HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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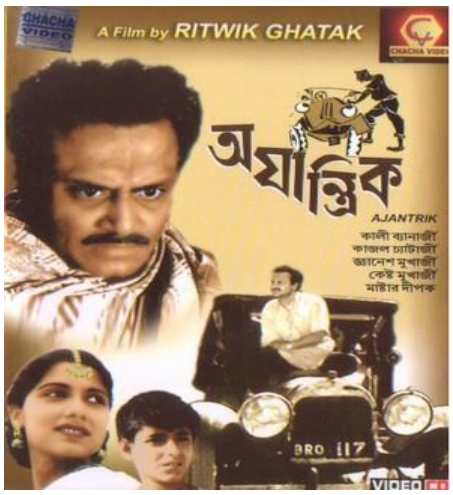
AJANTRIK */ PATHETIC FALLACY or Lit. UN-ROBOTIC,* also translated as *The Mechanical Man* (1958)
Ritwik Ghatak

Bengali language

Film link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oQ7qxSFdG2U







OVERVIEW

Director Ritwik Ghatak was born in Dacca (in present-day Bangladesh), and his family moved to Calcutta just before masses of starving people streamed into the city as a result of the famine of 1943-44 and the Partition of 1947-48. Those two events, along with the Bangladesh war in 1971, which also brought refuges to Calcutta, would dominate most of his films. Ritwik Ghatak became politically active in the IPTA (Indian Peoples Theatre Association) in the 1950s before entering the world of film as an assistant director and making his directorial debut in 1953 with *Citizen* (*Nagarik*), which went unreleased but is considered a classic today. Ghatak joined and was then purged from the Communist Party of India, after which he became a prolific writer of short stories, plays and film theory. He directed one of the all-time great films of Indian cinema with *The Cloud-Capped Star* (*Meghe Dhaka Tara,* 1960). Along with Satyajit Ray and Mrinal Sen, he charted a Bengali film industry that reflected the turbulent politics of his day and surpassed Bollywood in its social realism. His personal life was however rocky; he suffered from mental illness and alcoholism and even sold his film reels to shady producers for money and alcohol— leading to many of his film prints being recovered in unusable condition and having to be restored.

Ghatak directed eight full-length feature films (of which only seven were publicly released) and a handful of documentaries, which depict the lives of ordinary and marginal people. *The Cloud-Capped Star* (*Meghe Dhaka Tara*) was listed at number 231 in a list of all-time best films by Sight and Sound in 2002, while *Golden Lining* (*Subarnarekha*) was listed at 346. Ghatak also received many awards in India, including the National Film Award for Best Story in 1974 and a Padma Shri from the Indian government in 1970.

Film Based on a Bangla short story of the same name written by the writer Subodh Ghosh, *Ajantrik* presents a distinctly uncanny narrative of a peculiarly passionate relationship between a man and his car. In *Some Thoughts on Ajantrik, Cinema and I* (1987), Ghatak explains, “It rings true in every line of it. I have seen such men (I have had the doubtful pleasure of meeting Bimal himself in real life) and have been able to believe in their emotions. There lies the greatest source of power of the story”. As Kumar Sahani notes in the *Encyclopedia of Indian Cinema,* the film presents “a universalized leitmotiv of cultural dismemberment and exile that evokes an epic tradition by drawing on tribal, folk and classical forms.”

Background On the making of the film, Ghatak writes: “We had to work with the poorest possible materials and that too, on a shoe-string budget. This film threw before us a challenge at every step.

Every shot taken was every shot achieved. It is a situation in which one curses oneself at every step and likes it... It was fun all the way through— it is still fun while it is grossing exactly nothing at the box-office." Ghatak was honoured with an award at Venice in 1959 for *Pathetic Fallacy* (*Ajantrik*). Film critic Georges Sadoul shared his experience of watching the film this way: "What does 'Ajantrik' mean? I don't know and I believe no one in Venice Film Festival knew...I can't tell the whole story of the film...there was no subtitle for the film. But I saw the film spellbound till the very end".

SYNOPSIS

Bimal is a taxi driver in a small town in post-Independence Bihar, north India. He plies his trade with his beloved Jagaddal, a 1920 Chevrolet in decrepit condition, which continues to deteriorate. Bimal first drives an old man with his younger, somewhat deranged nephew to the latter's wedding and encounters a flash flood on the way. Jagaddal is however able to pull though and deliver the passengers safely, albeit in a half-dead state. Bimal subsequently drives around a series of passengers despite Jagaddal's condition worsening: a bride and a groom; an old man who is running late for his train; a group of 10 *adivaasi* (Oraon, indigenous) people; another Oraon couple after he gets stranded near their village during a festival; and finally the bride he had met earlier, now divested of her jewellery and abandoned by her so-called husband. The only person who supports his love of the car is a boy at his taxi stand, to whom Bimal confesses that Jagaddal has fed him and stood by him for 15 years since his mother's death. Bimal faces much hardship for his love for Jagaddal: a particularly irate Sikh taxi driver calls the car unsavoury names; the Calcutta Club babus call him a machine man who's intoxicated by petrol fumes; the mechanic, his friend, asks him to get rid of the 'lump of iron'; and a group of boys almost destroy Jagaddal and then throw mud on it. Through it all, Bimal's love and attachment for the cantankerous Jagaddal only grows**.** But, finally, Jagaddal heaves a last sigh; sputtering, spewing smoke and leaking gas, it gives up. Bimal cannot let go and spends all his money getting new parts and promising Jagaddal that it will be alright and they'll be together forever. But after a few months of Jagaddal failing to move, Bimal finally capitulates and sells the car to a scrap dealer, who has it dismantled and carried away. Suddenly, he hears a familiar noise— it's a toddler playing with Jagaddal's discarded horn. Tears streaming down his face, Bimal smiles, finally letting go of his obsession.

CHARACTERS

Bimal	Car driver/ mechanic in love with his car
Jagaddal ('The Immovable')	A 1920 Chevrolet Jalopy BRO 117
The boy	The mechanic's assistant and Bimal's confidante.
The Mechanic	unnamed
The lunatic beggar	unnamed

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Bimal

Bimal is the protagonist of the film who suffers under the "pathetic fallacy" of being irrevocably attached to his broken-down old Chevy. Indeed, there is nothing in his life apart from the car and worrying about it and tending to it, besides drinking.

Imaginative Bimal views Jagaddal as his brother and partner— even more than a wife. He talks to it constantly, reassuring, promising, pleading or threatening, depending on Jagaddal's behaviour. In one poignant scene, he gets so angry with Jagaddal that he stuffs heavy stones in the back and then forces it to drive up a hill, leading to its final demise. This obsession with creating a personality for Jagaddal shows his imaginative side.

Caring Bimal cares excessively for Jagaddal. Being his sole companion, it isn't surprising that Bimal cares more about Jagaddal than anyone else. "Even though Jagaddal a car, it's still human", Bimal tells the boy, as the car has been his only companion for over 15 years since his mother's death. It is a "hardworking old horse" that hasn't let him down and even drove miles upon miles on the gallon. He even shields Jagaddal with his body when the children throw mud on it. This is extended to people who care about Jagaddal and have kind words to say about it; for instance, the newly-married woman admires the rip in Jagaddal's canopy and he later gives her a ride for free and even buys her a train ticket. In all ways that matter, Jagaddal is Bimal's one and only BRO (its license number BRO 117 is maybe Ghatak nodding at an Americanism).

Scornful The other side of Bimal's obsession with Jagaddal is his near total disregard for the people around him and the few passengers he gets. He usually brushes off the Sikh taxi driver's efforts to antagonize him by comparing Jagaddal to a decrepit woman and in once scene sings his own preferred folk song loudly so as to drown out the Sikh driver singing a song in Punjabi with snide references to fickle woman. Bimal couldn't care less about insulting or abusing the passengers, especially if they badmouth Jagaddal. For instance, he almost hits the nephew-uncle duo and makes them push Jagaddal on a muddy hill road after a flash flood; later, he verbally abuses the old man who was trying to get to the train station in a hurry. But despite his rough exterior, he isn't malicious at heart, of course.

Determined From the beginning, Bimal is determined to keep Jagaddal, despite its fast-deteriorating condition. He cleans and polishes and waters it and works under the hood often, even promising to get it a new Rexine canopy. At the end, Bimal lovingly takes apart the old engine and buys as many new parts as he can afford in a last-ditch attempt to stay "together forever" with Jagaddal.

The boy The 12- or 13-year-old boy (who remains unnamed) is the mechanic's assistant and Bimal's supporter. He is the closest person Bimal has to a friend. True to his age, he is easily excited and not a very hard worker, but quick witted and street-smart.

Quick witted The boy is always on the lookout for an opportunity to earn a little money and always ready with the snappy replies. For instance, in the opening scene, he asks for a commission of 6 annas from the old uncle to bring him to Bimal; sadly, the stingy passenger only gives him 1 anna. Later, when the Sikh taxi driver badmouths Jagaddal, the boy stands up in its defence with a quick comeback.

Excitable The boy, true to his age, is always excited to go on a ride on Jagaddal and badgers Bimal to take him a few times; Bimal only obliges once. On that memorable trip, he even takes Jagaddal for a spin, much to Bimal's chagrin and the bride's near-death by being run down. On other occasions, too, the boy is seen flitting around the market area and engaging with Bimal, the other taxi drivers and random people, totally excited and completely distracted from his work duties.

Sympathetic Of all the characters, only the boy lends a sympathetic ear to Bimal's woes about Jagaddal and never criticizes Bimal's decision to hold on to the broken-down car and spend all his money on it. He even defends Jagaddal when anyone says rude things about it. Bimal also confides in him easily and tells him Jagaddal's history. Near the end, he tells Bimal that he will miss Jagaddal dearly.

THEMES

Technology and Animism In India's cultural milieu of the 1950's, Mahatma Gandhi's ideas played a crucial role in shaping the political psyche, as did the almost completely opposed statist agenda implemented by the first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. For Gandhi, who stressed reinventing an agrarian economy with industrialization playing a marginal role, the automobile was viewed as a cruel and merciless agent responsible for taking away jobs from people. On the other hand, the developmental model envisioned and implemented (with moderate success) by Nehru was based on mechanical, industrial and technological notions of progress. In *Some Thoughts on Ajantrik, Cinema and I* (1987), Ghatak explained in this way:

> The idea of the machine has always had an association of monstrosity for us. It devours all that is good, all that is contemplative and spiritual. It is something that is alien to the spirit of our culture... It stands for clash and clangour, for swift, destructive change, for fermenting discontent…With all our newly achieved technology, we have yet to find ways of integrating the future into our heritage... And that is precisely what *Ajantrik*, the story, has achieved for the first time in our literature. It has achieved it in a unique (and) typically Indian way. It contains that quaint indigenous flavour in its plot structure, its characterisation, its very style of narration.

Ghatak's vision inscribes the relationship between human and machine beyond the logic of technological determinism. As such, *Ajantrik* neither indulges in communitarian rhetoric nor does it subscribe to the western model of modernity and consumerism. Ghatak's take is more intuitive and inventive, describing a more organic relationship between the man, the machine and the landscape and people. Finally, and only at the closing scene, is there a movement from pre-modern attachment

to capitalist reality: as Bimal sees a child playing with Jagaddal's discarded horn, he acknowledges his delusion. The smiling child makes him realize his animism— a belief that treated pre-modernist objects as magical and larger than life— and move beyond it.

Culture: indigenous people Bimal's animistic belief largely parallels the belief systems of the Oraon people (who call themselves Kurukh and speak the Kurukh language), who are ubiquitously present in the film. Ghatak said that he 'had a nodding acquaintance with them, having been among them as a documentary film maker for about five years...They are constantly in the process of assimilating anything new that comes their way...They would fully understand Bimal, for they themselves are like him.'

Vignettes of the Oraons' marginal life are shown in one long sequence when Bimal finds himself stranded near their village and spends the night enjoying their festivities and drinking the local liquor. Their festive parade, the shrilling sound of their bugles, their flying striped flags are often shown through disjointed, abrupt and unexpected shots. He also gives a ride to a group of 10 Oraons and also a young couple.

Religion Ghatak also shows a visually haunting image of a Christian cross, used as a motif throughout the film and especially poignant in a scene when an Oraon woman sits in the cemetery and sings a mournful song just as it becomes clear that Jagaddal will never revive. The cross evokes the plight of India's Christian minority (including many indigenous tribes like the Oraon who largely converted to Christianity due to a variety of complex historical reasons), treated as social outcasts and taking on jobs that were looked down upon by the Hindu elites. Although it is never clear whether Bimal himself is a Christian, he does live in a hovel right by the cemetery, a location that a typical rural Hindu householder wouldn't favour. The child and the cross seen at the end also symbolize the cycle of life and death.

Caring/ Attachment The peculiar attachment that Bimal has for Jagaddal is the central theme of the film. Ghatak mentions that this attachment isn't really very unusual at all: "I have had the doubtful pleasure of meeting Bimal himself in real life". The car itself isn't that dated and only about 40 years (or less) old; restored vintage 1920's Chevrolet coupe are available for purchase even today (2024) and if Bimal could secure the financial means he probably had the expertise to restore it. Despite appearances, Bimal's attachment cannot be considered a "commodity fetish" in the typical sense of the term: a sort of libidinal connection and an obscure hierarchy of value attributed to commodities of industrialization like the automobile. And this is precisely because Jagaddal isn't a pristine vintage showroom car but rather it's exact opposite— it is quite literally falling apart despite Bimal's almost superhuman efforts to keep it running. Ghatak continues: "Only silly people can identify themselves with a man who believes that God-forsaken car has life...To us, city folks, it is a story of a crazy man. Especially (if) the machine retards us." In fact, the worse Jagaddal's condition gets, the more Bimal is invested in its repair and attempt to remain "together forever". He spends all his money, time and energy trying to fix Jagaddal, brooding and growing more isolated than he already was, until he has no choice but to give up.

Loneliness The inevitable question that the audience is bound to ask themselves is why Bimal is so attached to Jagaddal. Tying the "Bimal (s) of real life" and the "silly people who believe that God-forsaken car has life" is a fraught pathway of loneliness and isolation. After his mother's death, Bimal never tries to find friends or a wife and lead a typical householder life. The actual circumstances that led to his bachelorhood, loneliness and isolation are never discussed but easily surmised. Perhaps it was his poverty and low earning capacity, lack of other family, obsession with Jagaddal or possible membership of a marginalized community. Regardless, he has long come to depend on Jagaddal for fulfilling both his financial and emotional needs. The naming of the car is curious in that sense; while it is repeatedly compared to a woman and cars are generally attributed a female gender [Bengali doesn't have gendered pronouns or verbs], "jagaddal" means a very massive object, like a millstone, often on one's shoulders, that is very difficult to remove. So Bimal is, quite literally, carrying around a burden in order to assuage his loneliness. It's not that as a rational man, Bimal doesn't understand that Jagaddal doesn't have a consciousness; he continues in the make-believe because it makes him feel understood, unlike his human peers. Unlike the lunatic beggar, whose presence in some crucial places is by no means accidental, Bimal cannot just discard his beloved and then dance around with a new beauty on his arm.

Separation No one else's car has a name. And certainly no one would lavish upon their car the care Bimal reserves for Jagaddal. At a crucial moment, our hero Bimal strokes the most important

person in his life and says, “Never mind, Jagaddal. You and I … we’re together.” Another poignant moment occurs when Bimal confesses to the boy that Jagaddal is “human, too”. This Bengali portrait of devotion and erotic desire in the face of widespread mockery and community derision is also mixed with a bit of pre-Partition nostalgia. In fact, Bimal’s self-identity is bound up with this car, which in Ghatak’s hands, takes on a quirky life of its own. As such, the entire film is a journey not only of ferrying passengers but of separation from the one thing that defines Bimal’s identity. Slowly but surely, Jagaddal keeps breaking down and Bimal keeps trying to prevent the final separation. When it is being carried off by the scrap dealer’s men, Bimal, tears streaming down his eyes, finally bids adieu to the love of his life: “Go, dear friend...You’ve fed and clothed me long enough. After all you can’t do it forever”

Transience *Ajantrik* is first and foremost a comedy, a genre that well exposes transience. As Ghatak explained: “The story has a ramshackle car as its central character. This very fact threw up so many dynamic potentialities. I could always fall back upon mechanical speed— what with opportunities of bringing in the time-honoured mechanism of the chase and hair-breadth escapes and breakdowns at judiciously chosen moments!” The very existence of the car and its comedic emotions are an exercise in transience. For instance, the headlights are focused on as Jagaddal’s eyes several times: when Bimal starts loudly singing a devotional song, Jagaddal objects and he covers up the headlights; later, when the lady passenger, now abandoned, leaves a trinket behind and Bimal tries to chase the train to see her, Jagaddal jealously refuses and gets a kick which knocks off a headlight. The more comic these escapades get, the more Jagaddal’s physical transience and fragility are exposed: for instance, when Bimal angrily stuffs the stones in the back seat and forces the car to climb up a steep road, Jagaddal grunts, groans, smokes and spews with all his might, but to no avail. Bimal’s forceful actions only “condemn” the car. The feeling that Jagaddal is only a temporary companion is one Bimal knows well; perhaps that’s why he drowns himself in drink. It would have been only too easy for Ghatak to make a melancholy and melodramatic film on the topic instead of a comedy, as after all, the context and landscape are historically steeped in marginalization, isolation, poverty and a constant disappearance of traditional lifeways. However, as Ghatak said, “Try however I might, I could not peddle in nostalgic sentimentalism”.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1) Discuss Bimal’s attachment to Jagaddal with two examples.

2) Have you, like the director, “had the doubtful pleasure of meeting Bimal himself in real life”?

3) Discuss two scenes featuring Jagaddal’s comic escapades. Which emotions would you attribute to the car in these scenes and why?

4) How do the landscape and the other characters contribute to the development of the story?

5) Do you think this story is tragic or comic or something in-between? Why?

6) Have you seen another film with a similar plot or setting, for example, Martin Scorsese’s *Taxi Driver** or films about robot/AI/ sentient vehicles? How does the plot of that film contrast with Ghatak’s? What does your film of choice contribute to the technology/animism duality?

* Martin Scorsese said in an interview that *Taxi Driver* was inspired by Satyajit Ray’s film *Abhijaan* (*The Expedition*, 1962), which in turn was inspired by *Ajantrik.*

SCENES

1st Trip **T**wo men haggling for taxis at a busy Kolkata intersection. The younger man (who seems slightly deranged, laughing for no reason) is travelling to his wedding and the older one, his uncle, mistakenly took a wrong bus, as they explain to a boy who asks them. For a commission of a few coins, the boy takes the older man though an abandoned church cemetery to Bimal.

Bimal is drunk. He asks for twenty rupees for the ride and ten in advance. The older man and the boy return to the taxi stand. Soon after, Bimal arrives in a ragged 1920 Chevy, Jagaddal, his arrival signalled by the sound of discordant jangling in the background. The boy warns the passengers not to badmouth the car in Bimal's earshot or else. The passenger door breaks off but somehow they squeeze into the back seat. The old man gives the boy a coin. The car makes a tremendous noise and splatters water on a roadside lunatic beggar as it drives off.

It rains heavily. The roads are slick and the passengers get wet. There are some treacherous roads and a place where there is a flash flood. The groom insults the car as a "skeleton". Bimal almost throws them out but the uncle pacifies him. Bimal makes them push the car out of the mud. Finally they arrive the next morning. The groom is almost dead and has to be carried out.





Return Bimal leaves without looking back. On the way, he passes by a herd of cows. He tells Jagaddal to hold on till he reaches the water. Jagaddal seems to make a gulping noise when Bimal puts the water in. He starts singing a devotional song, sitting down next to Jagaddal, but the headlamp jerks (Jagaddal is displeased) so he covers it up with a cloth.




“Is the car a woman?” Bimal promises Jagaddal that he will give it a “Rexine cover” (new canopy made of fake leather) for the next big festival (Durga Puja). He polishes and keeps talking to Jagaddal, that everyone is envious of it. While he’s working under Jagaddal, the boy comes and pokes him and runs away. Two taxi drivers come and try to chat with him. One of them jokes in Hindi, “Is the car a woman?” and Bimal gets angry. They leave and the taxi stand boy arrives. Bimal says he will finally give the boy a ride.



Getting ready for a photo op The boy gets dressed up in his best clothes and waits at the taxi stand. Jagaddal arrives, with his signature jangling sound. Bimal is also dressed up in a pristine white shirt for a picture with Jagaddal and the boy. As they push Jagaddal to the right place, a new car arrives. Bimal tells the boy that Jagaddal is hardy and never gets sick, so all the other cars envy it.



Insult A random passer-by tells Bimal that some upper-class babus said that Bimal is a machine and intoxicated by petrol fumes. Bimal almost slaps him. Just as the irate photographer counts down, Bimal runs behind Jagaddal to catch a man who was spitting betel-juice on it and grabs him around the neck by his scarf. But he has to let the man go.



2nd Trip A young man and his fully covered wife come and board Jagaddal without even speaking to Bimal. They agree to pay 15 rupees for the ride and Bimal tells the boy to hop on. The roadside lunatic holds a big pan over his head to avoid being splashed. Another man jumps into a ditch to avoid getting run over. Bimal dismisses him by responding comically to his anger. The woman passenger laughs loudly, dropping her head covering—she is very pretty, as reflected in Jagaddal's rear-view mirror.

Jagaddal drives through open fields. On the way they meet a procession of triangular, striped flags. The woman comments that the hole in Jagaddal's canopy lets her see the sky nicely and she wants to rip it further. Driving by a market, she wants to buy a trinket. Bimal stops and her husband buys it for her. They resume their journey, finally arriving at a government bungalow. Jagaddal is overheated and keeps steaming.

While Bimal is taking his payment from the man, the boy jumps in and takes Jagaddal for a ride. Somehow Bimal runs, hops in and stops the car before Jagaddal hits the woman, who's laughing hysterically sitting on the ground. Bimal drives back, but stops on the way to turn down the canopy to examine the hole and have a leisurely smoke.





A chance meeting He notices the newly-married woman sitting empty-handed, alone on a large rock, and he gives her a ride. He drops her off at the train station and buys her a ticket. He comments out of the lady's earshot that the man who deceived her would get his just deserts. She tells him that she doesn't know where she will go. He rushes to return the ticket he had bought for her. The train comes and the lady gets on, while he runs behind the train handing the ticket back to her, then waiting till it is gone

Back with Jagaddal, he notices that she had left the little trinket her so-called husband had bought for her from the fairground and tries to start Jagaddal up (presumably to follow the train and return it to her). But Jagaddal refuses to start up even after much cranking. Frustrated, he kicks Jagaddal right in its face, making one of the headlights almost fall off. The car finally starts up. He chases the train over open fields and bad roads, forests and over a mountain.




Bimal and Jagaddal He tells the boy that the babus said that he was less a man than a machine and intoxicated by burnt petrol fumes. But they don't understand that Jagaddal is human, too— he earns money for Bimal every day and runs many miles on a gallon. Jagaddal has ‘given him company for the last 15 years since his mother’s death’. After getting out of there, he stops by a stream to clean up. Sore and muddy, he reassures Jagaddal that they’re together forever. Melancholy string music plays in the background as he drives back.




3rd Trip: A ride to the train station A desperate passenger wants to rent Bimal’s car but he initially refuses as he hasn’t eaten for two days. The passenger complains about the car’s decrepit state and Bimal yells at him to not poke his nose in his business and to pinch the nose closed instead and stuff himself into the back seat. They arrive at a level crossing and have to wait for the train to pass. The passenger says that he missed the train. They arrive at the station. The passenger says that the train has left, while Bimal insists that it isn’t here yet. Sure enough, a train horn blows and the passenger blesses Bimal. Bimal forgets about him and instead talks to Jagaddal, saying that it got tired too easily and pats it hard on the hood.




At the taxi stand A policeman goes around showing pictures of the newlyweds; the man apparently stole the woman’s jewellery and everything else and left her stranded. Bimal says he doesn’t know them. At the mechanic’s shop, the Sikh driver says Jagaddal is a “blind-in-one-eye buffalo”, “and old horse” and a “broken down skeleton”. The boy gets angry. The Sikh driver says that everyone will laugh at Bimal when the car finally goes bust. The mechanic de-escalates the situation.





4th Trip At night, the mechanic speaks to Bimal about not getting any passengers and exchanging Jagaddal at the junk yard to get a new car. Bimal says it's too much trouble. A group of 10 *adivasi* (Oraon tribesmen and women) and some villagers somehow squeeze in and they drive off. The roadside tea seller comments that it was a strange creature (*ajeeb cheez* in Urdu). Jagaddal's headlights flash in the night.




Bullies The next morning, when Bimal wakes, he finds a group of schoolchildren playing with mud nearby; he also sees a busy open market with a performance of masked dancers. He then goes to a temple and receives blessings from the priest. When he turns back, the children are destroying Jagaddal. He tries to drive them away but they swarm around, calling names and throwing fistfuls of mud at the car. Bimal protects Jagaddal with his body but cannot do anything else.




Together forever After getting out of there, he stops by a stream to clean up. Sore and muddy, he reassures Jagaddal that they're together forever. Melancholy string music plays in the background as he drives back.



A tribal celebration Suddenly, Jagaddal makes a strange high-pitched, birdcall-like sound from under the hood and stalls. Bimal is baffled. They are all alone, away from civilization. Soon, drumbeats trumpets and other musical instruments can be heard from a distance. It's a nearby tribal village celebrating a festival with dance and a parade, led by a man on a terracotta elephant carried on a palanquin by a dozen men and flying striped flags.





A stunning night While Bimal walks down a road, a group of Oraon (tribal) women wearing striped saris dance and walk in rows behind him, holding tree branches and brooms. We see several scenes of the Adivasis dancing to their indigenous music and songs. Bimal watches intently and drinks some local alcohol. The next morning, he gives a pretty young Adivasi woman (maybe a bride) a ride while her lover/ husband pushes the car. The couple chat sweetly, then run away.





Bimal returns home The lunatic beggar leaves his large pan on the road and it's flattened by a car. Bimal returns, pushing Jagaddal. Everyone comes out to watch and mock them. Only the boy is sympathetic.

Beginning of the end The boy asks Bimal why he hasn't taken the car out for a whole month or tried to get it repaired. He says no fixes are working even though he tried everything. The mechanic comes and tells him to let the broken-down old car go and not spend any more of his hard-earned money trying to repair what can't be fixed—Bimal should know better than care so deeply for a lump of iron. Bimal gets very angry but doesn't respond to the mechanic.

But he fumes at the boy, saying that he'll spend as much as he needs to. Late at night, Bimal hears a woman singing a melancholy song at a cemetery near him. He visits Jagaddal in the garage and tells him that he's there for it. The next morning, he gives the mechanic 50 rupees for parts. The mechanic says that he's pouring oil on a fire that's gone out.

Promises Bimal happily talks to Jagaddal, saying that now it'll be fixed and he'll dazzle everyone by bringing it back again to the taxi stand. Jagaddal makes some strange noises which Bimal thinks are mice. He spends hours dismantling and checking the engine. Finally satisfied, he lies down to sleep by a scurrying mouse.





False revival It's a usual day at the taxi stand. Suddenly, we hear the discordant music associated with Jagaddal's arrival along with cranking noises and everyone looks around to see what's happening. Jagaddal has arrived, heralded by trumpets and jangling! But the mechanic sighs and walks away after hearing a strange noise from the engine.





A last leap Bimal takes Jagaddal for a drive and tells it to fly like a winged horse. But it sputters and stops. Bimal angrily says that it wasn't satisfied even after he spent everything on it and he'll teach it a lesson. He's treated it with kid gloves for too long! He loads up the back with large heavy stones. Surprisingly, Jagaddal moves but then starts smoking and spewing oil and rolls back down the sloped road. Bimal punches the wind shield out and sobs.



Goodbye Jagaddal Months later, he finally agrees to sell the broken-down, leaking Jagaddal to a scrap iron dealer from Kolkata for 2 rupees per *maund* (approx. 82 lbs). The lunatic beggar gets a new dish and goes around showing it off and prancing. Bimal is heartbroken when the scrap dealer's men take Jagaddal apart and carry it away on a cart.

Bimal hears strange discordant noise— it's the taxi stand toddler laughing and playing with Jagaddal's discarded horn. Tears streaming down his face, Bimal finally smiles.







