

ARANYAK

(Of the Forest)

by

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Based on the novel

by

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Episode 2

BLACK

Sound of chatter, people talking, cups and saucers tinkling. Bell of a tram passing by. Announcements being made over a loudspeaker.

INT. COFFEE HOUSE, KOLKATA - DAY

We see Satya's face. Blank expression. As we zoom out, we see an English-language newspaper placed on the table in front of him. Open on the crossword page. A pencil between his fingers. Crossword half-done.

We keep pulling out. People seated around him. Chatting, arguing. Through the open window, we see a red double-decker bus come and halt at a stop on the road outside. Passengers alight, get on. Bus takes off.

A hand enters the frame and slams a plate in front of Satya, breaking his trance. On the plate is a sandwich. Satya looks up at the uniformed waiter, the man wears a deadpan expression. Next comes a cup of tea. Waiter departs. Satya pulls a paper napkin from the ones folded within a glass on the table and wipes the few drops of spilled tea from the table. Then looks up.

There are people everywhere. The place is full. A beam of sunlight has entered through a glass window and fallen on the floor between three tables. Cigarette smoke suspended in the air. More uniformed waiters moving around through the crowd, serving.

A smile appears on Satya's lips. He lets out a sigh and picks up the cup and takes a sip. Shuts his eyes in contentment.

The glass window shatters and a nilgai falls on the floor, skids and crashes into a table. The guests at the table are thrown around.

People shriek. The nilgai tries to stand up, but is shaking. Its hind leg is clearly broken. It lets out a tragic, deathly groan. Satya now looks at the broken window. Shrieks double in volume. People scamper. A jet-black panther walks in, taking its time. The nilgai tries to stand up, collapses back on the floor.

People try to rush out. Paw by paw, the panther takes its time to walk up to the nilgai. Watches the prey's eyes. We see the eyes of the nilgai too. Frightened. Helpless. We then see Satya's eyes in C.U. Frightened. Helpless.

The panther gently bites the nilgai's throat, snapping it into two. The nilgais thrashing legs wither away.

Silence within the coffee house. Satya hasn't moved. A straggler runs past him. The panther licks the neelgai's blood off its own paw. Then grabs the dead nilgai by its throat and turns around towards the window. Is about to walk out.

Stops. Turns its head to see Satya, sitting alone in the coffee house, steam from the tea swirling up in the air. The nilgais corpse falls on the floor. The panther advances towards Satya, step by step. Comes and stands right in front of him. Satya can't take his eyes off. We hear the blaring horn of a bus outside.

INT. CUTCHERRY -- SATYA'S HUT - NIGHT

Satya wakes up in his bed, panting. Drenched in sweat. He takes a moment to realize where he is.

We now see Satya's room in the cutcherry. There's a lamp burning on the desk. Crickets chirping outside, foxes yelping. Satya is sitting on his bed, trying to catch his breath. Struggles to get up from the bed, somehow manages to do so. Grabs the bedpost to support himself. Makes his way to the corner, pours himself a glass of water from the earthen pitcher. Drinks. Stands in a daze.

SATYA (V.O.)
You can't wake up from a nightmare
if you aren't asleep.

INLAY TITLE: ARANYAK (and then, gently) OF THE FOREST

FADE OUT.

EXT. GRANT SAHIB'S TREE - DAY

A couple of cranes fly away.

EXT. GRASSLANDS - DAY

Three wild horses grazing. One neighs.

EXT. CUTCHERRY KITCHEN - DAY

The cook has just finished washing utensils. Picks up the stack, shakes it to drain the water, and carries it inside. A few seconds later, the cat comes flying through the air and lands on the veranda outside.

INT. CUTCHERRY -- SATYA'S HUT - DAY

Satya stands in front of the mirror, buttons up his *kurta*. Combs his hair. Muneshwar Singh comes in and strikes a salute.

SATYA

What is it?

MUNESHWAR SINGH

Huzoor, Nandalal Ojha has come to see you.

SATYA

Who on earth is Nandalal Ojha?

MUNESHWAR SINGH

He's a rich farmer from the Shungthiya village, Huzoor. He doesn't farm anymore though. Owns quite a few acres of land, rents it out to other farmers in small tracts. His main income is from his moneylending business.

Satya puts the comb down and steps out.

EXT. CUTCHERRY - DAY

A chair and table has been set up in the front yard. A few accounts books, files and papers are on the table. An ink pot and a fountain pen too.

In the distance, NANDALAL OJHA (male, 45) stands respectfully, waiting for Satya.

Satya sits in the chair and gestures. Nandalal walks up to him and offers a *namaskar*.

NANDALAL OJHA

A humble little something for Huzoor.

Nandalal spreads out five betel leaves on the table, then pulls out a pair of clippers from his pocket and starts cutting betel nuts into small pieces. Puts them on the betel leaves. Smiles and bows.

NANDALAL OJHA (CONT'D)

My regards.

Satya doesn't know what to do. Looks at Muneshwar Singh, who offers a gesture. Satya picks up a single slice of betel nut and puts it in his mouth.

Nandalal Ojha smiles, puts the clipper back in his pocket and sits on the ground.

SATYA

How can I help you?

NANDALAL OJHA

I have come to invite Huzoor to my humble abode. There will be a new moon in a couple of days. Very auspicious! If Huzoor will be so kind as to come, this servant will be forever indebted.

SATYA

To your home?

NANDALAL OJHA

Yes, Huzoor. In Shungthiya village. Just behind those woods over there.

Satya looks in the direction indicated. From his POV, we see that the woods are at a great distance away.

SATYA

Thank you, for inviting me. I can't promise right now. But I will think about it. I'll send word to you, let you know what I decide.

NANDALAL OJHA

Very well, Huzoor. I will wait for Huzoor's word.

Nandalal bows and departs.

INT. CUTCHERRY KITCHEN - DAY

Satya is having lunch, the cat sits closer to him than what we had seen on the first day.

Satya puts a few pieces of cauliflower on the floor next to his plate, the cat eats them.

Through the backdoor of the kitchen, Satya sees a LITTLE GIRL (6) peering at him. The girl gives a start when the cook yells at her, trying to shoo her away.

SATYA
Leave her alone!

The cook chases the little girl, who runs away. A woman in ragged clothes appears in the frame and grabs the little girl. This is the same scarred woman we had seen earlier near the kitchen. The woman says something to the cook in a pleading manner, but the cook shakes his head and continues to send them away. Satya watches the entire thing. The cook walks back.

SATYA (CONT'D)
What's wrong with you? She's just a little girl.

The cook doesn't say anything.

SATYA (CONT'D)
And who was that woman?

Nothing. The cook just turns away from him and starts blowing air into the coal of the oven.

Satya gives up. Turns around to find the cat happily eating away from his plate.

SATYA (CONT'D)
(to the cook)
Barbarians!

Storms out of the kitchen.

INT. CUTCHERRY -- SATYA'S HUT - NIGHT

Goshtho Chakraborty stands near the door, Satya is sitting at his desk.

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY
Nandalal Ojha is an important man in the region. I would suggest you consider accepting his invitation.

SATYA
Is it true that he lends money to poor farmers at high interest?

(MORE)

SATYA (CONT'D)

And then seizes their crops and homes when they can't pay their debts?

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY

There have been a few complaints...

SATYA

That's exploitation. Preying on helpless, vulnerable people. Taking advantage of them.

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY

Like I said, he's an important man. It is the power that he wields over the people that makes him important.

SATYA

But this is injustice! Lawlessness! We are the 20th century and -

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY

This is the forest, Babu. The laws of the city cease to be in effect as soon as you step into the forest. Here, the only law is 'might is right'.

SATYA

Barbarians! Uncivilized, uneducated, immoral bunch of goons and thugs.

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY

(hesitates)

If I might say so, Babu, the banks in the city aren't too different, if you think about it. They do exactly the same as Nandalal Ojha does. Only with paperwork.

Satya rises to his feet and paces up and down the room. Goshtho Chakraborty watches him patiently.

SATYA

That's an unfair comparison, Goshtho Babu. I know it, and you know it too. Back in the city, there are courts, there's the police. Banks can't do whatever they want to. There are rules. They cannot dictate the lives of people.

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY

(smiles)

If you say so, Babu!

Satya is still in a huff. He walks up to his desk, tries to compose himself. Then picks up an envelope from the desk.

SATYA

I've been meaning to tell you something. It's sad that this had to happen before you have left. But it is what it is. They will just have to find someone else.

Satya gives the envelope to Goshttho Chakraborty.

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY

Is this...?

SATYA

I want you to mail it, Goshttho Babu. To the city. To the estate's headquarters. I can't stay here anymore.

Goshttho Chakraborty looks at the envelope. Then looks up at Satya.

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY

Your wish is my command, Babu! But I have one little request to make to you before you go.

SATYA

Request? What request?

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY

There is a group of farmers from the eastern side of the forest who had leased land from us. Land from within our estate. They were paying their rent on time too. Good people. Hardworking people.

SATYA

Go on...

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY

Last monsoon, the river that flows next to their land overflowed in the heavy rains, and their land was flooded.

(MORE)

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY (CONT'D)

There's nothing much I could do, except to offer them alternate pieces of land elsewhere in the estate. But they chose to go to the city instead, looking for work. Which I personally think was a good decision, because the rains had already set in, it would have been impossible to till the new land. In the winter, the land dried up, and they returned to the village. Only to find that a zamindar from the neighbouring village had seized their land by force. The poor farmers came to me, seeking my help. I filed a case in the courts of Patna city - it is the estate's land after all. The courts have set a date next week, for the hearing. The farmers will be there, and so will the zamindar and his lawyers. If you could be there too, then the farmers will get a lot of moral support. And who knows? Perhaps the presence of an educated man like you might even convince the judge to rule in our favour. Do this for the poor farmers, Babu! They will be indebted to you for the rest of their lives.

SATYA

(hesitates)

Why don't you go?

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY

There's a difference between my being there and your being there. You are the estate's manager, after all! And anyway, there's no mail till Tuesday. By the time you come back from the city, perhaps the response to this letter would have come from the headquarters. And then everything will be fine.

Beat.

SATYA

Very well, I'll go.

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY

Thank you so much, Babu! I will go see about your dinner now.

SATYA
Goshtho Babu?

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY
Yes, Babu?

SATYA
Is it really necessary for me to go
have lunch with Nandalal Ojha?

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY
Like I said, he's an important man
in the region. He has walked eleven
miles to invite you personally.
It's merely a matter of courtesy
that you accept. You don't have to
stay too long, just go, have a bite
or two, and come back.

SATYA
Fine, then. You can send word to
him. Tell him I'll come, but ask
him not to make any elaborate
arrangements.

EXT. CUTCHERRY - DAY

We see Satya's shocked face as he looks up at something. Then
we hear an elephant's trumpet call. Its trunk moves through
the frame.

Satya is standing in front of a massive elephant. There's a
ornate howdah on top of the animal. A MAHOUT (male, 55) sits
on the elephant's neck with a stick in his hand. The
elephant's huge legs have anklets on them. They tingle as it
lifts one of its leg.

SATYA
What on earth is this?

MUNESHWAR SINGH
This is an elephant, Huzoor!

SATYA
I can see that, Muneshwar Singh!
Thank you very much! What is this
for? What is it doing here?

MUNESHWAR SINGH
Nandalal Ojha has sent it. For
Huzoor.

Satya looks even more bewildered. Stares blankly at Muneshwar Singh.

MUNESHWAR SINGH (CONT'D)
To...take Huzoor to Shungthiya. To
Nandalal Ojha's home.

SATYA
What was wrong with the bullock
cart? I would have reached faster.

MUNESHWAR SINGH
It's just a local custom, Huzoor!
You will be very comfortable up
there.

EXT. WILDERNESS - DAY

The elephant makes its way through the forest. The mahout is guiding it along, making clicking noises with his tongue.

We see Satya now, looking extremely uncomfortable. His shoulders are stiff. He looks scared. He somehow manages to grab on to the sides of the howdah.

The branch of a tall plant approaches. Mahout ducks and doges it. No way for Satya to do so. He goes through the branch.

SATYA
Barbarians!

MONTAGE: WILDERNESS - DAY

- The elephant walks through a vast windswept field of white catkins

- Farmers working in the fields look up to see the elephant passing by

- Mahout points Satya towards the direction of a jungle, Satya sees a wild elephant standing there, it calls out to the one they are riding, and the greeting is returned

- A dragonfly hovers over a flower, then lands on it

- Hundreds of parrots perched on the branches of a tree, Satya passes right under them

- A verdant field on which 30-40 cows are grazing, the teenaged cowherd watches the elephant pass by

EXT. CHAMTA LAKE - DAY

A large flock of cranes and hundreds of other birds fly around the lake. Lotus floating on the surface of the water. Water lilies too. Some hyacinth here and there.

The elephant dips its trunk into the water. Next to the trunk, the mahout kneels in knee deep water, drinking straight from the lake.

Satya looks on. Licks his lips and rubs his throat.

SATYA (V.O.)

That beast. That man. They are free.

The mahout has quenched his thirst. Walks up to the elephant, pats it on its hide. Elephant offers him its knee. Mahout jumps on the knee and easily climbs up to his place on the animal's neck.

SATYA (V.O.)

They can do whatever they want.

The elephant resumes its journey. We hear the clicking sounds again. Satya looks at the water with yearning eyes.

SATYA (V.O.)

I can't.

EXT. NANDALAL OJHA'S HOUSE - DAY

A large crowd has gathered outside a large house. Everyone is sitting on the ground and waiting. An elderly man sits on a charpoy smoking a hookah. A naked child pulling a calf's ear. The calf moos.

A YOUNG BOY (10) comes running around the corner. Says something to the crowd in the local tongue. Everyone rises to their feet. The boy runs into the house. Nandalal Ojha runs out decked up, followed by a few teenage girls with welcome-plates in their hands. The girls jostle with each other to find space to stand. Nandalal Ojha says something animatedly to someone outside the frame. A group of men immediately begin to play *dhol*s and *clarinets*.

We now see the elephant turn the corner, mahout and Satya atop. A few children run towards the animal. Start running under its belly, laughing and yelling all the while. Satya is visibly worried for the children. Mahout is unmoved. Elephant trumpets.

The sound of the band is deafening now. Elephant sits on the ground. Satya alights. Places a palm on his left ear. Nandalal Ojha immediately runs to the band and yells at them, asks them to shut up. Music stops abruptly.

NANDALAL OJHA

My forefathers must have done some good in their lives! Huzoor has come to this poor servant's hut.

The teenage girls come and thrust the welcome plates in front of Satya's face, letting out a shrill ululation. Satya is slightly taken aback. Nandalal Ojha notices this and scolds the girls. They scoot. One of them comes back to apply a small smear of red vermilion on Satya's forehead, then runs back to the other girls, who giggle at her.

NANDALAL OJHA (CONT'D)

Come, Huzoor! This way. Please come!

Satya walks into the courtyard. Others follow him.

INT. NANDALAL OJHA'S HOUSE -- COURTYARD - DAY

Satya is sitting on an ornate but uncomfortably low wooden stool. A young girl brings a plate and keeps it in front of him. The plate has a few betel nuts, a tiny bowl of rose-oil and thin slices of coconut. Satya looks around to find everyone staring at him expectedly. Not knowing what to do, he dips his little finger in the rose oil and dabs it on the side of his neck. An ahhh of relief rises from the gathered crowd.

Another girl brings a plate loaded with food.

NANDALAL OJHA

Just a little snack for Huzoor!

SATYA

I can't eat that much!

Nandalal Ojha grins. Satya digs in. From the corner of his eye, he sees everyone staring at him as he eats. Feels uncomfortable. Clears his throat. Nandalal Ojha seems to realize his discomfort. Scolds everyone and shoos them away. Only a few people remain.

Satya finishes his meal, washes his hands in a finger bowl. Nandalal takes a velvet covered plate from a young man and offers it to Satya. On the plate is a small silk pouch.

NANDALAL OJHA
Please accept this humble gift from
your servant, Huzoor!

Satya opens the pouch to find a wad of cash inside.

SATYA
What's this?

NANDALAL OJHA
Just a little something for
Huzoor's *paan*!

SATYA
Nandalal, you know I can't take
this money.

Nandalal hurriedly pinches his ears.

NANDALAL OJHA
Curse me and my children if I were
to dare offer money to Huzoor!
Perhaps Huzoor misunderstands. This
is just a humble gift from a lowly
subject to his king.

Satya picks out a coin from the pouch and returns the rest to
the plate.

SATYA
I'm no king, Nandalal. But I accept
this coin as a token of your gift.
Please buy these children some
sweets with the rest.

NANDALAL OJHA
As Huzoor pleases!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. NANDALAL OJHA'S HOUSE -- COURTYARD - LATER

A young man with oily hair and neatly dressed in a coat
buttoned up all the way to the neck sings a song completely
off key. Nandalal Ojha watches with a content smile on his
face. Satya is visibly uncomfortable. But tries to keep a
straight face.

Singing stops. Young man bows to Satya, who forces a smile
and gives a little nod.

SATYA

Well, Nandalal! Thank you for your hospitality. I must head back now. If your elephant could -

Satya rises.

NANDALAL OJHA

Please don't say MY elephant Huzoor! Everything I possess is yours. I am at your service.

SATYA

Very well, thank you once again. Come to the cutcherry sometime.

EXT. NANDALAL OJHA'S HOUSE - DAY

Satya and Nandalal Ojha walk towards the elephant.

NANDALAL OJHA

Actually, Huzoor, if you don't mind my saying this, I do have one request for you. More like a plea. Or a boon, if Huzoor would be so kind as to grant me one.

SATYA

What is it?

NANDALAL OJHA

My elder son will be 20 next summer. A smart, hardworking young man he's turned out to be. It is my earnest plea to Huzoor - he has to make my son the collector at Labtulia.

SATYA

Labtulia! But there's already a collector appointed there.

NANDALAL OJHA

(winking)

Everything is in Huzoor's hands. Huzoor is the king of the land. If he wants -

SATYA

Look, Nandalal. I can't take a man's job away and give it to someone else. Especially when that man is doing his job just fine.

NANDALAL OJHA

Of course, of course! How much
shall I give Huzoor for his *paan*?

Satya looks uncomfortable. Looks up at the massive elephant.
It trumpets.

SATYA

Thank you for the lunch, Nandalal.
But I cannot do what you are asking
me to do.

Nandalal Ojha's smile fades away. Satya proceeds to mount the
elephant. The mahout helps. The band begins to play again.
Nandalal rebukes them roughly and the music stops.

The elephant makes its way back towards the bend of the road.
Nandalal looks on, displeased. Satya turns around to watch
him one last time.

SATYA (V.O.)

I should have known. The man who
doesn't hesitate to exploit the
poor and the vulnerable...how could
he possibly have good intentions
towards me?

EXT. SHUNGTHIYA VILLAGE - DAY

The elephant passes through the village road, huts and
shanties on both sides. People living in miserable
conditions. They watch him pass by. Their faces are blank and
expressionless.

SATYA (V.O.)

One man's rise is another man's
fall. That's what it has always
been. From the dawn of humankind.
Everywhere. Throughout the ages.
This injustice, this abuse, this
disparity whose signs lay all
around me...this was wrong.

Satya sees a mother carry a sleeping baby in her arms. The
woman is watching him. The baby's stomach has swollen up with
kwashiorkor. Satya is visibly upset. Forces himself to look
away.

SATYA (V.O.)

But it wasn't a wrong for ME to
right. There was a nothing I could
do for these people.

The people watch as the elephant walks out of the village.

SATYA (V.O.)
Even if they needed me.

MONTAGE: WILDERNESS - DAY

- The sun is about to set over the tree-line
- The elephant passes by the Chamta lake
- The cowherd we had seen earlier is leading his cattle away from the field
- A group of women walk home with bunches of twigs and branches on their heads and small axes hanging from their sides
- Three or four dogs bark at the elephant (inaudible)
- An old man with a turban watches as the elephant passes by

EXT. CORNFIELD - DAY

The elephant has stopped to drink from a tiny pond. The mahout is tending to it.

Satya is standing on the ground, stretches his back. We see a cornfield behind him. He looks around. Hears a baby crying, some commotion.

He enters the path between the cornfield, curious.

A LITTLE BOY is thrown out of the field, falls on the ground. Starts crying. His elbow is bleeding. Sound of grown men shouting. Someone shrieking.

Satya takes a few more steps forward.

Two uniformed SEPOYS walk out of the cornfield, dragging a WOMAN by her hair. The woman has a BABY in her arm, both mother and baby are howling. A third sepoy drags a LITTLE GIRL by the neck. The boy is wincing in pain. We now see that this is the same scarred woman we had seen outside the cutcherry's kitchen, and so is the little girl. The girl helplessly circles the men as they beat the woman.

SATYA
(yells)
Hey! Stop! What the hell do you
think you are doing?

The two sepoy look at Satya, the woman still in their grip. The third sepoy immediately lets the boy go, says something to the other two, who push the woman on the ground. One of them puts his foot on the woman's back to keep her pinned down to the ground.

SEPOY 3
(saluting)
Huzoor!

SATYA
(to Sepoy 1)
You let that woman go! You let her go right now!

The sepoy takes his foot off. The children run to the woman, who is coughing and gasping for breath.

SATYA (CONT'D)
Are you guys even human? What do you think you are doing?

SEPOY 3
This woman was stealing corn,
Huzoor!

SATYA
And that gives you the right to beat her like an animal?

SEPOY 3
She's a thief, Huzoor! She's not a good woman.

SATYA
(fuming)
Shut up! Disgusting! Brutes - the lot of you! You let that woman go, right this instant. And report back to me at the cutcherry first thing tomorrow morning.

SEPOY 3
Huzoor!

SATYA
And if something happens to her or her children overnight, if so much as a hair on their head is hurt, I'll have the three of you thrown behind bars. For the rest of your lives! You remember that!

The sepoy says something to the other two. They don't look happy. The woman limps away with her children. Satya walks back to the elephant.

EXT. CUTCHERRY - NIGHT

We hear the tinkling of the elephant's anklets. A servant runs out of one of the huts. We now see the faint outline of the elephant. It sits. Satya alights. Walks into his hut.

INT. CUTCHERRY -- SATYA'S HUT - NIGHT

Satya keeps his shawl on the bedpost. Sits down on the chair, looking exhausted. We hear the tinkling of the elephant's anklets again, it gradually fades out as Satya buries his face in his palms.

PRELAP:

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY (V.O.)
Her name is Kunta. Widowed. Has three children. Lives in abject poverty. Comes to the kitchen for leftovers. Begs for alms.

INT. CUTCHERRY -- SATYA'S HUT - DAY

Satya is sitting by the side of his bed, winding his pocket-watch. Goshtho Chakraborty stands at a distance, speaking to him.

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY
Not that she gets any. People here have hardly enough food to feed their own children. How can they give alms to her?

SATYA
Why was the cook shooing her away the other day?

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY
Because I asked him to. I thought she might bother you. The Manager Babu before you...

SATYA

Goshtho Babu, everyday, three times a day, when I sit down for my meal, I have to tell the cook that I cannot eat the amount of food he has served on my plate. He doesn't understand my language, so doesn't do anything, simply walks away. So inevitably, everyday, I have to waste food. Now you tell me this - how can I sit down for my meal today, eating only a portion of what's there on my plate, when I know that there's a woman out there, with three starving children in tow no less, who could have had a full meal with just the amount of food that I was throwing away? Or feeding to the cat?

Goshtho Chakraborty smiles sadly, lowers his head.

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY

All I can say is that I am happy you feel that way, Babu. Like I was saying, the Manager Babu before you...

SATYA

She doesn't bother me, Goshtho Babu. Nor do her children. Will you please see to it that they get some food everyday?

Goshtho Chakraborty hesitates.

SATYA (CONT'D)

What's the matter? Is there a problem?

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY

Might I say something, if you don't mind?

SATYA

Go ahead.

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY

You told me the other day that you were planning to leave. When you do, someone else will come in your place. Perhaps he will not be as kind as you are.

(MORE)

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY (CONT'D)

Perhaps unlike you, he will be bothered by the cook giving food from the kitchen. Perhaps he might even be revulsed by the sight of a beggar woman with three beggar children roaming around the cutcherry.

SATYA

(furious)

I can't believe a man with your wisdom and sensibilities is saying that, Goshtho Babu! Just because what someone might say or do in the future, am I supposed to remain silent when I see those starving children?

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY

(calmly)

No, Babu. That's not what I am saying. I am merely telling you that in my humble opinion, giving them food everyday is only a temporary solution, and a rather ineffective one, if I may be so bold.

SATYA

Then what do you suggest?

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY

There's a bit of land near the western fringes of the field over there, Babu. Just past the swamp. That land remains vacant, there are no tenants there. If you would consider giving that piece of land to Kunta, then she could build a hut over it and do a bit of farming. She's still young, not even in her forties, she will be able to grow some food for herself and her children. Then she wouldn't have to beg anymore...or...(hesitates) depend on anyone else for food.

Satya looks at Goshtho Chakraborty. We see the old man standing respectfully.

SATYA

Very well. You let me know what needs to be done, I'll do it.

Goshtho Chakraborty bows slightly, turns to leave. Satya rises from the bed, walks to the desk, puts the watch on the table. Turns to see Goshtho Chakraborty standing at the doorway.

SATYA (CONT'D)

What's the matter, Goshtho Babu?

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY

I was just taking a moment to wonder how our fortunes rise and fall with the whims of the almighty, Babu!

Beat.

SATYA

What do you mean?

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY

Around ten years ago, there used to be a ruthless landlord who used to rule the villages around the estate. His name was Debi Singh.

FLASHBACK

EXT. FARMLANDS - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Farmers working in the fields. A group of spear and axe wielding goons attack them, beat them up. A man stands on a tiny hillock and watches. We zoom in on the man's face.

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY (V.O.)

Debi Singh Rajput. He wasn't from around here, he had come from Jaunpur, run away from some family feud when his uncles slaughtered his parents and his little sister and tried to murder him.

INT. GRANARY - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Mounds of grains and corn heaped in a shed. Four farmers sleeping inside. One of them wakes up, rubbing his eyes. Smoke enters the frame.

All four jump up and run to the door.

EXT. GRANARY - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The door of the granary is locked from outside. It shakes as the people inside bang on it. A group of men set fire to the shed. DEBI SINGH watches.

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY (V.O.)

It was perhaps his parents' brutal death that had made Debi Singh so merciless, so stubborn. He took whatever he wanted to. Without fear or remorse.

EXT. MUD FIELDS - DAY (FLASHBACK)

A series of date palm trees stand along the edge of the mud fields. A group of men wade through the mud to reach the trees. From every tree, we see corpses hanging by the neck, faces and bodies covered in mud. One from each tree.

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY (V.O.)

Killed, plundered and looted wherever he went.

EXT. BRICK KILN - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Smoke rises from a chimney, mountains of brick stacks rise in the air. A STRONG MAN(35) has been tied to a post. His clothes are bloodied and he looks bruised and battered.

Debi Singh walks up to him and says something (inaudible) in a threatening manner. The man spits on his face. Blows land on the man. Four men hold him in place.

Debi Singh takes a knife from one of his henchman and slashes the man's face. Blood splatters on his own face.

INT. DEBI SINGH'S MANSION - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Two HENCHMEN walk along a passage to enter a hall. Debi Singh sits on a throne in the middle of the hall. The two henchmen bow, then tell him something (inaudible). We see Debi Singh's face.

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY (V.O.)

He was the most feared, most ruthless man in the region.

EXT. DEBI SINGH'S MANSION - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Three corpses have been laid in the front yard. Man, woman, child. Debi Singh comes out onto the balcony above to inspect.

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY (V.O.)

But one day, just like that,
something happened. Something
stirred inside the man, and he
changed.

Debi Singh watches the three corpses, looks disturbed. From his POV, we see the corpse of the child. A little girl. Dead. Debi Singh is trembling. We hear loud shrieks, men yelling, the crackling of fire burning, and the slash of a sword. Debi Singh collapses on the floor. People around him help him up.

INT. DEBI SINGH'S MANSION -- TEMPLE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Debi Singh falls at the feet of an idol of Shiva. Tears flow down his cheeks.

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY (V.O.)

No one knows why.

INT. DEBI SINGH'S MANSION -- BARN - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Wounded men, women and children are being treated, their wounds tended to. Debi Singh sits in one corner, bandaging a little girl's eye.

EXT. FARMLANDS - DAY (FLASHBACK)

It is raining hard. Group of men gathered. A man holds an umbrella, from under which Debi Singh gives a speech (inaudible). He comes out from under the umbrella and throws the sword in his hand on the ground. One by one, the other men come forward and throw their axes, sticks and spears on the ground too.

EXT. KASHI -- VISHWANATH TEMPLE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Debi Singh sits next to a shivalinga, hands folded. Weeps his heart out.

Priest gives him a flower. Debi Singh bows, takes it and touches the priest's feet. The priest tells him something (inaudible). Both the priest and Debi Singh bow to the shivalinga.

EXT. KASHI -- THE GANGA - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Thousands of lamps float on the water. Evening *aarti* happening in the background. Debi Singh stand in chest deep water, praying, hands folded, eyes shut.

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY (V.O.)
Debi Singh did his penance. Hoping
that the holy waters of the Ganga
would wash away his sins.

Debi Singh takes a dip in the water, remains submerged.

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY (V.O.)
In Kashi, Debi Singh finally found
God.

EXT. KASHI -- COURTESAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

An elderly KING alights from a horse-carriage, dragging Debi Singh by the hand. Takes him inside.

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY (V.O.)
But along with God, he found
something else.

INT. KASHI -- COURTESAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A COURTESAN (female, 40) is singing(inaudible), a few musicians accompany her. Courtesan notices that Debi Singh's eyes are fixed on the ravishingly beautiful DANCER GIRL(16), who is in the middle of a Kathak recital. The dancer girl seems to be enjoying the attention.

The courtesan stops singing, jumps to her feet. Throws a velvet pouch at the King, storms out. King is furious, shouts (inaudible) at the courtesan. A few other man hold him back, try to pacify him.

Debi Singh continues to stare at the dancer girl. Dancer girl matches his glance. Faint smile on her lips. She bows lightly to him. And he to her. She exits.

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY (V.O.)
He found love.

EXT. KASHI -- RAILWAY STATION - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

We hear the whistle of a coal-engine train. A BRITISH OFFICER stands on the platform, talking to his troops who have gathered around him.

One of the soldiers instructs a porter, who starts loading the officer's luggage on to a first class compartment.

Debi Singh waits near the door of another compartment, one coach away. He is wrapped from head to toe in a black blanket. One of his henchmen is with him.

From around the ticket room, the dancer girl walks hurriedly onto the platform, along with another young woman. Both covered in similar blankets.

The henchman runs towards them, brings them to Debi Singh. Debi Singh boards the train, turns around and extends a hand to the dancer girl. She hesitates, looks at the steps of the compartment. We hear a shrill guard's whistle. Then the whistle of the train. The train begins to move.

The dancer girl looks up at Debi Singh's face. Seems to make up her mind. Takes Debi Singh's hand, and as soon as she does, a bullet comes and hits the henchman.

Debi Singh pulls her into the carriage. We hear the sound of bullets. The train is moving. Debi Singh tries to grab the hand of the henchman, but fails. The man collapses on the platform.

The dancer girl looks out through the door back at the platform. From her POV, we see the British troops firing at a group of armed men who are now standing next to the ticket room.

From amidst the men, the courtesan points towards the dancer girl. The dancer girl is weeping. A bullet goes right through the courtesan's chest. She wilts away and collapses. The dancer girl cries out (inaudible).

Debi Singh hugs the dancer girl in his arms, trying to console her. The girl is crying her heart out. The train leaves the platform.

EXT. DEBI SINGH'S MANSION - DAY (FLASHBACK)

A huge crowd is gathered. Most of them are women. Debi Singh alights from a horse carriage. Helps the dancer girl out. Women ululate, a large band starts playing (inaudible).

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY (V.O.)
Debi Singh's wedding was a lavish
one. A king's wedding.

EXT. DEBI SINGH'S MANSION - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A long queue of villagers. One by one, they step up to Debi Singh and the dancer girl, who is now in bridalwear. The bride gives the villagers clothes.

INT. DEBI SINGH'S MANSION -- COURTYARD - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Villagers sitting in rows and columns. Debi Singh and his bride walk in between the rows, serving food to the villagers. An extremely old woman raise her trembling hand and places it on the bride's head in the gesture of a blessing.

Debi Singh watches his bride from a distance. They smile at each other.

INT. DEBI SINGH'S MANSION -- BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Debi Singh and his bride lie in bed, talking away (inaudible). Tears roll down Debi Singh's cheeks as he speaks. The bride pulls his face into her chest. Debi Singh hugs her tight and weeps.

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY (V.O.)

The entire village, and all the villages around it, seems to have lit up in the glow of the new queen's warmth and kindness.

EXT. VILLAGE ROADS - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The bride's palanquin is passing through, carried by four bearers. Villagers standing by the side of the path with folded hands. They bow.

Bride looks out, frowning. Asks the bearers to stop.

INT. VILLAGE HUT - DAY (FLASHBACK)

A DRUNK MAN (40) is beating his WIFE (25) black and blue. The woman is howling, her face is swollen and bleeding. She looks over the man's shoulder behind him.

The drunk man looks back too. Sees Debi Singh's bride standing at the door. Behind her, a large crowd gathered. The four bearers step in, grab the drunk man and drag him outside. The battered wife runs to the bride and falls at her feet. The bride lifts her up and takes her into her arms, consoling her.

EXT. FARMLANDS - DAY (FLASHBACK)

A group of sickle-carrying female farmers bless the bride as she distributes food and blankets to the poor.

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY (V.O.)

She was not just the queen of the village. She was the queen of their hearts.

INT. DEBI SINGH'S MANSION -- BEDCHAMBER - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The bride sits at a window, looking out, staring into the void, tears rolling down her cheeks. Debi Singh walks in, notices her. Doesn't disturb her. Lowers his head, walks out.

INT. DEBI SINGH'S MANSION -- BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Debi Singh tries to emulate his bride's dance moves, as she sits on the bed and giggles. Debi Singh tries to do the Kathak 'twirl', trips and collapses on the bed. Both laugh and kiss.

The bride whispers something into her husband's ears. Debi Singh looks at her tummy with surprise and looks overjoyed. Gives her a bear hug.

INT. DEBI SINGH'S MANSION -- TEMPLE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Debi Singh sits at the feet of Shiva's idol and prays, looking nervous. A priest is seen offering prayers to the idol. Turns around sharply to look back. Then looks at the priest, who smiles and gives him a flower.

INT. DEBI SINGH'S MANSION -- BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The bride is in labour, lets out one final cry, then sinks in relief. A midwife shows her the newborn. She gives an exhausted and tearful smile.

Debi Singh enters. The midwife offers to put the baby in Debi Singh's arms. Debi Singh doesn't want to hold it, looks terrified.

The midwife insists. Debi Singh looks at his wife, who nods gently. He takes the baby in his arms. Looks down at its face. We see the baby's pretty face. Debi Singh is overwhelmed with emotion.

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY (V.O.)
Those were the happiest days of
Debi Singh's lives.

INT. RIVERSIDE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Debi Singh and his bride are having a little picnic by the river. Their DAUGHTER and SON are running around. We see that the bride is pregnant, she is embroidering a design on a handkerchief. Behind her, in the background, we see two guards standing in the distance.

The two children pull their father's hand. Debi Singh gets up reluctantly. The little girl blindfolds her father. The children giggle as they make their father swivel around several times, before hiding.

We now see the bride. She is smiling as she sews.

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY (V.O.)
But sooner or later, your past
catches up with you.

Behind her, we see the two guards collapse on the ground one after the other. The bride is still looking ahead. Very slowly, her smile fades away. She has seen something that we haven't.

We now see the riverside from her POV. The children are standing on one side, watching their father lying on the ground. Smoke swirls out of a hole in Debi Singh's chest.

A scarfaced man walks up to Debi Singh. This is the same man whose face Debi Singh had sliced up. He bends down over Debi Singh and spits at his face. Debi Singh sputters, a bit of blood lands on the scarred face. The man lifts his heavy hands and brings them down on Debi Singh.

The bride gives a start. But is too shocked to react otherwise. We hold on her face.

A hand enters the frame and snatches the handkerchief out of her hands.

The scarfaced man wipes the blood on his face with the handkerchief, then throws the handkerchief on the bride's lap. Looks down at her for sometime. Then grabs the bride's chin. Pulls out a knife.

DISSOLVE TO:

FLASHBACK ENDS.

INT. CUTCHERRY -- SATYA'S HUT - DAY

We now see Goshttho Chakraborty standing in the doorway again, head hanging. Satya is listening to his story with a frown on his face.

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY

Kunta carries the mark of her husband's sins on her face, as a reminder to everyone that God may forgive, but man doesn't.

SATYA

What happened to her? How did she...?

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY

After her husband died, his killer took over all his properties - his land, his house...everything. Kunta was thrown out on the streets, scarred, abused, widowed. The villagers wanted to help her, but the new landlord's henchmen threatened them, prohibited them from doing so. People say Kunta gave birth to her third child in a pond in the middle of the forest. No one knows how the baby survived.

Beat.

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY (CONT'D)

Perhaps it would have been better if the baby would have died. If all of them would have died. After all, what kind of life is this?

Beat.

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY (CONT'D)

Or perhaps, she lived on with her children waiting for some miracle to happen. For her fate to turn. For someone to come along...and change her destiny again.

Satya stares at Goshttho Chakraborty, who smiles briefly at him, and leaves the room.

EXT. CATKINS FIELD - DAY

Satya is sitting on a small mound in the middle of the white catkins, lost in thought.

In the distance, the sun is setting. A mellow, profound moment.

EXT. CUTCHERRY - NIGHT

A bonfire has been set up in the front yard. Satya sits at a table, watching the cook roasting fowl over the fire. There are a few other people gathered around - all locals.

Muneshwar Singh walks up to Satya.

MUNESHWAR SINGH

Huzoor? These two men have come to meet you. They've come all the way from Naugacchia.

DASHRATH SINGH (male, 50) and CHHATTU SINGH (male, 50) bow and greet Satya.

DASHRATH SINGH

Greetings Huzoor! My name is Dashrath Singh Jhandawala. This is my brother-in-law Chhattu Singh.

Satya greets them. Asks the two men to sit near the fire.

DASHRATH SINGH (CONT'D)

Huzoor, before we sit, we would like to show you something.

SATYA

What is it?

Chhattu Singh exits the frame, reenters as he brings a white horse to the spot.

DASHRATH SINGH

Please accept this humble gift, Huzoor. His name is Gora. After the colour of his hide, that is. A fine animal, Huzoor. Arabian.

SATYA

A fine animal indeed. But what am I going to do with this? I don't know how to ride a horse.

DASHRATH SINGH

Oh it's easy, Huzoor. All it needs is for you to get used to him, and him to you. Once that trust is built, you wouldn't be able to fall off his back, even if you wanted to. He will take care of you.

SATYA

But I can't take a horse from you!
It must be expensive!

DASHRATH SINGH

We have plenty of them, Huzoor! Back at our ranch. There was a time when Chhattu and I used to own around thirty horses. We used to breed them, raise them, and train them to dance. Dancing horses fetched quite a bit of money in the village fairs.

SATYA

(points to Gora)
Can he dance too?

DASHRATH SINGH

Oh no, Huzoor! We quit that line of business a couple of years ago. We now grow paddy and corn, we have a small piece of land, just outside Naugacchia.

SATYA

But Dashrath Singh, I can't accept this gift from you.

DASHRATH SINGH

We've come a long way to meet you, Huzoor. We've heard that you don't know how to ride. Out here in the forest, everything is at great distances from each other. You will have to travel a lot. The manager Babu before you also used to travel. For survey work, to supervise collections, to meet important people. A horse would help. Please don't say no, Huzoor!

Satya looks at Gora for sometime. Then nods. Muneshwar Singh takes the horse away.

SATYA
 (to Dashrath Singh)
 Sit. Have dinner with me.

The two men smile, bow and sit.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CUTCHERRY - LATER

A 70-year-old BLIND MAN is playing a tune on a flute. Fire crackles. Owl hoots in the jungle.

SATYA
 (to Dashrath Singh)
 I've been hearing of some poaching activities in the forests of Mohanpura. Not too far from your village. Is it true that some men have entered the jungle?

DASHRATH SINGH
 Yes, Huzoor! A band of around half a dozen men. Armed with rifles! Not from around here, they must have come in from the forests of Sialkuchi.

SATYA
 What are they hunting?

DASHRATH SINGH
 Bears, deer, elephants, buffaloes...whatever they find. Hide, horns, meat, tusks - they take it all.

Chhattu Singh scoffs, says something. Dashrath Singh shushes him.

SATYA
 What is he saying?

DASHRATH SINGH
 He's running a fever, Huzoor. People say all sorts of bizarre things when they're sick. Jungle lore, fantasy, tales of magic...all nonsense, Huzoor.

SATYA

Really? Must be something interesting, then! Do share what he said with me.

DASHRATH SINGH

He said, they won't survive long out there. These poachers. Tyandbaro will get to them.

SATYA

Tyandbaro?

Chhattu Singh nods. Says something in the local tongue. Dashrath Singh translates.

DASHRATH SINGH

Tyandbaro! The god of the wild buffaloes! Half man, half buffalo!

SATYA

Interesting!

DASHRATH SINGH

I can see Huzoor doesn't believe in all these foolish stories...

SATYA

Oh, no, no! Nothing like that. I do believe. My mind is always open. But has anyone seen this...this Tyandbaro? I mean, how do you know what he looks like?

Beat.

Fire crackles. Foxes yelp in the distance. Chhattu Singh looks scared.

DASHRATH SINGH

Many years ago, Huzoor, even before I used to be in the dancing horses business, I was involved in some questionable activities in the forest. I feel ashamed to say this tonight, but I have given up that life now. I used to smuggle opium through the forest.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. MOHANPURA FOREST -- DAY

A herd of mules being led through the forest. Dashrath Singh walks ahead of a couple of other men. We can see a fourth man at the end of the line, guiding the straying mules back into the line. Bags hang on both sides of each mule's back.

DASHRATH SINGH (V.O.)

We would get the goods from a trader in Purnia. And we would have to deliver it to another man in Azmabad. In between lay the notorious forest of Mohanpura. Tigers, leopards, bears, rhinos, wild tuskers, poisonous snakes - the entire jungle was strewn with dangers. But of all the animals that roamed that jungle, there was one that was perhaps the most ruthless, the most dangerous of all.

We now see four men setting up pointy wooden spikes in a deep pit on the ground. They are laying a trap.

DASHRATH SINGH (V.O.)

Humans!

One man perks up his ears, tries to listen. Then signals the other three. All four get out hurriedly. They cover the pit with leaves, vines and branches.

Dashrath Singh sees them from a distance. Gestures to his men. They take cover behind trees and bushes. Watch on.

DASHRATH SINGH (V.O.)

Men with greed in their hearts. Men who wouldn't bat an eyelid or turn a hair before taking the lives of innocent animals.

We now hear a rumble. The men laying the traps run away and hide behind trees.

A large herd of buffaloes come walking in from the bend of the path. They are headed straight for the pit. One of Dashrath Singh's men try to say something. Another covers his mouth and silences him. Points to the other group of men. We now see they are carrying spears and axes.

The herd has almost reached the pit. But they suddenly stop, just a few yards away from the pit. The entire herd stops behind them.

The poachers frown and look at each other. One of the poachers hear something rustling in the bushes behind him. Turns to look. But before he can react, he is pulled high up in the air, disappears into the foliage above. Leaves fall from the branches of the trees.

The other poachers are dumbstruck. As are Dashrath Singh and his men.

Beat.

The poacher who had been pulled up into the air falls on the covered pit, back down, gets impaled on one of the spikes. Screams fill the air. The other poachers try to run, get pulled up in a similar manner. Two more poachers fall into the pit, get impaled.

The fourth one falls by the edge of the pit, he grimaces as his back snaps. He tries to drag himself away from the pit, along the leaf-covered ground, weeping. Reaches a monstrous hooved foot. A large human hand grabs him by his hair and pulls him up. We now see the buffalo god. At least 30 feet tall. Body of a man, head of a buffalo. A pair of horns. Nostrils flaring. Eyes burning, watching the final poacher writhe in pain as the entire weight of his body hangs by his hair.

DASHRATH SINGH (V.O.)

Tyandbaro! God of the wild
buffaloes! Protector of all life in
the jungle.

The buffalo god tears the poacher's torso into two and throws the two pieces away from each other. The upper half comes and lands near Dashrath and his men. They look on in horror, somehow managing to remain silent and hidden.

Tyandbaro now dips his hand into the pit and gets the spikes out, the poachers still stuck on them. Then throws the dug out earth back into the pit, leveling it. Then disappears in the dense foliage of the jungle. The buffaloes walk around the pit and move on.

FLASHBACK ENDS.

EXT. CUTCHERRY - NIGHT

We see Chhattu Singh's scared eyes. Satya watches the eyes. Chhattu Singh says something in the local dialect.

One of the words he says is 'Tyandbaro'. Everyone gathered bow their head, fold their hands and shut their eyes in prayer. Satya watches them.

SATYA (V.O.)

The jungle people fear some local deity. Perhaps just a tale told by old grandmothers to children to stop them from wandering into the forest.

Satya's gaze now turns to the horse - Gora. It looks scared. Something is making it restless.

CHHATTU SINGH (O.S.)

Tyandbaro!

Gora throws his front legs high up in the air and lets out a neigh.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. CUTCHERRY -- SATYA'S HUT - DAY

Satya combs his hair in front of the mirror. Puts his watch in his pocket, picks up a bunch of files and red account books from the desk and gives the bunch to Muneshwar Singh.

SATYA

Tell Goshtho Babu that I have gone to Patna for the hearing, I will be back by day-after-tomorrow. And give these to Banwari.

Muneshwar Singh nods and leaves. Satya walks back to his bed, picks up a storybook.

Then walks out of his hut to find the syce brushing Gora's mane.

MUNESHWAR SINGH

Your trunk has been loaded on the bullock cart, Huzoor.

Satya doesn't respond. Walks towards Gora. Says something to the syce in the local tongue. Syce replies, holds Gora steady.

MUNESHWAR SINGH (CONT'D)

(looking concerned)

Huzoor!

Satya tries to mount. Gora goes wild. Satya loses balance, falls on the ground.

Muneshwar Singh rushes in, helps Satya up, dust his clothes.

Muneshwar Singh shouts at the syce, who shouts back.

Satya looks at Gora. Gestures to the syce. Syce holds Gora steady again.

MUNESHWAR SINGH (CONT'D)

Huzoor should perhaps consider...

Too late. Satya tries to mount Gora again. This time, Gora throws his front legs up in the air, throwing Satya off his back. Satya lands with a resounding thud. Grimaces and holds the back of his head in pain.

Two or three people help him up and dust his clothes. Satya waves them off in a huff. Dips his hand in his pocket and pulls his pocket-watch out. The glass is smashed. Satya looks hurt. Looks at Gora angrily. Gora snorts defiantly.

SATYA (V.O.)

I guess some animals just can't be tamed. They only belong in the jungle.

Walks away towards the bullock cart waiting in the distance.

EXT. WILDERNESS - DAY

A coal engine train chugs through the undulating landscape. Smoke fills the skies.

INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT - DAY

Satya sits by the window reading the storybook. Train whistles. Satya looks outside. From his POV, we see rolling hillocks, as far as the eyes can see.

EXT. PATNA JUNCTION - DAY

Satya steps out of the train on a platform thronging with people. Has the tin trunk in his hand. Somehow manages to make his way out.

The road is crowded too. Urban clamour. Rickshaws and tongas everywhere. Hardly any space to move. Satya struggles to find his bearing.

A fistfight breaks out between two unknown men. People rush in - some to join, some to stop. Satya breaks away from the crowd and stumbles onto the road. A tonga whizzes past him, missing him by an inch. The driver yells an abuse at him, and lashes his whip.

EXT. PATNA CITY -- MARKET - DAY

Vendors selling vegetables, people haggling over prices. Yelling and shouting everywhere. Pushing and jostling. Satya makes his way through the crowd with the tin trunk in his hand.

INT. PATNA CITY -- COURTHOUSE - DAY

A group of farmers greet Satya as he walks along a passage. One of them takes the trunk from his hand. Satya speaks to them (inaudible).

INT. PATNA CITY -- COURTROOM - DAY

People clamouring. Satya sits among the crowd and watches the proceedings, looking uncomfortable. Judge bangs gavel.

JUDGE

Order, order!

Crowd doesn't listen. Judge starts banging gavel till it breaks. Judge throws the handle of the gavel at someone in the crowd. Satya looks on. The din fades away.

SATYA (V.O.)

Goshtho Babu had said that when he went back to the city, he saw something that made him hurry back to the forest.

Constables start beating everyone up with sticks. Crowd scatters. Some people land blows on the constables.

SATYA (V.O.)

I now know what he had seen.

Crowd and constables fall on the ground in a heap. Judge is frothing in the mouth, yells. Takes off his wig and throws it on the floor. Leaves.

From Satya's POV, we see the wig being trampled by dozens of feet as people fight with each other.

SATYA (V.O.)
Barbarians!

EXT. PATNA CITY -- MARKET SQUARE - DAY

A large crowd is gathered around a cockfight. Two roosters are about to fight each other. Satya watches. The owner of one of the roosters ties two razorblades on its legs. Sets it onto the arena. The other rooster has razorblades on its legs too. People screaming their lungs out. Fight begins. The blades slash on the birds' flesh. Blood everywhere. Bloodthirsty people scream for more. One of the roosters is down on the ground, blood dripping from its throat. Its owner clutches his hair in defeat. A loud roar echoes through the sky.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. WILDERNESS - DAY

Silence. Absolute silence.

Leaves flutter in the breeze.

Butterflies sitting on flowers.

A sparrow plucks something out of another sparrows downs.

A deer grazes by the side of the road. Stops, raises its head. It has heard something.

A bullock cart comes tinkling into the frame. Satya is sitting at the back, in a pensive mood. Looks around.

From his POV, we see the wilderness. Serene.

Satya looks up. Sees the crescent moon. Then looks towards the east. We see the sun rising over the hills.

SATYA (V.O.)
I don't like it here. Of that I
have no doubt. But will I like it
back in the city? Back there, I am
a nobody. Back there, I had no
money, no food, no respect.

We now see the sun's rays falling on Satya's face. His eyes glisten.

SATYA (V.O.)
Here in the jungle, I have all of
those.

(MORE)

SATYA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 And I also have something else.
 Something far more valuable than
 money or respect.

Satya swiftly wipes the gathering teardrop from his eyes.
 Composes himself.

SATYA (V.O.)
 I have peace.

The bullock cart carries on down the path, against a
 magnificent sunrise. We now see that the deer has gone back
 to grazing, unbothered by the cart passing by.

EXT. CUTCHERRY - DAY

The bullock cart reaches the cutcherry. Servant rushes to
 fetch Satya's trunk.

Satya alights, looking exhausted. Sees Goshttho Chakraborty
 waiting for him, with a trunk and a bedding hold-all next to
 him. Satya walks to the old man.

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY
 Welcome back, Babu! I was on my way
 out, I'm leaving today. How did the
 hearing go?

SATYA
 Have you mailed it already?

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY
 I beg your pardon?

SATYA
 The letter! The letter I gave you!
 You haven't mailed it already, have
 you?

Beat.

Goshttho Chakraborty smiles. Pulls the envelope out of his
 pocket. Gives it to Satya.

SATYA (CONT'D)
 But you...you said you'll mail it.
 So I was...

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY
 (gently)
 No, Babu! I never said I'll mail
 it. I said - 'your wish is my
 command'!

Satya stares at the old man's wise face with a look of gratitude.

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY (CONT'D)
Kunta has been weeping all day, all night.

SATYA
Why?

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY
She can't believe what you have done for her. Muneshwar Singh and his men have built her a small hut. Her children slept under a roof after many years. Right now, you are no less than a god to her.

Satya looks shaken, overwhelmed.

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY (CONT'D)
Didn't I tell you, Babu? The forest won't let you leave!

Satya simply stares back. Doesn't say anything.

GOSHTHO CHAKRABORTY (CONT'D)
Goodbye, Babu! And thank you for everything!

Goshtho Chakraborty picks up his trunk and hold-all and starts walking towards the bullock cart.

SATYA
No, Goshtho Babu!

Goshtho Chakraborty turns around.

SATYA (CONT'D)
Thank you! For everything!

As Goshtho Chakraborty looks on, Satya tears up the resignation letter, crumples the pieces and puts them in his pocket. Goshtho Chakraborty smiles, nods briefly and walks away towards the bullock cart. Servant loads his luggage in the back. The cart leaves.

Satya watches him go. Then turns around to find Gora standing in the distance, tied to a post. He walks up to the horse. Places his hand softly on his mane, caresses him gently. Gora snorts.

SATYA (CONT'D)
(whispering)
You want to know a little secret?

Gora whinnies.

SATYA (CONT'D)
I trust you! Let's see if you trust
me!

Satya unties the reins from the post. Syce runs up, Satya waves him away.

Satya mounts Gora. Moves him around a bit. Then kicks him gently on his side. Rides out through the gates of the cutcherry. Syce smiles happily. So does Muneshwar Singh.

EXT. GREEN FIELDS - DAY

Gora is galloping through a pristinely beautiful green field with Satya on his back. Satya is completely in control. He has the reins in his hand and the wind in his hair. In the background, we see the forest, and even beyond that, we see the outline of the hills. The sound of the gallop fills the air.

SATYA (V.O.)
I was right. Some animals just
cannot be tamed!

As the wind blows, the bits and pieces of the letter from Satya's pocket drop out and blow in the air, leaving a trail behind him.

SATYA (V.O.)
They only belong in the jungle!

DISSOLVE TO:

BLACK.

CREDITS ROLL.