young fetuses are soaked in a display jar. Thereafter, the camera slowly pans on his dream further and he sees his sister Sutapa wearing a swimsuit and posing for a photo shoot. This image is followed by an actual situation of a violent mob thrashing a car driver while going for a job interview. A firing squad of police that is ready to execute his terrorist brother Tunu and his girlfriend Keya’s sudden appearance as a nurse running to help
dying Tunu. These events in his nightmare were the series of events that he has experienced in his daily struggle within his home and the streets of the city.

The dream sequence is an emblem of Siddhartha’s insecurity, failure and guilt. Every event in the dream is symbolic of Siddhartha’s character and inaction. His victimization by the interview board and the allusion to the aborted fetus in the dream is symbolic of his castration, the fear of patriarchal society and finally the wish for death. Sutapa in a swimsuit is an allure and threat, her dancing lessons and her popularity with the boss, while craving for a successful career as a model makes Siddhartha ineffectual further. Tunu’s heroics of embracing death symbolizes his inner character of what he could have been and reasons for his procrastination in the present situation. There is also a death wish here on the part of Siddhartha to die more meaningfully than he has lived. There is an underlying sexual desire within Siddhartha through the sequence of his nightmare. He combines all the three women in his life, two of them who he has recently met. The swimsuit clad Sutapa, embodies his incestuous desire and guilt. The prostitute he recently met is replaced by Keya. There is amazement as well as relief on the face of Siddhartha as the good nurse has appeared to cure him. In a larger context, finally Keya establishes her place in his existence.

Figure.32. (a), (b), (c), (d) A sequence of Siddhartha’s unconscious mind.
Among all population flows into India, the inflow from Bangladesh has received great attention in the recent times. Satyajit Ray in the film *Pratidhwandi* also focused on this aspect of Bengal. Due to similar geographical, socio-cultural and racial linguistics linkages coupled with easy accessibility of the border induced the people of Bangladesh to move towards India, especially, to the states bordering Bangladesh. Gyanendra Pandey in remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism, and History in India traces the aftermath of partion og Bengal. He mentions that the partition of British India in 1947, more than three million Hindus may have migrated from East Pakistan. A total of 864,000 Muslims immigrated to East Pakistan because of the military operations by the Pakistani military in 1971. After the independence of Bangladesh, most of these refugees returned, although an undetermined number remained in India. Satyajit Ray’s mind turned towards this event and applauded the heroism of poorly armed Bengalis against the brutality of well equipped Western Pakistani soldiers. In the film, Siddhartha’s family migrates from East Pakistan and this trend of migration is followed by Satyajit Ray earlier in *Apu Trilogy*. Siddhartha’s mother’s accent in the film reveals their status of refugees from East Bengal and the victims of 1947 partition. Throughout the film, Siddhartha is functioning within a culture of extremes, in a deeply plural society. After living through a history of displaced who crossed the border when he was a young child, Siddhartha is now a resident of the land across the border. He is in India, a country that he is familiar with but not comfortable. Siddhartha in this new place opts for a middle space as he indefinitely postpones the choice and commitment of his previous identity. He adopts this new city and tries to create his own identity within the city. Although, there is a sense of living in this new city, but unlike any other third world city, Calcutta is home to elites and slums. The city is a mixture of the Western progress, colonial hangover and appalling poverty. Siddhartha’s lingua franca is a mixture of Bengali and English separately as well as in mixed hybrid formats.

Siddhartha throughout the film is frustrated by the city and questions his identity in the rising new India. This frustration arises from the personal as well contemporary social condition of Calcutta. The city offers nothing to Siddhartha besides bomb blasts, drugged hippies, eulogizing cows, nurses forced into prostitution, a sister flirting with her desires and a brother who wants to be a part of revolution. Siddhartha seeks only one solution, that is to clean it all up by the machine gun. However, when given an opportunity to put his violent streak into practical use, he finds himself reluctant in proceeding to any action. His inner conflicts, desires, doubts leave him in a state of continuous frustration and rage. In a sequence where Siddhartha reaches home tired and frustrated from the city, he interrupts the wife of his
sister’s boss who has come to their house unannounced to allegedly complain Siddhartha’s sister’s illicit affair with her husband.

Siddhartha tries speaking to her sister but she fends off his concern. Suddenly he feels that he is younger of the siblings and his words do not matter to any of them. He recalls his childhood days with his sister, when an enigmatic bird voice haunted him and will continue to haunt throughout his life. Siddhartha and Sutapa shared the same joyous feeling; her dance on the terrace in the present reminds him of the bird song that he heard in his childhood. He finds his sister has gone too far away from him and has abandoned the memory of childhood. A few minutes later, Siddhartha tries to communicate with his brother but he fails again to create any meaningful dialogue. His younger brother Tunu is too fascinated by the revolutionary ideology of the naxalites and while watching Tunu bandage his wounded leg, he slips into the past memories of childhood. One fine day in the countryside they had collectively witnessed a cock’s neck brutally cut by a peasant. While sensitive Siddhartha had turned away from the murderous scene, Tunu witnessed the entire incident without covering his face. When Siddhartha asks Tunu, “Do you remember the bird?” Tunu replies “What bird?” For a political revolutionary like Tunu, dedication to the cause is much more important than his past. Tunu might have deliberately erased the past as this could show his expression of weak sentimentality as he imagines following the footsteps of Che Guevara and Karl Marx. This makes Siddhartha aware of his estrangement even within the four walls of his home. Siddhartha is driven by hysterical urge, decides to visit Sutapa’s boss Ananta Sanyal to teach him a severe lesson. Ananta Sanyal appears as a dignified and confident man in front of him, but while confronting the man, sitting in his large mansion in Alipur, he falters from his objective and rather asks him for a job. Then to hide his weakness and despair he leaves before the boss can return from making a telephone call.

Earlier in the coffee house conversation with a faceless man (Satyajit Ray), audience come to know that Siddhartha was also involved in student politics. At this juncture, Siddhartha is a changed man; he has completely lost faith in the government. Satyajit Ray here alludes to the failure of the coalition leftist government in the early and late sixties. The coalition government was a collective failure in governance and encouraged corruption and factionalism in every sphere of the society. Siddhartha in this situation is just a bourgeoisie disillusioned by the leftist policies and puts his personal problems above those of his peer ideological group. Tunu his younger brother who is a staunch naxalite and a follower of their violent ideology openly criticizes his elder brother’s middle path of complacency. The space
in which Siddhartha lives is a passive location of perpetual struggle, where the only thing a man wants is to survive according to the dominant rules of the authorities.

Tunu complains that Siddhartha is stuck in a daily ritual of finding a job and cynically mentions that he is just another pawn in the game, which will finally be a cog in the bureaucratic web. Siddhartha, after a dialectical thought process finds him left with only one option, and that is to turn into a terrorist like his younger brother and join in the revolution against the state apparatuses. Here, Satyajit Ray has clearly mentioned a direct influence of Che Guevara on the young college going Tunu. Siddhartha had sold his college medical books to purchase this idealism and in retrospect, this ideology seems to be a fond dream of adolescent minds. For Siddhartha at this point of time economic survival seems to be utmost necessary. Peeking into the mirror Siddhartha fantasizes himself bearded like Che Guevara, but his despair is so high at this moment that the Marxist utopia to him seems futile. Instead, he seeks himself to face the practical reality rather than meditating and following the political ideologies. Tunu on the other hand is a hot blooded young man and like every other naxalite, his primary aim is to dismantle the bourgeoisie state.

Although the city of Calcutta has brought a sense of failure in the protagonist, but there is something about the city that does not make the protagonist leaving this place. Siddhartha is fascinated with the place and his friend Adinath also mentions that he cannot see himself live outside the city for a single minute. Even of life here was rotten, other cities were dying or were already dead. Amidst political upheaval, bombings, tension, at personal and social level, the city somehow leaves a mark on the lives of these young individuals. The struggle that the city brings upon them has its own charisma and this very charisma has fatally consumed the citizens. Siddhartha has accepted and is overwhelmed by this merciless reality of Calcutta. Like every other individual, he is trapped within the whirlpool of social majority. He constantly tries to escape from being a social animal, but somehow has to confront this social identity at every step. Satyajit Ray in this film bridges the communication breakdown in the form of a love relationship amidst the emotional turmoil within and social unrest outside in the city. Siddhartha and Keya are neither happy and nor in a position to commit themselves into a relationship. They simply enjoy each other’s physical presence and company.

In the sequence shot on the roof top of high rise building in Calcutta, they look down upon the political supporters at a mass meeting. Their voices are unintelligible under the sound of large loudspeakers. The private space for which they had come on the roof top is occupied by the movements of swarming crowds and the noisy loudspeakers. This is the first
time in the film that Calcutta has been captured by Satyajit Ray from an aerial view; otherwise the city of Calcutta in the film has been captured only from the ground level. This overhead aerial shot is a panoramic survey of unrest in Calcutta. What becomes visible is the larger network in which the audience sees how an individual is connected to the city. The problems and unrest inside the city affects the individual citizen in a complex pattern, which at the ground level a person may not be able to identify. The conversation between Keya and Siddhartha and their discussion of personal problems somehow seems to be linked to the larger problem below in the city. It is here that Siddhartha and Keya vow to each other to stay in contact, no matter what happens to them.

Siddhartha as a person is reluctant to identify himself as a person belonging to the leftist or rightist movement. He has consciously shrunk himself to the middle space where his only goal is to solve his personal problems. The city urges Siddhartha to act in a violent manner and he is tested by the city at every step. For Siddhartha, it is an existential dilemma—that if he joins the movement like the swarming mob, will he be able to retain his identity or will he have to blindly follow the public whose minds are influenced by calculated tactics of corrupt politicians? Earlier in a conversation with Keya, Siddhartha mentions that he did not identify himself with the lynching mob. So how could he sacrifice his identity over the boiling mob fighting social problems under a general ideology. Siddhartha tries to distinguish himself from the city but at the roof top when he is searching for some privacy with Keya, he still is not able to escape: City hangs over and above him like an ominous presence engulfing him.

Figure.33. (a), (b). Roof top view of Calcutta.
In the final interview scene of the film, seventy one job aspirants are sweating for survival under a single ceiling fan for four vacant posts. Here we come to know that Siddhartha’s conscious choice of being passive is an active process of observing the world. By the end of the film he erupts like a dormant volcano, disturbing and destroying everything that comes under its vicious anger. The two interviews in the beginning and at the end of the film highlight the reality of the failure of a young nation state to provide basic employment/livelihood to the (disillusioned) young men. Most of the applicants stand, since the infrastructure cannot support such a large herd. The candidates are tensed and proliferation of cigarette buds in a sand bucket speaks more than their facial expressions.

The tensed faces have unique expressions and Siddhartha watches their expressions, supporting him from the wall of corridor, where a pasted poster shouts about “Strikers and Non Strikers, Discrimination should go”. This poster is a warning sign that Siddhartha stands for later against the interview panel. The weather outside slowly gets hotter and Siddhartha’s pent up anger slowly gains momentum. A man nervous and tired of heat falls on the ground unconscious and this is the first time in the film when Siddhartha, rather than being a passive watcher acts. He leads a small delegation to complain about the dismal condition of candidates standing outside in the blistering heat. Suddenly the strange faces seem to have genuine concern for each other bound by frustration, hope and anger. Inside their request is met with a deaf ear by the board of directors, and as the interview board signals personal attack on Siddhartha. On hearing the interview board, Siddhartha’s supporters vanish from the door and this humiliation of Siddhartha culminates into his final rage.
Satyajit Ray pans the camera at every face outside that is incapable to protest. In a larger context, this sequence highlights the utmost importance of self interest within the youth of a factionalized nation. After receiving a negative response from the authorities, Siddhartha squeezes himself at the same place between the walls and closes his eyes. He reminisces a series of images of doped hippies playing with a stethoscope, a semi nude beggar sleeping on the road, a dirty slum area and a posh home. These are the random images that he has picked while travelling on the streets of Calcutta. These images signify the desire of Siddhartha for a good life and the polarities that exists within the society. When Siddhartha opens his eyes, he finds most of the men tired and their worn out faces gives him a glimpse of his own reality. The incompetence and meekness of their action makes him realize of the passive life he is living. Satyajit Ray here uses a medical metaphor for the last time as Siddhartha gazes at these men with his X-ray vision. He finds these candidates as skeletons without flesh, blood and feelings. This dehumanizing condition brings out the pent up anger of Siddhartha and he strides into the board room and explodes. He demands an answer from the board but nobody reciprocates to his question. This pent up anger is the culmination of his passive approach to the routine life. His aggressive body movement destroys everything in the board room as he throws ink on the wall, overturns a table, hurls a chair on the window and manhandles a member of the interview board. This sequence ends with the lighted table lamp falling down on the floor, signifying the end of the passive streak of the protagonist and a new way to live life on his own terms.
This aggressive scene in the film is also symbolic of the violent Calcutta of 1970s, where terrible violence occurred throughout the city. The tracking shot of the walls painted and plastered with posters to the shot of blurred landscape outside the window of a moving train reveals to the audiences that finally Siddhartha has given in to the corrupt situation. Finally Siddhartha takes up the job of a medical sales man in a remote area of Bihar, which is far away from his rejection and rejecting the city of Calcutta. He settles temporarily in a motel and writes a letter to Keya mentioning that he still cherishes their relationship. Through his protagonist Siddhartha, Ray mentions that a person with political ideology is less interesting and Siddhartha as a young man did not have any firm ideology. He thought for himself and therefore he suffered because his act of protest was on a personal level and not an expression of a political ideology. Siddhartha’s outburst is an accumulated gesture of the experience that he has faced with the corrupt political system. The film ends with the sound of a bird from Siddhartha’s childhood. He associates this bird with her sister Sutapa, who like the bird is still a sense of wonder to him, living in her own dream world. Siddhartha in this new margin of a small town is physically displaced from Calcutta. He may have succumbed to the corrupt officials of the city, he might have lost to the citadels of the city, but after hearing the familiar birds call, he has an inner satisfaction of accomplishment. The sound of the bird’s call might have haunted him in the childhood, but now this call of the bird has revitalized him and linked to the nature of this Hindi speaking town. Satyajit Ray ends the film, with the scene of death of an unknown person. There is a monotonous chant of Hindu mantra “Ram Nam Satya Hai” (The Name of God is Truth). In the novel, Sunil Ganguli ends with Siddhartha stalking the streets of the small town at night and cursing the world with
rage. Satyajit Ray’s ending and the beginning of the film with death signifies the process of life. Whatever the circumstances, life moves on with the world and finally everybody has to follow the course of the nature. Ben Nyce in his work *Satyajit Ray: A Study of His Films* (1988) explains this as “Something is dying in him and something is being reborn” (19). Siddhartha has a liberated state of mind at the end of the film. Satyajit Ray in the last shot of the film freezes the image of Siddhartha as he slowly turns towards the camera and tries to bridge the past and present of his life. *Pratidwandi*, prominently focuses on the future Calcutta in making. Satyajit Ray’s concern is not with Siddhartha, but with the whole class of educated and unemployed Siddharthas who are dissatisfied with the older generation clinging to the outmoded values of the society.

*Seemabaddha*, the second film of the trilogy does not raise much to the artistic creativity of the film *Pratidwandi*. The opening shots of the film reveals that Satyajit Ray is extending the platform of his film *Pratidwandi* to the theme of his new film *Seemabaddha*. This film features a voice over narration telling us that in addition to the numerous unemployed and illiterate people in Calcutta, there are about innumerable literate unemployed. The lead character of the film, Shyamalendu Chatterjee, introduces himself by a voice over and describes his rise from a small town boy to that of a corporate executive at a private company in Calcutta. Shyamalendu complacently distinguishes himself from the basic economic and social problems running within the contemporary society and comments that unemployment is the root cause of all the troubles in the society. Similarly before the film actually starts, we come to know his designation, his foreign firm, his lifestyle rather than his personality and who he actually as a person is. He has dedicated ten years of his life to the highly reputed firm of Hindustan Peters and he specially mentions that it is a foreign firm “Incorporated in England.” This clearly indicates that getting associated with the Western culture of life and foreign companies is a sign of personal superiority and this notion enhances the impression of an individual on the populace. Satyajit Ray describes this film as a story of the Western oriented corporate sector people living in Calcutta, especially those who work in multinational companies or large scale Indian companies. Their lifestyle is a copy of the elite American or Anglican way of living that generally revolves around the office, elite cocktail parties, clubs, race tracks and golf fields. To accompany the voice over narration in the film, Satyajit Ray uses a long collage sequence, consisting mostly of documentary images, trees, graphs and split screens.

*Seemabaddha* starts where *Pratidwandi* ends, the protagonist Shyamalendu in the film is a contrast to the personality of Siddhartha in the first part of the *Calcutta Trilogy*. 
Shyamalendu in the film is an individual who is critiqued, unlike Siddhartha who individually asserts himself in the film. Satyajit Ray’s through this film endorses the view that Westernization has created an inherent masculine weakness. This weakness has further generated a culture that is contemptuous of Hinduism and Hindu way of life. The film is also about a powerful psychological drama that follows young executive’s journey up the corporate ladder and his immersion into corruption. Shyamalendu is young, educated and suave, who is willing to trade his moral and cultural values for a seat on the board of directors. The film is a success story of a boy belonging to a modest background and rising to a position of highest order in the multinational firm. Shyamalendu, a son of schoolmaster, after freshly completing post-graduation in English at Patna University gets a job in the sales wing of a British merchant company Hindustan Peters Limited in Calcutta.

Figure.36. (a), (b), (c), (d) Inaugural screen shots of *Seemabaddha*. 
Shyamalendu is the in charge of the sales division of ceiling fans in the multinational company. He arrogantly mentions: “My future is completely tied to that of my firm”. Since Shyamalendu acknowledges only a singular method of climbing the ladder of success and to accomplish his objective, he creates multiple personalities for himself. This small town boy from Bihar sheds his native skin and immerses himself completely into the life of nouveau riche. In a split screen shot, Satyajit Ray showcases Shyamalendu riding a bicycle through the streets of Patna. Later in a contrasting sequence of shots, he moves into a larger apartment in a posh colony, starts playing golf with his business partners and co–workers and finally goes on to his work in a chauffeur driven car. The company, Hindustan Peters has provided Shyamalendu a luxurious flat where he lives with his wife Dolan, who also graduated in English, under the guidance of her father Prof. Bhattacharya. In the film we come to know about their child through a letter from their seven year old boy, Raja, who is a boarder at St.Paul school in Darjeeling.

In contrast to Pratidwandi’s representation of a lower middle class, Seemabaddha looks at the city from a highly upper class perspective. The city of Calcutta in Seemabaddha is away from the crowds, untidiness and sordidness and represents the Westernized life of Calcutta. The mise en scene of the film is set in fashionable and expensive places where people only adopted lifestyles of English sahibs. Satyajit Ray presents this class difference and detachment from the everyday lower Calcutta in a series of shots from the pent house of an apartment. The grand hobby of the elite class of gambling at the Victoria Memorial race course also represents the splendor of the life style and their remoteness from the margins of everyday Calcutta surviving in the streets. In this elite life there is no struggle for survival on daily basis. To this section, economic realities do not matter; traditional values clash with the modern in this setup, while morality has an altogether different connotation. The plot of the film is based on the order of ceiling fans by a Middle East company. Shaymalendu, the protagonist of the film is given the responsibility to undertake the task and deliver the order on time. Along with the main plot there is a sub-plot of an unsaid love story between Shyamalendu and her sister in law Tutul. Shaymalendu is not a handsome man, but has a decent personality and Tutul lived in his neighborhood during his days in Patna. Tutul had admired and liked Shyamalendu even before he had married her sister. During her Calcutta visit, this admiration develops into a mutual attraction. But at this point of time Shaymalendu’s priority was to be a director of his company. The narrative of the film revolves around the visit of this interesting character of Tutul. Tutul is apparently impressed by the glamour of this elite life and the nouveau riche lifestyle of her sister.
Satyajit Ray has acutely and skillfully developed her character and it is only through her interactions with Shyamalendu that we perceive him more personally and intimately. The nature of Tutul towards his brother-in-law assumes considerable significance because throughout the film, Tutul is openly critical with her words and actions. She critiques Shyamalendu’s vanity and his judgement on the tender and industrial crisis. Initially experiencing the nouveau riche lifestyle, Tutul maintains her distance from the world of Shyamalendu and Dolan. Although she has enjoyed her moments at the race track of Victoria Memorial, meals at highly reputed restaurants and has shown curiosity to rush inside the beauty salon to see the world that lies beyond those expensive doors. Tutul eventually, expresses her disinterestedness in the social life of Shyamalendu and Dolan and decides to spend her days rearranging bookshelves at home. Satyajit Ray represents Corporate Calcutta life through the character of Shyamalendu. The life Shaymalendu lives here is luxurious. He has an apartment whose covered area is two thousand seven hundred and eighty square feet, he has servants, foreign furniture and can afford to send his sons to boarding schools at the hill station. Shyamalendu’s world germinates out of the establishment of Hindustan Peters and Shyamalendu as a character in the film is introduced to us in the context of his designation as a Sales Manager in the company.

The shot sequence of a party at Shyamalendu’s home, where he has invited his fellow colleagues for an informal party, provides a glimpse into the world of Shyamalendu. People like Tutul with country background are merely passive entities dressed in expensive clothes. The characters in the party engage themselves in serious drawing room discussion on the political and social threats posed by Naxalite violence in the nooks and corners of cityscape and further they recognize and discuss on the unavoidable reality of unemployment. Shyamalendu critically comments that the “whole system is rotten.” In addition to the hypocrisy of the upper class, Satyajit Ray in the scene also comments on the clash of tradition and modern values. When Shyamalendu’s parents arrive unannounced at his flat, their facial expressions apparently change because of the cultural shock they receive after entering the door. Shyamalendu and Dolan accompany them to another room and an embarrassed Shyamalendu silently calls Tutul to entertain and support the old couple. The shot shifts back to Shyamalendu’s world and we see Shyamalendu’s colleagues continue their discussion on the changing role of youth in the international sphere.
The cinematicscapes in the film that Satyajit Ray represents is the life of Shyamalendu in his office, related spaces such as factories and his domestic life at home. Satyajit Ray manages to hold our interest in the office politics as well as life of Shyamalendu at home. The major part of Calcutta is not focused in this film, the nearest Shyamalendu feels the pulse of Calcutta is through the windows of his company apartment. The company apartment is not just comfortable and a beautifully designed luxurious flat, it signifies a contrasting lifestyle that is a dream for millions walking on the streets of Calcutta. The violence of the Calcutta in the 1970s, the political turmoil, murders, bomb explosions and gun fire are isolated from this segment of Calcutta. The people belonging to this class of society only care about their monetary benefits and personal ambitions. They are unaware of the world that lives outside their elevated window glasses. There are clear instances in the film where the characters are boasting and mimicking the typical the Western lifestyle. In a
scene when Shyamalendu and Dolan go out for lunch with Tutul at an elite club, Satyajit Ray highlights the notion of class distinction. Shyamalendu mentions with pride that “ten years ago only foreigners were able to be members of the club.” The character of Sir Barun Roy is personified as a silly old hybrid man, who displays his foolish nature of giggling and ogling while meeting Shymalendu, Dolan and Tutul at the club. Sir Barun Roy’s admiration for Tutul completely discomforts her and Satyajit Ray here covertly provides an early discomfort in this new life.

The first half of the film Seemabaddha is based on the upper class lifestyle set in the context of Calcutta. The voice over at the beginning of the film provides us the condition of unemployment in Calcutta along with the statistics. Satyajit Ray captures a sequence of men standing outside the employment exchange in a long queue. This long stretched line sums up a generations shattered dream, idleness and frustrations. Shyamalendu in the film is introduced in a contrasting manner. Whereas the idleness of the youth was the main destroyer of their dreams, Shyamalendu clearly had a specific goal in his mind. He had earlier mentioned this in the introduction through a voice over. His complete body language and his first steps towards the advancement of his career speaks of a person not wanting to belong to the lower middle class section anymore. At this point of time, there is a sense of urgency in his life and the only thing that lures him in the first half of the film is money. After a brilliant career in academics in Patna, Shyamalendu Chatterjee and his wife Dolan shift to Calcutta, where he joins Hindustan Peters. Soon he is promoted to sales manager and is given a task of shipping a consignment of ceiling fans to the Middle East.

In the introductory part of the film there are shots of the location of the company in the sub-urban part of Calcutta, its head office, one hundred and eighty white collar workers and twelve hundred employees working under their discretion. The senior management of the company is introduced in hierachial pattern by an arrangement of circular photograph on the single screen. The Managing director Mr. Andrew Ferris is an Englishman and also a graduate of Balliol College, Oxford. Under him are two other Englishmen, Davidson who has bighty with cancer and has returned to England and the third English man is the Finance director Gordon. Amongst the other Directors of the Board there is Sir Barun Roy, a hilarious old man who with the mercy of the British Raj in the pre-independent India has obtained knighthood. Shyamalendu (Sales Manager of Fans division) and Ranadeb Sanyal (Sales Manager of Lamp division) are in competition for the vacant position on the Board of Directors. Their rivalry is first indicated in the waiting room outside the board room where both attack and counter-attack each other with smoke rings. Ranadeb is a bright young man
who emulates the English life style and wears bow ties with the Western tailored suits. Shyamalendu on the other hand follows the similar lifestyle, but on a lesser degree acts flirtatiously with his secretaries. He has modeled his life according to the rules of corporate sector.

Satyajit Ray choreographed life in this part of Calcutta as a joy ride in a theme park. The structures, the policy makers, the owners had an envious way of life and this life could only be desired by the majority of Calcutta struggling in the streets for basic survival. Everything was going perfect for Shyamalendu at home and in the office. He had everything that he had always desired, but his final objective of being a member of the board of director was not yet achieved. His dream depended on the consignment of fans that is to be shipped to the Middle East. At this critical moment, he receives a phone call from the company informing him that the consignment of fans to be exported is defective and the inspection committee has rejected the final consignment of fans. A delay in shipment would cause heavy losses to the company and a blow to the personal reputation of Shyamalendu. This might also lead to ouster him from the company with a bad portfolio. Shyamalendu has a week to rectify this error and by fifteenth March, he has to in any case dispatch the order otherwise the penalty clauses might bring a loss to the company. Shyamalendu uses his power, seeks help from the Managing director, but there seems to be no solution to the problem. This is the first time in the film that Satyajit Ray has focused on crisis situation in the life of Shyamalendu. This situation equals to the crisis that Satyajit Ray focused on the other protagonists of the Calcutta Trilogy. But in this film Satyajit Ray, ironically comments on the aspect of morality that is lost in this section of upper class Calcutta.

Shyamalendu is a part of a commercial sector and a bureaucratic system that is a complete society in itself. His dealings have to in accordance with their principles and laws created orally and conveyed verbally through their subordinates. Shyamalendu in order to succeed takes the easy road and compromises with his morality and principles that he had brought from his small town of Patna. Earlier, Satyajit Ray in a scene of exuberance provides a subtle sign of the imminent disaster. In an afternoon drive with Tutul to Chowringhee lane and Park Street, his pride on Hindustan Peters is shattered by Tutul’s jocular laugh at the flickering of lights and the poor synchronization of the neon fan. The unsynchronized movement of fan is an indication of the imperfections within the company of Hindustan Peters and how vulnerable a Sales Manager could be before common masses. In a state of depression Shymalendu goes home, drinks and rethinks on the issue for a possible solution. He shares his plight with his wife Dolan and sister in law Tutul, but apart from emotional
sympathy they could provide no possible solution. In a jest, Tutul suggests him a plan of action that he seriously follows. Shyamalendu in a disturbed state of mind calls the company labour officer Harihar Talukdar, who after thirteen years of labour officer; is now a personnel officer. Shyamalendu with his help hatches a plot to cause a strike in the factory. Harihar Talukdar assures Shyamalendu that labour trouble can easily be instigated. It is in the factory canteen that the incident of serving rotten fish is created and later on this turns into an industrial confrontation.

Figure 38. (a), (b) Screen shots showcasing economic disparity and class distinction.

Satyajit Ray here deliberately inserted contrasting shots of the club life, restaurants frequently visited by the managing directors to the disheveled condition of the factory canteen caused by the bomb blast. The company watchman is seriously injured in a bomb blast that was caused by one of the fellow workers and is admitted in the hospital on the expense of the company. In the context of this dehumanizing condition, Louise Althusser in (“Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses”) views that a young child around the age of sixteen is ejected into the production through a specific ideology. Some turn into workers or small peasants, another portion goes somewhat further and fills the white collar jobs. A last portion of constant hard workers reach to the summit and turn into “the agents of exploitation (capitalists, managers)” (155). Louise Althusser further states that practically every individual has an ideology and plays specific role in the class society. Shyamalendu here plays the role
as a professional agent of exploitation and instructs the labourer, Harihar to obediently enforce the order without any further discussion.

Shyamalendu for humanitarian aspect meets the watchman in the hospital and the watchman commits his sincerity towards the company. After the strike ends, the film expresses the attitude of Shyamalendu and the company labourer officer towards the fellow labourers. This point raised by Satyajit Ray in the film is debatable, but in the end the director does not provide any solution. On the injury of the watchman, Shyamalendu and the company labour officer hilariously imagine his funeral and how his widow would have been provided compensation by the company. The company labour officer further remarks “Aren’t people dying in Calcutta all the time?” Shyamalendu on hearing this sends a condolence note to the watchman and finally both laugh over on the situation. The margins or the lower section of the society consists of the powerless workers like the watchman. As the centre cannot exist without the margin, the success of these executives like Shyamalendu is often founded on the sacrifices of these voiceless marginalized people. Executive officers like Shyamalendu show no concern for the efforts of these ordinary people. The outstanding quality that Shyamalendu possesses and that differs from the other two protagonists of the *Calcutta Trilogy* is his command over the space, his work, his family and his company. He boldly faces the crisis and overcomes from his sheer will power, effective planning rather than surrendering to them unlike the other two protagonists of the *Calcutta Trilogy*.

Satyajit Ray in the film gives a sense of freedom for the movement of characters partly because they are economically independent and possess an influential status in the society. The characters here in the film altogether live in a space that is a dream for the lower strata of the society. The advertisements of self-grooming kits, Indian and foreign dresses, interior designing, are subtly marked as the status of the upper class society. In a scene of the advertisement of a swimming short, Satyajit Ray presents the working day of Shyamalendu through the advertisement of a short at the Calcutta swimming club. Satyajit Ray here ironically understates in disbelief that material comfort establishes and creates a desire in the imagination of the consumer. The consumer sacrifices the real in order to pursue the pleasure of the unreal imagination. Satyajit Ray’s personal experience of working in an advertisement firm early in his career came in handy to represent this part of the film. In *Satyajit Ray: The Inner Eye: the Biography of a Master Film-maker*, Andrew Robinson the author of the book mentions the extracts from the shooting notebook of Satyajit Ray that:

He makes a very detailed list of the objects in Shyamalendu’s room in his company flat, as well as sketching over and over again possible designs for the
company logo- one example of his fascination with typography out of the many dotted through his notebooks. He also took the advice of Sankar, the novelist, who recalled that Satyajit Ray once phoned him to enquire precisely where in a batch of fans the defects were located which nearly wrecked Syamalendu’s career in the armatures, or in the blades. (215)

In the film, Satyajit Ray does not intend to focus on the plot of social unrest in the streets of Calcutta, but rather he examines from a neutral point of view the causes that stir these movements of social unrest. The question of morality varies from section to section of the people in the society. For Shyamalendu and his company labour officer, the injury to the watchman and the lockout in the factory was justified because it turned out to be hindrance in achieving his personal ambition. Satyajit Ray’s neutral point of view in representing Shyamalendu could be his personal preference at the end of the film. The plot revolves around the professional life of corporate sector in Calcutta and how Shyamalendu’s life is weaved according to the rules of the company. So professionally the decision made by him regarding the future of the company is practically correct, but ethically this might go against his principles of morality. Shyamalendu works according to the interests of the company and saves the company from disgrace if the consignment deal had gone the other way. Tutul a small town girl, just like Shymalendu is truly representative of the country side morality of a small Indian village. For her, Shymalendu’s act of engineering a strike is an issue of morality and the plan which he devised to manipulate the workers for achieving his objective is immoral. Tutul fails to comprehend the extent to which Shyamalendu falls because she admired him and loved him more than his revolutionary boyfriend. Although he is only mentioned in words and never appears in the film. She is disillusioned by the darker side of Shyamalendu’s personality and realizes that she has a person waiting for her in Patna. Tutul symbolically rejects Shyamalendu and his world by returning the expensive watch that he had gifted her.

Shyamalendu, since the time he shifted to Calcutta has abided the rules of the corporate executive world. These rules are based on the principles of the Western capitalism. He develops his personality according to the codes of the Western gentleman. In the opening scenes of the film, Shyamalendu like the other high esteem officers develops a habit of never looking towards any particular person while walking on the corridor. His life and rewards are invisibly tied up to the Hindustan Peters company. A single fan of the company is symbolic of his status, his comforts that he strives for throughout the film. Finally the expected occurs, the Professional hero of the Hindustan Peters company gets his deserved promotion and
Shyamalendu becomes the director of the company. His wife is thrilled, but Tutul whose praise he genuinely wants despises him at this moment of his happiness.

Satyajit Ray ends the film symbolically with the scene of a non-functioning elevator of his apartment. Shyamalendu with his latest success starts to climb the stairs in a jovial mood. As he walks upwards, he gets slower and slower towards his abode. By the time he reaches the top his mood of joy is almost over and he is completely exhausted. He thinks over his success and in a pleasant mood calls his sister in law, Tutul. Tutul appears and walks slowly towards the window. The camera focuses on her back and symbolically speaks of her lost affection and respect for Shyamalendu, after the factory incident. They stare at each other, exchange the final glances and without speaking any word she removes the expensive watch gifted by him, places it on the table and vanishes from the screen. Satyajit Ray gives us the last shot of the film from the point of view of the ceiling fan where Shyamalendu is slouched on a chair, with hands over his head and surrounded lonely by the material artifacts and rewards of his success. Satyajit Ray continues his social reflection of the society into the third film *Jana Aranya*. The film again concentrates on the deprived and unemployed youth of middle class society of Calcutta. *Jana Aranya* provides a glimmer of hope for the young men of his generation to become economically independent by not depending on the decayed government. The film carries forward the critique of morally corrupt elite class in terms of society as well as business.

*Jana Aranya*, the last film of the *Calcutta Trilogy* is an excellent adaptation from a Bengali novella *Jana Aranya*, written by Mani Sankar Mukherjee. The simple and tightly constructed narrative of the film raises a number of moral issues and one of the highlighted anomalie in the film is corruption that has infected every layman in the Calcutta city. The city of Calcutta as shown in earlier films of the *Calcutta Trilogy* has politically and socially changed from the previous years. The bombs, political assassinations, street murders were considerably reduced, but the life of the middle class society had constantly degraded to new depths. The rate of unemployment and inflation sky rocketed to a new level. Naxalite idealism had led the youth to new depression and this ideology finally fetched them nothing apart from struggle and desperation for a better life. In the early 1970s corruption had changed the way of life of people. Satyajit Ray evaluated the situation and showcased the extent to which this disease had spread inside the roots of the city. He was much interested in representing the life of a middle man and his struggles in the jungle of human desires, morals and corruption. Thematically, *Jana Aranya* fits logically to the sequence of *Calcutta Trilogy*. The dominance of the city as a character is common in the films and highlighting certain
moral issues and characteristics are universal to all the three films of the *Calcutta Trilogy*. *Jana Aranya* in many respects shares a lot of similarity to the earlier film *Pratidwandi*. The protagonist Somnath like Siddhartha is a middle class youth, intelligent and hardworking. Like Siddhartha, he also is deprived of what he deserves and compromises with morality and integrity to satisfy the higher corrupt officials. *Jana Aranya* has a conventional opening without any pictures in the background to dilute the words and the film does not start until the sequence of the informative words has come to an end. In *Pratidwandi*, the film opened with abstract pictures in negative and in *Seemabaddha*, Satyajit Ray follows the technique of framed portraits.

The film starts with the sequence of mass copying in the examination hall of a college where the professor is reluctant to pin point any particular student. Here we come to know about the protagonist Somnath, a middle class youth, innocent and intelligent. He expects to qualify the final examination with good marks, but with his microscopic handwriting and the bad eyesight of the examiner goes against his ambitions of qualifying with higher percentage. Somnath, finally after the results now turns out towards the city. Just like Siddhartha he begins his first quest of life on the streets, searching for a livelihood to survive in the city of dreams, desires and corrupt officials. The film opens with a close up shot of an examiner in a class. The camera zooms at the students writing on the answer sheet and the various methods they use for cheating in the examination. In the background there is a loud voice of an examiner’s sandals moving around the class and deliberately avoiding the student’s illegitimate actions in the class. The older generation of the society is helpless within the area of student domination. Although there is a little reference to naxalism, but the society here of the young and the older generation is morally bankrupt and there is no place for sincere efforts. Every individual in the film has their own excuses for not performing in an efficient manner and they justify their actions by accusing the government for their predicament.

Figure 39. (a), (b) Introductory sequence of the classroom in the film.
In one of the evocative opening shots of the film, the camera pans down on a man walking towards the staircase through a wet narrow lane. The frustrated man enters a small room and we get a first glimpse on the pile of papers lying on the table. We slowly learn from the shot that the old man is a Calcutta University examiner of History. The examiner checking the History exam papers is troubled by the circumstances and in addition to the bad eyesight that requires somebody else’s spectacles, mosquitoes, intense heat, humidity torture him during the evaluation of the History papers. Rather he comments sarcastically that after buying new spectacles as if “They will pay me more”.

This general carelessness on the part of the evaluator highlights the reluctance of the older generation towards their job, family and the entire education system. This education system at the present time is at peril and the students (good or bad) suffer from their negligence. This reluctant attitude transforms the life of deserving students and the protagonist of the film partly suffers from the hands of the unenthusiastic evaluator. After this brief scene there is a sequence of shots showing chaos in which examination results are published. An official has an authentic list of the number of successful candidates and the unruly crowds of the students are noisy, excited and enquiring the result. This simple example of disorderliness in opening shots has a significant meaning. This chaos and unruly behavior in every aspect of the society is the dominant theme running throughout film. Satyajit Ray indirectly highlights the general disorder within the mundane city of Calcutta through casual references of electricity load-shedding and telephonic disturbances that causes inconveniences to the citizens of Calcutta.
Somnath’s elder brother belongs to the new school of thought. His attitude towards the world is neutral, practical and believes in accepting the things as they come. He constantly mocks his father’s old school thoughts of conversing and searching for a solution. This characteristic of his father is highlighted in the scene where his father is brooding on the result of Somnath. The examiners negligence has closed the door for Somnath to pursue honors in History and his deserved advancement in life. His father, knowing about the ability and potential of Somnath is outraged and remarks “a fool has marked my son’s paper.” Somnath’s father resolves to speak about the injustice to the vice chancellor of the university, but his elder brother laughs of the situation. He tells his father that the vice chancellor has been subject to *gherao* by a group of rebellious students in his office. The sooner one adapts to the situation and succumbs to the circumstances the better prospects there are to find a job and live a peaceful life.

The results of protests are often delayed and these require a considerable amount of perseverance time and money. The middle class have always been deprived of these things so it is better to follow the course of the river rather than to go against the current. These actions of the authorities such as the examiner and the bearers of these actions suggest a failure in the working machinery of the society. The state is helpless to provide any hope for the youth of the society. Their final ray of hope is also crushed when they find out that they are one of the thousands other applicants applying for a single post of clerical job. In the novel, on which the film is based, Shanker has presented Somnath as a mediocre student. The controversy over the History result is Satyajit Ray’s addition to the narrative. Satyajit Ray in doing this had a clear purpose of representing the disorderliness in the society that lacks leadership and betrayal of the future of youth by the older generation of the state.
To worsen the situation further, Somnath is rejected by his girlfriend and by the family of his girlfriend because of his unemployment, future prospects and lack of financial security. Satyajit Ray in a brilliant sequence satirically portrays the current government officials who although are aware of the present condition of the youth. The officials of the government are unable to promise and provide any formidable solutions to overcome the problems faced by the younger generation. In a meeting with Jagbandhu, the incumbent Member of Parliament, along with his friend, M.P refuses to provide any resolution. He suggests them reluctantly to read the autobiographies of great men such as Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar and make sacrifices and face difficulties like these true men. He criticizes the false promises made by the previous political parties and blames them for the current situation of unemployment of the youth in distress. Somnath gets himself enrolled in the employment exchange and attends series of interviews in which he gets rejected. The question, “What is the weight of the moon?” leaves him in despair and finally he questions back from a marginalized position that “What it is to do with the job?” Here Satyajit Ray has totally focused on the question that Gayatri Spivek had posted in her seminal essay “Can the Subaltern Speak”, and when the subaltern speaks they are no more subaltern.

Somnath faces the similar problem and when he speaks, he is quietly asked to leave the interview hall without any further questioning. Satyajit Ray has not focused on the nature of job for which Somnath is applying, but rather he has focused on the senior officials exploiting the youth at their discretion. Satyajit Ray minutely captures the visual depiction of a dysfunctional society through a sequence of shots. The amazement of Somnath’s father on the number of applicants for just one job, repeated shots of the letter box and the number of applications being unloaded and dispatched from the delivery van escalates the condition to a new level. Every eligible candidate undergoes considerable amount of trouble into making of one application and Somnath is just one of the hundred thousand candidates who spends money in hope of getting work. Finally their hope is deflated in the interview by a panel of unreal people asking ridiculous questions such as “What is the weight of the Moon.” In this context Henri Lefebvre mentions that a powerful ideological tendency is exercised by the technocrats in their silent offices on the mental space of the emergent. These ideas are deformed or diverted in the process of theoretical practice and the established culture reaps out a benefit by exploiting and maneuvering this locus of the emergent mental space. Lefebvre further notes that:

Unaware of what’s going on in their own mind and in their working concepts, profoundly misjudging in their blind field what’s going on (and what isn’t),
end up meticulously organizing a representative space. Urbanism thus finds itself caught between those who decide on behalf of higher institutions and power. (qtd. in Merryfield: 89).

The characterization in the film is overtly simple, but the roles particularly that of Somnath’s father reverberates the clash of tradition and modernity in the film. The retired father of Somnath is seen in the very first shot of the film. Due to the loss of his wife early in his career, his attitude towards the life is very serious. Throughout the film he smiles only once and that is at the last shot of the film when Somnath returns home in a grim mood and tells him about his success in receiving the contract of whitening powder from Kejriwal mills. He is constantly in conflict with his eldest son Bhombol, who since the first shot of the film has a counter argument for his father’s notion and ideas about naxalism and action. His father still believes in the ethical way of life and for his son all these values are obsolete in the present society. This difference in the approach towards life is highlighted in the sequence on
the dining table. Somnath’s father enquires from him about the means through which he gets the order? On this question, Bhombol sarcastically replies to his father that “Bribery was always there and there is a Sanskrit word for bribe which dates back to the ancient times. Bribes are taken now for granted.” In developing the traditional character with moral values of the past, Satyajit Ray has consciously alluded to the middle class values that were developed in the writings of Rabindranath Tagore. His works were strictly read and followed by the generation to which Satyajit Ray belonged and had developed a moral conscience in the middle class ethos of an entire era.

Somnath while searching for a job accidentally slips over a banana skin and finds himself in the custody of Bishu Babu. Bishhu Babu is a refugee of East Bengal and had sneaked into India during the time of partition. Bishu babu is a successful entrepreneur and suggests Somnath to get into his own business rather than wasting his time in the futile search of a job. Bishu makes a simple observation, “There are so many trades,” and the camera pans to the signs that show abundance of business and commercial activity in the market. Bishu tells Somnath how he started off one day with half a dozen oranges and made a profit of two rupees on his maiden venture. The simple business theory of Bishu impresses Somnath and encourages him to initiate with whatever little he has and gradually build up wealth. Here Satyajit Ray cynically comments on the ruling government, who has irresponsibly ruined the future of the upcoming generation. He clearly indicates the failure of a society in totality and its inability to provide a better future to the educated youth.

Before the discourse with Bishu babu, Somnath was playing according to the structure of family and following the levels of society in the search of a government job. After the conversation with Bishu Babu, he deconstructs the order of the family and selects a practice that according to his ideas is endowed deeply within his belief and consciousness. This practice according to Somnath’s consciousness is venturing into business and he rightly proves his worth through hardwork and prowess. In the discourse between Bishu babu and Somnath, Satyajit Ray captures life on the streets of Calcutta. The cinema verite technique precisely captures the *mise en scene* of city in authentic style and color. The camera tracks down the city’s narrow alleyways that are laden with small bazaars of clothes, bangles, cigarettes, *paan* and *lassi* shops. The camera here works at the eye level and the water filled semi-metallic road is captured minutely along with their footsteps and conversation regarding their future venture. In the conversation, Bishu Babu highlights his rise from a poor refugee to a successful businessman and suggests Somnath to journey into the new domain.
Without prospects and intrigued by Bishu's success, Somnath says that he'll need to talk with his father. His father has made his own deal behind Somnath's back, a proposal to marry the daughter of a cement factory owner and take over his factory after marriage. Not happy with this prospect, Somnath opts to learn about Bishu's "order supply" business. Essentially this means acting as an independent agent between wholesalers and retailers for everything from stationery to elephants. In Bengali, the word is dalaal that translates as "pimp" but Bishu insists that he considers this by a more palatable title of a "middleman." As help, he offers rent-free use of the office space for three months and even introduces him to several resourceful friends. One of them quickly masterminds Somnath's first order for envelopes and straightaway makes him enter the world of business.  Andrew Robinson in Satyajit Ray: The Inner Eye: A Biography of a Master Film-maker, reinstates Nirad.C. Chaudhuri’s inddepth analysis of the moral climate in Calcutta. He mentions that:

Nirad C. Chaudhuri caustically describes the typical moral climate of Calcutta in the early 1920’s, when he was the same age as Somnath, the central character of Satyajit Ray’s film: ‘a shallow top soil of dry as dust prudery, but one could easily hear the squelching of the soggy layer of weak vice underneath. The moral weather of Hindu society is regulated by the high and low pressure of the winds of opinion prevailing in it and not by absolute moral judgements. (217)
The comparison by Nirad. C. Chaudhuri of the Hindu Brahmin society of the 1920s and the 1970s in which Somnath grows up can be clearly understood in the shot where Somnath asks permission from his father for a business venture. The father of Somnath after listening to his request turns thoughtful, then tensed and speaks “nobody took a job until my grandfather’s time.” He casually permits him for the business venture and before leaving for his room, he gives his opinion that he will have to get use to the “idea of business”. The father dismisses business as morally incorrect and after losing his elder son to the harsh demands of the society, he wants to inculcate ethics in his younger son Somnath. Somnath’s failure in the outer world makes him resort to this idea of business and the father is afraid to lose his second son to the corrupt world. He apprehends that his failure in the outer world will perpetuate a different moral tradition to the successive generations. This transition in the structures of home has altered the precept that he had received from the ancestral family. Somnath’s father’s idea of morality and protesting attitude continuously creates a communication barrier between his sons. The idea of the utopian world that he strongly believes does not exist in the corrupt contemporary Calcutta. His father is living in a renounced world, slouched on a chair and is completely blinded like Dhritrashtra. Living the life of a retired powerless patriarch, he makes no attempt to reconcile with the new world. In the earlier film Mahanagar, Satyajit Ray had for the first time examined the contemporary Calcutta through the eyes of the middle class. In this film also, he has concentrated on the everyday life and ethos of a family with traditional social values. They would die hungry rather than send women out for work. This clash of traditional and modern values is integral to the films of Satyajit Ray and he carries this idea forward in the character of father in Jana Aranya.

Somnath starts working as a middleman and now has a second round of experience with the corrupt world through his new profession. Under the guidance of Mr. Adok, Somnath ventures into order supplying of buying cheap and selling at a competitive price in the market. He starts off as a supplier of stationary and is encouraged by the small profit he makes with his maiden venture. Somnath’s indication of material success is depicted by Satyajit Ray through various shots. A gift that he buys for his sister-in-law Kamala and the briefcase hanging from his hand indicates a mark of status that he did not have in the earlier shots, while walking through the similar streets. Although innocent and magnanimous in his dealings, he receives suggestions and help from a string of people inside and outside the office regarding his new business venture. These suggestions guide him through the dealings within the corporate world. The unknown estate manager explains to Somnath that the
business world is full of people that are here to “exploit, including me”. Mr. Adok makes an interesting observation on Somnath, “Everyone will help you. There’s something appealing about you.” Meanwhile Somnath’s friend Sukumar, who also had started from the same platform, has a journey downwards. He accepts the job of a taxi driver offered by his congress politician. The politician had earlier advised them to sacrifice their lives for the country, but somehow Somnath could understand the larger context of his words. Sukumar falls into the trap of his language and finally settles for a job that is lower than what he deserves. Another film that deserves to be mentioned here is Ritwik Ghatak’s film *Nagarik* that was never released during his lifetime, but with the help of new technicians it was released in 1977. This film focuses on a journey of a middle class family and their poverty. Throughout the film they move from a good locality to a less respectable locality and finally their fate settles them into the slums. The father of the house is the sole earner and the eldest son continues to struggle for a job throughout the film. Ritwik Ghatak naturally brings out the poverty of the family not only through the *mise en scene* of the film, but also through the expressions of the characters.

Somnath quickly gets into action and with the help of Bisuda’s accountant Mr. Adok, he grabs his first order of delivering carbon papers for a company. Somnath has a clear conscience and his associates and business acquaintances are willing to help him because of his innocent looks, his cultured soft spokeness and his inquisitive nature to learn things. Somnath after bagging a series of small orders wants to grab a bigger deal. He aspires to make large profits so that he atleast starts saving money and be content for a year. He contacts the Public relations officer, Mr. Natabar Mitter, to whom he had been introduced earlier by Mr. Adak in his office. At their first meeting, Somnath is impressed by Mitter’s showy, expensive watch, the attitude of valuing time. For Somnath, he is the platform, the extra help that could escalate the course of his future. Mr. Mitter is a jack of all trade regarding the financial deals. He is a middleman of a middleman, who finds solution to all the problems of a middleman. He sets up a deal with the third party in favor of some commission for his work.

Mr. Natabar Mitter is a person who has dedicated himself in manipulating the clients and his specialization includes in identifying the weak spots of the rich and influential people. Mr. Mitter identifies the root cause of the problem and provides a remedy for the concerned parties. Somnath calls Mr. Mitter and after diagnosing the problem he suggests a solution to Somnath. Mr. Mitter meets Somnath in the morning at the breakfast table in a restaurant. Mr. Mitter initiates the conversation with a pen that reveals a naked woman, and asks Somnath if
he reads sex novels, has a girlfriend and if he has ever made love to a woman. Somnath reacts in good humour and when Mr. Mitter mentions about Mr. Goenka’s crippled wife and attractive secretary then the point is clear to Somnath sitting across the table. Somnath after thinking about the solution hesitates to act as this method of bagging the order is against his personal ethics and universal morality. But this concern of Somnath hardly moves Mr. Mitter as his livelihood depends on such actions and for him these things are a part of routine life. At one point Somnath loses his interest and Mr. Mitter comments on Somnath that “You admit you’re a weakling in mind and body.” He explicitly comments on the middle class hypocrisy of Somnath and finally convinces him to go through with the act. The film showcases two major realms of Somnath’s life: the home and the world. Mr. Adok had earlier suggested that successful business is not entirely clean and an amateur in this field has to mould or could be vulnerable to the amoral and corrupt practices. Somnath in his existential crisis experiences stress and Satyajit Ray depicts this dilemma of Somnath in a private conversation with his sister-in-law Kamala. In a candle lit close-up sequence, Somnath indirectly tries to convey his explicit work to Kamala. In a turn of event, she encourages him to go ahead with whatever work he is doing tomorrow. The next day Mr. Mitter calls Somnath precisely at four o’clock. Somnath rightly answers the call, follows Natabar Mitter’s direction in heavy voice and accepts the defeat of his morality to survival in competitive capitalist society.

The darkest part of the film is pictured by Satyajit Ray with a dark ride through the underbelly of Calcutta. Somnath and Mr. Mitter search for a woman to be delivered to Mr. Goenka in a particular hotel. At the first destination, the chosen lady agrees at a fixed price. While she is changing clothes, her drunken husband returns home earlier than expected. He is a clerk in the Calcutta Corporation and his drinking habits has lead his wife to take up prostitution. The clerk, in a fit of rage curses Somnath and Mitter and throws them out of their home. In desperation Mr. Mitter leaves for the second establishment where an old lady welcomes them. The sequence opens with light humor as Natabar Mitter is welcomed in the house by a domesticated dog and then by an old widow. The old lady is respectably dressed in a white sari and acts as a mother of two daughters. She formally agrees, but steps in a condition that her daughter will not travel to meet up the client as her other daughter was taken by a person to Hong Kong and had never returned. Mr. Mitter now panicks and drives Somnath to a third alternative in a more salubrious place.

Earlier in the film Satyajit Ray briefly mentions about Somnath’s friendship with Sukumar and the plot does not develop any further. But in the context of the last section of
the narrative, this sub-plot of friendship is immensely crucial. Somnath and Sukumar, during their college days and post-college days spent a lot of time together, discussing their plight of dependence on their families. Sukumar has a younger sister Karuna to marry and belongs to economic weaker section of society. Satyajit Ray establishes his material context of life through a sequence when Somnath takes sweets to his house to celebrate success in the new venture. Sukumar lives in a squalid slum beside the railway line that has small houses, broken roads with sewage and drainage problems. The overall atmosphere of Sukumars’s family and home is dark, gloomy and unrestrainedly pessimistic. Sukumar mentions about her sister Karuna as a budding actress, who earns a meager salary on the amateur stage of theatre. Another sign that Satyajit Ray offers is Karuna’s sequence of changing clothes without drawing of curtain. When Sukumar realizes that neighborhood youths have gathered outside her window, he rushes in and slaps her. This small incident is an intimation by Satyajit Ray that he will later reveal in the disturbing culmination of the film.

Distressed by the failure at both the places, a crunch situation occurs at this point of time. The hard earned reputation of Mr. Mitter is at stake and to maintain it within the business circles; he has to deliver the girl on time to Mr. Goenka at any cost. At last, he moves to a brothel on grubby street run by a pimp named Charan. Satyajit Ray establishes this sequence by panning on a board on the wall. As the headlights of the car hit the wall, a board emerges out of the darkness titled Lotus commercial School. In haste Mr. Mitter rushes out of the car and screams out loud the name of Charan. On hearing the familiar voice of Mr. Mitter, a thinly built middle aged Charan appears on the screen and with respect greets both the clients. Charan also works as a clerk in the school and runs a side business of supplying girls to the clients at low price. Mr. Mitter speaks to Charan, the pimp about the nature of the girl required and after showing three girls, none of them appeal to Mr. Mitter. Charan promises him a nice girl named Juthika, who will arrive shortly at any particular time. Natabar Mitter instructs Somnath the final details, including the payment of girl and leaves in a jiffy as he has to meet another client.

Somnath in a perplexed state of mind decides to call off the deal, but Mr. Mitter with some witty remarks convinces and moves him forward with the deal. The girl reports to Charan and he further provides some guidelines to her. Somnath walks after the girl towards the taxi and as he steps inside the car, he is perturbed by the sight of the girl. The girl working under a pseudonym of Juthika turns out to be Karuna, sister of his college friend Sukumar. Trapped with her in a taxi, Juthika and Somnath are unwilling to face each other. Somnath sympathizes with her plight, offers her money and asks to leave, but as a professional
prostitute, she refuses to leave and accepts only what she deserves. The five minute ride from Lotus commercial school to the hotel turns out to be a long embarrassing ride for both of them. When they reach the door of the hotel room, he pays her three hundred rupees and asks about Sukumar, she tells him that he is now driving a taxi. Somnath suddenly dwells into his thoughts and briskly moves away from the door to wait downstairs at the reception. In comparison to his immoral work, suddenly the work of Sukumar seems respectable to him.

Figure 43. (a), (b) Juthika and Somnath at the Lotus commercial school.

In the final sequence of the film, Somnath returns to the house and breaks the news to his father about the contract; Satyajit Ray here frames Somnath in partial eclipse. His father weeps and utters, “At last… what a relief”! In the background, Rabindranath Tagore’s song can be clearly heard “darkness is gathering over the forest.” Satyajit Ray has used darkness as a metaphor throughout the film. In the final scene, Somnath’s father is sitting in dark room because of the power failure. This darkness within the room is another indication of his blindness towards the world and how his younger son Somnath will permanently keep him away from the darkest part of his life. Satyajit Ray tracks the camera on the father moving towards the radio and finally the frame fades into black. Satyajit Ray throughout the film thematically concentrates on the failure of traditional morality and structures, especially in the burgeoning capitalist world. Somnath loses his innocence to the profit making ugly world and encapsulates the theory of materialism to survive in the chaotic world of business.
The cinematics of Calcutta showcases major fractures in the society and especially with corruption governing the roots of the city, the crisis deepens and affects the youth of the city. The films concentrate on the major problems that post-independent India is facing at the centre and the entire social structure is depleting. The older generations of men are unable to identify and methodically pose a solution to the troubled younger generation. The cracks within the society are widening and there is a continuous fragmentation and division within the classes of the city. The tiresome journey of truth, despair and hope is perpetually challenged by Satyajit Ray in the films. The cinematics of the film do not propose or pose a threat or challenge to the corrupt structures, but they constantly reveal the root cause of social problems. The film highlights Satyajit Ray’s personal ideology and through the cinematics he presents his complete disbelief on the ruling government. The
solution that he proposes is to escape from the governmental structures and have faith in the individualism for success. This trend of anti-government wave was also popular in the Hindi mainstream cinema, but then cinema also borrows its imaginative narrative, space and scapes from the city. The phenomenon of angry young man is applicable to the films of *Calcutta Trilogy* and the protagonists of the film stored this rage either physically or mentally. Their outburst is either structurally coded by the society or is extremely barbaric in style. This hysterical attitude is the collective recollection from the disintegrated society marred with corruption, violence and superficial ideologues. At such a critical juncture, the cinematicsapes of the city act more as an adversary rather than a friend. Satyajit Ray blends the physical space, the contemporary time and the individual tale of disenchanted young men, to create an intimate cinematicsapes of the city of Calcutta.