

Note on the dialogue - English translations are added when Hindi is spoken. English dialogue is spoken in English.

INT. BEDROOM, KOLKATA, INDIA - NIGHT

BUSY CITY NOISES drift in the open window of a small, hot room where SANAATAN PATOORI, gentle, frail, middle aged, lies in bed beside his wife MADHIR, a middle aged matron. The sounds are typical for a large city and mostly in the background, except for one which is clear and immediate.

Outside on the street, a MADMAN is having a hallucinatory fight with someone or something near the window.

Madhir, restless in her sleep, reaches out a hand and lays it on Sanataan then gets out of bed. In her pajamas, she crosses to the open window and looks out.

EXT. KOLKATA STREET - NIGHT

From their older home we can see the beautifully lit mountainous skyline of the extensive commercial district of Kolkata. Between us and it stretches the deteriorating middle-class suburbs of the city of which they are part. The once brightly painted walls of the house are long faded, and what was a fashionable address is now simply an acceptable one for people on a modest income. A low wall encloses it, and pressed against the wall as if to defend himself is a small wild-eyed BEGGAR, panting as if having run a race, dressed in charitable cast-offs, his eyes closely searching the empty street.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

MADHIR looks down from her upper floor window to the BEGGAR. As she watches, the Beggar leaps forward. SHOUTING WILDLY AND ANGRILY IN HINDI, he continues his furious battle to defend himself against nothing. Vicious punches are thrown at empty air, the Beggar only pausing to rub his hands in pain as if he has connected with something solid before returning to his loud and angry attack. Madhir watches for a moment then turns away and goes back to bed.

As she lies down, Sanataan shifts.

MADHIR

Pain?

He nods, grimaces.

SANATAAN

The noise too.

MADHIR

Mere pyaar so.

(Sleep my love.)

She returns to her poor rest, once more laying a comforting hand on her husband.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE COURTYARD - MORNING

MADHIR gets out of a barely serviceable taxi at the entrance arch of a masonry and mud courtyard. The POOR OF INDIA pass in and out of the entrance and after Madhir pays the DRIVER, she joins those going in.

EXT. COURTYARD - MORNING

Unlike most markets where the buying and selling of produce, meats and household goods makes for a loud, raucous, colourful and energetic mash of sound and movement, this is a somber place. THE SICK AND INJURED move around the perimeter of the walled courtyard, passing seated MEDICAL QUACKS and their helpers who have spaced themselves out to allow Customers to stop for treatment or groups of ONLOOKERS to gather. Services are offered by tinny microphone and speaker or SHOUTED OUT, garish signage, and constant urging for those suffering to stop and be cured of whatever ailment the Quack specializes in. Many have.

MADHIR walks along, reading the signs, listening to the HAWKERS PLEAD, stopping to watch a treatment, serious as she walks, searching.

She stops at a QUACK who is sitting on a small rug on the ground, a pile of dried lizards on a cutting board in front of him, a hand grinder to one side. Leaning against the wall behind him is a picture of the bones of two open hands, skeletal, reddish smears rubbed into the knuckle joints and wrists to show inflammation.

MADHIR

Gathiya?
(Arthritis?)

The Quack nods.

QUACK

Char.
(Four.)

Madhir shakes her head.

MADHIR

Do.
(Two.)

The Quack shakes his head.

QUACK

Teen.
(Three.)

MADHIR

Do.
(Two.)

The Quack holds out his hand and Madhir hands over two rupees. The Quack takes one of the dry lizards and chops it in half on the cutting board, then puts it in the grinder and cranks. A powder spills out of the grinder and is caught on a piece of torn paper below. The Quack folds it and hands it to her. She has a question how it is used, so she mimes holding a glass of water, pouring the powder in, mixing it, then rubbing it on her hands. The Quack nods.

MADHIR (CONT'D)

Dhanyavaad.
(Thank you.)

He nods his thanks, then she turns and leaves.

INT. HOSPITAL - AFTERNOON

MADHIR watches through the glass window of room in a modern and pristine hospital as SANATAAN, wearing a loose hospital gown, is led into another room for tests by the MEDICAL STAFF. Madhir sits on a chair to wait.

EXT. HOUSE - AFTERNOON

MADHIR Comes out of the house carrying a plastic glass partially filled with water. She walks through a gate onto the street and looks for...

...the BEGGAR, who is sleeping on the ground tight against the low wall. Madhir walks the wall to him, stopping at his feet. She taps the glass on top of the wall and he wakes, looks at her but doesn't move.

Madhir puts the glass on the wall, takes out the paper and its powder and pours the contents in the water. She mixes it with the spoon, then mimes to the Beggar that it is to be rubbed on the hands. The Beggar watches without reaction as she leaves the glass on the wall and goes.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

MADHIR wakes to the cries of a man in pain. Beside her, SANATAAN writhes in his sleep, clutching his stomach in agony. She takes him in her arms and holds him tightly as tears run down his face and he tries to get through another episode. He buries his face in her clothes and she lowers her head to his.

She looks to the window, where suddenly THE VOICE OF THE BEGGAR ERUPTS on the street. He has flung himself once more into a terrifying battle and he is fighting for his life. GRUNTS OF EFFORT, THE FLAP OF CLOTHING, SCREAMS OF HATE, all carry through the open window.

As the battle outside rages, Sanataan calms, and Madhir turns her attention to softly stroking his head, her hands on him, her ears listening to the battle outside.

EXT. FRONT DOOR OF PATOORI HOME - AFTERNOON

MADHIR answers the door to ADITI, early 40s, a nicely dressed housewife, who stands respectfully at the door.

ADITI
Namaskaar.
(Greetings.)

MADHIR
Namaskaar.
(Greetings.)

ADITI
Sanataan, he is well?

MADHIR
He is receiving help.

ADITI
Aadarsh has found work in the city.
We are grateful.

MADHIR
Bhagavaan ka shukr hai.
(Thank God.)

Aditi is reluctant to come to the point, but she must.

ADITI
He works very hard. Sleep is needed
in the night.

Madhir waits, just looking at her, refusing to engage with this.

ADITI (CONT'D)
The hours are long.

Madhir stays silent. Aditi becomes embarrassed, though the message she wants delivered has been.

ADITI (CONT'D)
I wish Sanataan good health.

Aditi turns and Madhir shuts the door. She stands there, worried, then goes into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

MADHIR opens a kitchen cupboard and pulls out mismatched kitchen plates and glasses, evaluating them one at a time until she finds the best of each. She puts them on the table then goes to the refrigerator and begins to pull out meats, cheeses, fruits, drinks.

EXT. HOUSE - AFTERNOON

MADHIR comes out of the front door carrying the plate, now full of the best of the food she has. The glass is full of the best drink. She has changed into her best dress and made herself up.

She leaves through the gate to the road and sees the BEGGAR sitting, his eyes on the food and drink she carries, his back against the wall.

She kneels in front of him and offers him the food and drink.

MADHIR

Demon fighter. You honour my family.

The Beggar takes the plate and immediately starts to eat as he stares at her over the plate.

She bends, putting the glass on the ground in front of the Beggar. She lowers herself further, until her head touches the ground. She stays like that a moment, then rises, and with her eyes humbly on the ground, backs up, turns and leaves.

INT. HOSPITAL RECOVERY ROOM - NIGHT

MADHIR sits at the side of the hospital bed as SANATAAN sleeps after surgery. A NURSE comes in to check that all is well. It is, and she smiles to Madhir as she leaves. Madhir smiles in quiet happiness in return.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

ADITI and her husband AADARSH stand in the front yard of their house beside Madhir and Sanataan's, watching the ambulance gurney being rolled away from the wall to the waiting ambulance, the body quiet under the sheet.