

## Ghat

*Ghat* mainly refers to a level place on the edge of the river which is used for varied purposes like bathing or purification rituals. Hindu death rituals like shaving and bathing are performed at the bank of the river or pond. Canonically this ritual is called '*ghat*' from which the general term seemed to have originated. Besides bathing, '*ghat*' also serves the function for communication and business. It is usually a landing place where ships are loaded and unloaded. Much of the trading activities are also carried on the river-side and it is also the berthing place for different river crafts like country boats, steamers, launches. The size of the ghats varies depending on the importance of its location.

In traditional economy, '*ghats*' acted as pseudo ports where merchandise was generally exchanged. The Mughal era witnessed farming of every substantive '*ghats*' annually. These farmers were called '*ghatwals*'. The maintenance of this ghats were carried by the '*ghatwals*' and assured protection to people who travelled by boat or any other means. Ghatwals were paid nominal amount for rendering such services.

Ferrying services developed along both sides of the rivers to ensure swift communication of people are also called ghats. Shipping Corporation Ghat, Fairlie Place Ghat, Armenian Ghat, Ahiritola Ghat, Sovabazar Ghat , Bagbazar Ghat are the best examples. The ferry service from these multiple Ghats along the Ganges continue to offer fast, comfortable rides and are the best way to avoid traffic even till the present times. Mutty Lall Seal's Ghat is a prominent landmark in Kolkata's riverbank. Simm's map (1848) indicates another ghat called Mutty Lall Seal's ghat on the Howrah-side of the Hooghly river.

Bibliography :

<http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Ghat>