

THE PHONE BOOTH

(2006,06,19)

EXT. A CRANE SHOT OF BUSY STREETS OF JANAKPUR

CUT TO:

EXT. A STATIC LOW SHUTTEER SPEED SHOT OF A STREET IN JANAKPUR

CUT TO:

A MONTAGE OF A OLD MAN WALKING DOWN THE BUSY LANES OF  
JANAKPUR.

DUSTY LEGS, OLD JHOLA, AND TIRED EYES.

CUT TO:

THE MAN REACHING A KIRANA SHOP/ A PHONE BOOTH.  
MAN ASKS THE SHOPKEEPER, "(IN MAITHILI) BHAI, CAN I MAKE A PHONE  
CALL?"

THE SHOPKEEPER REPLIES, "(IN MAITHILI) DADA, HOW MANY TIMES WILL  
YOU RING THE PHONE WHEN YOU KNOW THAT HE IS NOT GOING TO  
ANSWER?"

THE MAN SMILES AND SAYS, "(IN MAITHILI) I KNOW THAT HE WILL  
NOT RESPOND BUT THESE CALLS SATISFY ME."

THE SHOPKEEPER REPLIES, "I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY MORE YEARS WILL  
YOU KEEP DIALING THIS PHONE TO A GHOST."

THE MAN DOESN'T REPLY AND PLACES A 5 RUPEE COIN ON THE  
COUNTER.

HE STARTS DIALING THE PHONE AND PICKS UP THE HANDSET.

STATIC, LONG AND LOUD STATIC, MAN'S EYES FILLED WITH HOPE AND  
DELUSION BUT HIDES A HINT OF REALITY.

THE PHONE BEEPS INDICATING THAT NO ONE RECEIVED THE CALL.

THE MAN STARTS SPEAKING, "(IN MAITHILI) NAMASTE BETA, I KNOW  
THAT YOU CANNOT HEAR WHAT I'M SAYING BUT I HAVE HOPE THAT ONE  
DAY YOU WILL RESPOND. THE COW GAVE BIRTH, ITS A BULL CALF.  
YOUR MOTHER USED TO SAY THAT BULL CALVES BEING BORN IS A BAD  
SIGN BUT OH WELL SHE ISN'T HERE TO REPEAT THAT. DO YOU  
REMEMBER YOUR OLDER COUSIN BIRAN? HE IS GETTING MARRIED NEXT

WEEK, THEY SENT ME AN INVITATION TOO BUT WHAT WILL I DO BY GOING THERE, EVERY ONE JUST TALKS ABOUT POLITICS NOWADAYS. I MADE A LOT OF BIGHAUTI FROM ITS MILK. I WAS ABOUT TO EAT IT BUT THEN I REMEMBERED THAT YOU LIKED (PAUSE) TO EAT THAT VERY MUCH. (WEEPING) I COULDN'T MAKE MYSELF TO EAT THAT. THE FIELDS ARE GOING DRY, MY OLD BODY AND MIND CANNOT UNDERSTAND PROPER IRRIGATION AND METHODS SO, THE FARM IS ROTTING. I JUST WISH THAT YOU COME HOME AGAIN AND SEE ME. I'M GETTING OLD SON, I'M SICK AND I MIGHT DIE ANYTIME NOW. (SOBBING) I WANT TO SEE YOU SON, I WANT TO SEE YOU ONE LAST TIME. PLEASE."

THE OLD MAN HANGS UP THE CALL AND SOBS FOR SOME TIME.

THE SHOPKEEPER TRIES TO CONSOLE HIM BY SAYING, "(IN MAITHILI) AREY DADA, WHAT'S THE POINT OF BEING SAD AT THIS AGE, YOU KNOW THAT HE IS HAPPY WITH HIS MOTHER AND HIS STEP-FATHER. IVE HEARD THAT HE HAS MOVED TO KOLKATA FOR STUDIES HE HAS FORGOTTEN YOU AND HERE YOU ARE SOBBING FOR A CHEATING WIFE AND A DISTANT SON."

THE MAN WIPES THE TEARS OFF HIS FACE AND PICKS HIS JHOLA AND STARTS MOVING.

THE TEEN KIDS SMOKING AND CHATTING SEE THE MAN AND SAY MOCKINGLY, "(IN MAITHILI) DADA, DID THE GHOST REPLY TODAY?"

THE KIDS ALL START LAUGHING AT THE OLD MAN'S DESPAIR.

CUT TO:

NEXT WEEK, (2006,06,26)

EXT. THE SAME STREET AS BEFORE  
THE SAME MAN, THE SAME ATTIRE JUST A DIFFERENT DAY.

MAN GETS TO THE SHOP AGAIN, "(IN MAITHILI) BHAI, I WANT TO MAKE A CALL."

THE SHOPKEEPER IS NOW SYMPATHIZING THE OLD MAN AND REPLIES, "(IN MAITHILI) DADA, YOU ARE COMING HERE FOR THE LAST 5 YEARS, EVERY WEEK, SPENDING FIVE RUPEES, JUST TO TALK TO YOURSELF. YOU ARE OLD NOW, YOU SHOULD REST NOW. YOU SHOULD NOT WAIT FOR HIM LONGER."

THE MAN TRIES TO IGNORE THE SHOPKEEPER BUT IS TOO TOUCHED BY  
THAT STATEMENT.

HE STILL PLACES A 5 RUPEE COIN AND PICKS UP THE HANDSET AND  
DIALS THE NUMBER.

AGAIN STATIC, LONG AND LOUD STATIC, MAN'S EYES FILLED WITH  
HOPE AND DELUSION BUT HIDES A HINT OF REALITY.

THE PHONE BEEPS INDICATING THAT NO ONE RECEIVED THE CALL.

THE MAN STARTS TALKING," (IN MAITHILI) I DO EXPECT EVERYTIME I  
CALL THAT YOU WILL PICK IT AND RESPOND. NOW EVEN I HAVE  
STARTED TO BELIEVE (PAUSE) THAT IT IS A MYTH AFTER ALL BUT IT'S  
ALRIGHT, YOU PROBABLY ARE HAPPY. MAYBE, THAT IS THE REASON  
THAT YOU HAVE NOT RESPONDED TO ANY OF MY CALLS IN THE LAST 5  
YEARS OR CALLED BACK. (PAUSE) THE HOUSE IS QUIET THESE DAYS,  
AFTER YOU LEFT (PAUSE) NOW EVEN MURLI DIED, THE LACK OF SOUND  
IN THE HOUSE WAS A LITTLE OVERCOMED BY (PAUSE) HIS BARKING BUT  
NOW EVEN HE IS NOT WITH ME ANYMORE. I AM LONELY SON. YOUR ROOM  
IS THE SAME AS YOU'VE LEFT IT, ALL YOUR TOYS, ALL YOUR PAPERS,  
ALL YOUR MESS, EVERYTHING IS JUST THE WAY THAT YOU LEFT IT.  
SOMETIMES I GO IN YOUR ROOM AND.....JUST SIT AND OBSERVE, THE  
HAPPINESS, THE CHEERFULNESS THAT YOU HAD BOUGHT. I SAW A BOY  
JUST LIKE YOU YESTERDAY ON THE BAAZAR, I WANTED TO CALL YOUR  
NAME OUT LOUD JUST TO SEE IF YOU WOULD RESPOND BUT (PAUSE). I  
KNOW YOU HAVE A NEW LIFE THERE, NEW PEOPLE, NEW HOUSE, NEW  
FRIENDS AND EVEN A NEW FATHER AND ITS OKAY, YOU DONT OWE ME  
ANYTHING (VOICE CRACK) BUT EVEN THEN JUST ONCE, I HOPE YOU  
PICK UP THE PHONE AND JUST BREATHE, JUST LET ME KNOW THAT YOU  
ARE ALIVE AND DOING WELL, (WEEPING) THAT IS ALL I WANT  
SON.....THAT IS ALL THAT I WANT. "

THE MAN STARTS TO WEEP AGAIN, AND THE SHOPKEEPER FEELS PITY ON  
THAT MAN BUT DOES NOT SAY ANYTHING.

THE MAN HAD EXCEEDED THE DURATION IN WHICH HE COULD TALK FOR  
FIVE RUPEES. SO HE REACHES INTO HIS KURTHA'S POCKET TO PAY  
AGAIN BUT AS HE IS ABOUT TO TAKE HIS HAND OUT OF HIS POCKET, A  
PICTURE FALLS FROM HIS POCKET. HE PICKS IT UP WITH HIS  
TREMBLING HANDS AND LOOKS AT THE PICTURE, ITS A PICTURE OF HIS  
SON.

CUT TO:

(FLASHBACK)

INT. THE OLD MAN'S HOUSE, NEAR MAIN DOOR.

THE MAN IS SOBBING IN A CORNER, WHILE THE CHILD IS BEING  
DRAGGED BY HIS MOTHER.

THE BOY CALLS FOR HIS FATHER, "BABA, BABA, BABA." WHILE BEING  
DRAGGED BUT THE MAN IS HELPLESS SO, HE CANNOT DO ANYTHING.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE THE KIRANA SHOP.

THE SHOPKEEPER CALLS THE MAN.

THE SHOPKEEPER SAYS, "DADA, TAKE YOUR CHANGE."

THE MAN TAKES THE CHANGE FROM HIM KEEPS IT IN HIS POCKET WITH  
THE PICTURE, PICKS HIS JHOLA AGAIN AND MAKES HIS WAY.

AS HE IS ABOUT TO LEAVE, THE PHONE RINGS.

THE MAN TURNS BACK AND STARES AT THE PHONE FOR A LONG TIME IN  
INDECISION BUT HIS IGNORANCE AND HIS LACK OF CONFIDENCE TO  
FACE HIS ESTRANGED SON AGAIN TAKES OVER HIM SO, HE TURNS IN  
DESPAIR AND CONTINUES WALKING ON HIS WAY.

PAN TO:

THE PHONE IS STILL RINGING.

THE PHONE KEEPS ON RINGING FOR A UNCOMFORTABLY LONG TIME. NO  
ONE PICKS UP THE PHONE.

AFTER A LONG RING, THE PHONE FINALLY GOES QUIET.

FADE OUT: