

FILM

YATRA

Abhijit Ghosh-Dastidar

Goutam Ghose's "Yatra –A Journey" (Hindi, Colour, 130 mins) follows a writer's journey with memories and inner picturizations. A train cuts through the countryside, without any connection with the related plot. Writer Dashrath Joglekar (Nana Patekar) is at a book launch of his book 'Janaza'. He recognizes the eyes peering from a black 'burkha'. Later in the evening he joins his wife, Smita (Deepti Naval), his daughter (Anondee Ghose), and son (Romit Raj) at a supermarket, 'Central Bazar'. The writer is seized with thoughts on literature, culture and corporatization. A train again passes through the night, rural skyline. Telephone messages herald that Dashrath has been conferred the Sahitya Puroshkar award. There are telephone discussions on the separate status for literature.

At home the family is together, with Dashrath's mother (Bharati Devi). Smita has purchased a turtle artefact miniature. Dashrath is fond of his drinks. The story line in the Mumbai flat, cuts to a zooming train. Rains come in, along a classical music background. It is noisy within the flat, as the son plays zuzz drums, loudly. Dashrath has already started his new book, "I am a bazar". Soon Dashrath is on a train journey to Delhi, to receive his 'Sahitya' award. In the train compartment while drinking, Dashrath discusses his book, "Janaza" with Mohan, a young film maker. He retells Lajwanti's (Rekha) story, and the hero, Satish's (Nana Patekar) progress. Lajwanti, the courtesan, dances before a Sett (Chatta Sri Ramulu), in Adilabad. Sett, a politician, stirs a riot in the Reddy community. He marries Lajwanti, and keeps her in a mansion, as second wife. They make love, lustily. The flashblack presents Dashrath in an old building, with furniture scattered in the court-yard. The family is leaving Adilabad. Dashrath's mother and wife, Smita cry. Everything is left behind, and what remains is *maya*. It is a stormy night, and the family-members walk over dry fields, presented in sepia.

Sett brings along friends and the Distinct Collector to watch Lajwanti dancing, over a long drinking session. When the raucuous male spectators try to pull and drag her, with lurid screams, she protests and leaves the dance hall. She decides not to place her dancing art before animals. The Sett slaps her. That night leaving the Zamindar's mansion, Lajwanti walks along the river bank. Sett, the Collector and the other friends, chase her in a jeep and a motor-cycle. Lajwanti is gang raped, and the Sett supervises the assault. A lone tree in the backdrop bears witness as Lajwanti's scart flies off. Next morning Satish on a cycle finds Lajwanti on the river bank, and Lajwanti screams and runs, as a train passes over a bridge. School teacher, Satish brings home Lajwanti, where she is looked after by Satish's wife, Sharada (Deepti Naval). But Lajwanti remains silent, and throws away a glass of milk. Satish and Sharada watch in awe, when one morning Lajwanti sings. Below a large tree, Lajwanti plays blind buff games with Satish's small children. □□□