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Jagaddal, the unwieldy jalopy, is tied to the driver Bimal in an animate, human bond.

Such a pair of a man and a machine poses a problem for a taxi stand in a small town of Bihar. Bimal and Jagaddal inadvertently generate an antagonism of others towards themselves. The woman at the pan shop, the other taxi drivers and even the madman Bulaki ridicule this strange relationship. The old, veteran mechanic Gaur Mistry somehow manages to tolerate this eccentricity, though he repeatedly warns Bimal of the unwelcome consequences of such an infatuation. But there is one who senses the jalopy's mysterious humanness and its owner's instinctive response to it. It is the child Sultan, a helping hand at Gaur Mistry's. His is a child's perception not yet fully tainted by the adult sensibilities of possession and domination.

And what transpires between a ramshackle 1920 Chevrolet and its human counterpart? Well, as the rumour goes at the taxi stand, they are wedded to each other. Perhaps, it is indeed so, otherwise why should Jagaddal conspire with Bimal and indulge in shabby behaviour when the bridegroom and his uncle laugh at both and question their capabilities? Jagaddal glides gracefully like a Swan on the smooth tar road, but stops in rigid obstinacy and refuses to budge an inch in the thick of pelting rain on the craggiest possible mountainous track. Her vengeful spirit is appeased only when the faulting humans sigh and pant and push her out of the puddles and ditches. She vanquishes them; they are meek, silent and exhausted.

Bimal is ever grateful to her as she slogs day and night with her not-so youthful body, and fetches enough money to keep Bimal going from day to day. Moreover, in return, she either demands a bare minimum of fuel to traverse the length and breadth of that mountainous region or emits deep, satisfying, gurgling noises with a gulp of water only. 'I am poor and Jagaddal knows it,' sighs Bimal. 'Jagaddal is your mother, isn't she?' Bimal gazes thoughtfully at her when Sultan says so.

But all this does not end well. Bimal is suddenly drawn towards an attractive but deserted bride. He wants to follow the train taking her away from him. He comes to Jagaddal thinking of the other woman. The jalopy stares at her paramour's infidelity and asserts herself against him and refuses to get started. A harassed and inflamed Bimal kicks her for the first time. She responds to this direct and positive communication. Again as before she runs smooth and fast for a while, but then stops and remains immovable despite Bimal's attempts to start her.

A broken and vanquished Bimal gets drawn towards a mesmeric tribal procession. He drowns himself in this exoticism and the Bacchanalian obliviousness. The next day Bimal drags an invalid Jagaddal to the taxi stand amidst uproarious jeers and laughter. Now the people have an upper hand on Bimal's arrogance and irrationality.

Bimal suddenly realizes his waywardness and Jagaddal's anguish at it. He is bent on rectifying it. Jagaddal must be put on the road hale and hearty. Thus Bimal plunges into an absurd fight for survival—more for the jalopy than for himself. He fritters away his life's savings buying new parts for the car. He simply turns a deaf ear to Gaur Mistry when he tries to put sense into him.

One fine morning, Jagaddal stages a comeback to the taxi stand first making its cackling klaxon call, then displays its *robe blanche* to a dumbfounded crowd. Gaur Mistry blinks twice unbelievably, then his veteran cars pick up the fault in Jagaddal. Bimal too detects a disconcerting screech inside the cab.

Bimal takes her far away on the hills to perform a last test drive or a test of his lost faith. He piles huge boulders on her rear seat and shifts into gears. Jagaddal momentarily revives into animation and then slides back downhill. Then she stops, never to move again. An appalled Bimal savagely hits the window-screen and breaks into a helpless moaning.

A scrap dealer almost reluctantly takes away the last remains of Jagaddal at two rupees a maund. Bimal somehow copes with this heart-breaking parting and gracefully bids farewell to Jagaddal. 'Good bye, my dear. I bear no grudge against you.' She is gone, but did he hear her calling him? No, it's a child gleefully sounding the horn of the now-departed Jagaddal. Bimal smiles at him with tears in his eyes.