

#PARENTING

Tips for Travelling with Toddlers

There are plenty of ways you can make travelling with toddlers and young kids much easier.



Holidays with babies and toddlers are very different to the trips you took while child-free. At 10am, when you previously might have been stirring from sleep or quietly reading newspapers over the breakfast buffet, you'll now be at the local playground, having already been up for four hours. At 7pm, where you previously might have been considering an aperitif before heading for a sumptuous dinner, you'll now be wielding your phone torch trying to navigate round a hotel room and find the balcony without waking your kid up.

However, that's not to say holidays with little kids can't be fun! Not relaxing or course but enjoyable as you get to explore new places through their eyes and spend time with your child without everyday responsibilities to worry about. Plus there are plenty of ways you can make travelling with toddlers and young kids much



easier as we've discovered. Read on for our top tips for holidaying with little ones.

Consider Timings Carefully

Let's talk travel times. In the olden days, getting a super early or late flight to save a few quid was probably worth it, but once you add in the extra stress of grumpy kids, it might not be. Also, it's a good idea to choose a flight that incorporates some of their nap or sleep time - we can't dream of 20 minutes peace to read a magazine, right? Whether it's a hired car or specific train, make sure you have a plan for when you arrive at your destination because flapping around wondering how to get to your hotel with a boisterous toddler in tow will not be fun.

Plan, Plan, Plan

Forget the old days where you could just fling loose t-shirts and some sun cream in your suitcase ten minutes before leaving for the airport - travelling with babies or toddlers requires some military-style

planning. Make a list of everything you'll need with plenty of time to spare and physically tick things off as you put them in the suitcase. You will probably find that after spending days packing for your children you suddenly remember yourself and end up with one pair of shorts and an old T-shirt for the entire holiday - que sera, sera.

Get a Lightweight Buggy

A huge recommendation for this one, particularly if you are flying. There are some absolutely brilliant buggies these days that are super lightweight and fold down into neat little packages that you can slot into the overhead lockers on a plane (which means you don't have to leave your buggy outside the doors to be shoved in with all the other luggage).

Think Through the Entertainment

Did you know a toddler's attention span is so small it's actually invisible to the human eye? Okay, we are joking, but you know what we mean. Always pack more entertainment options than you think you might need (the same goes for plane snacks - think about it, a reasonable amount, then double it). Good options for a plane include story books, colouring, some magic water books and pop it sensory toys. Unless you are completely anti-screen this is best as a good time to crack out the cartoons.

Invest in the Right Gear

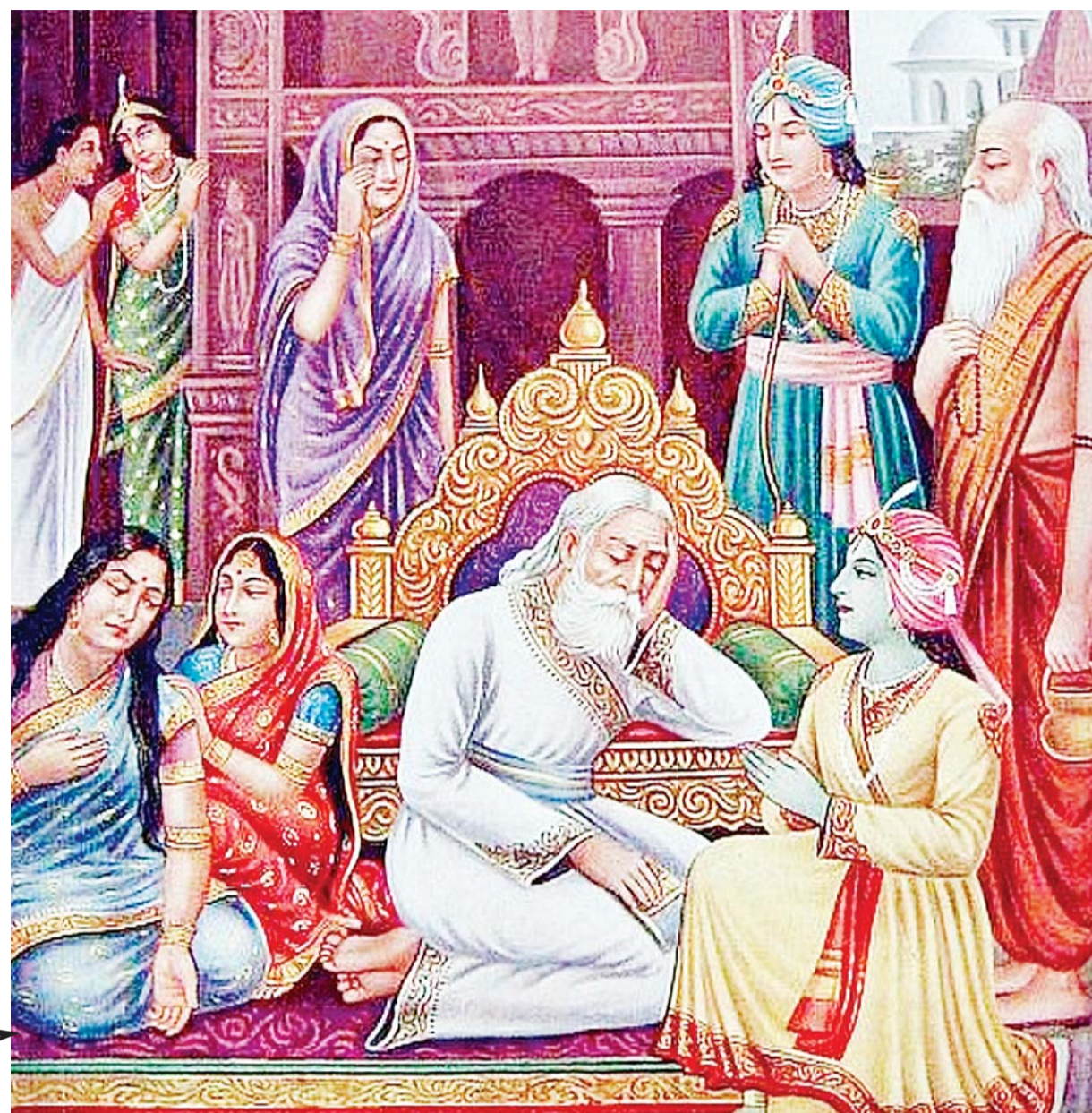
Right from babyhood, there's a seemingly endless supply of 'must-have' gear that comes with kids and a high percentage of if you can actually do without. However, a few products are actually turned out to be very useful for us when travelling with toddlers. These include a portable black-out blind so you can block out blazing sunshine at bedtime and for kids still sliding off a normal seat, this pack-away high chair.

Forget Perfection

We're constantly bombarded these days with images of perfect parenthood - Instagram snaps of grinning families cavorting around the beach or perfectly-dressed mothers clutching a toddler as they look out into the sunset. Remember, that's only a snapshot of most people's holidays - they're probably got just as many tantrums, arguments and nap-refusing monsters to deal with as you have. Holidaying with little ones is not going to be perfect, but if you can embrace the joyful moments and let yourself mope on quickly from any tension, you'll have a fabulous time and plenty of brilliant memories to look back on.

We have heard of love stories of Laila-Majnu, Romeo-Juliet and many more where lovers are forever young and perpetually in love, and even die young. But, what happens if you grow old with your love? Does the love stay young or does the passion transform to an equally ardent abhorrence or does old age take away all that desire and leave you with a resigned acceptance of your fate and partner?

King Dasharatha grieves inconsolably at his obligation to banish Rama to the forest.



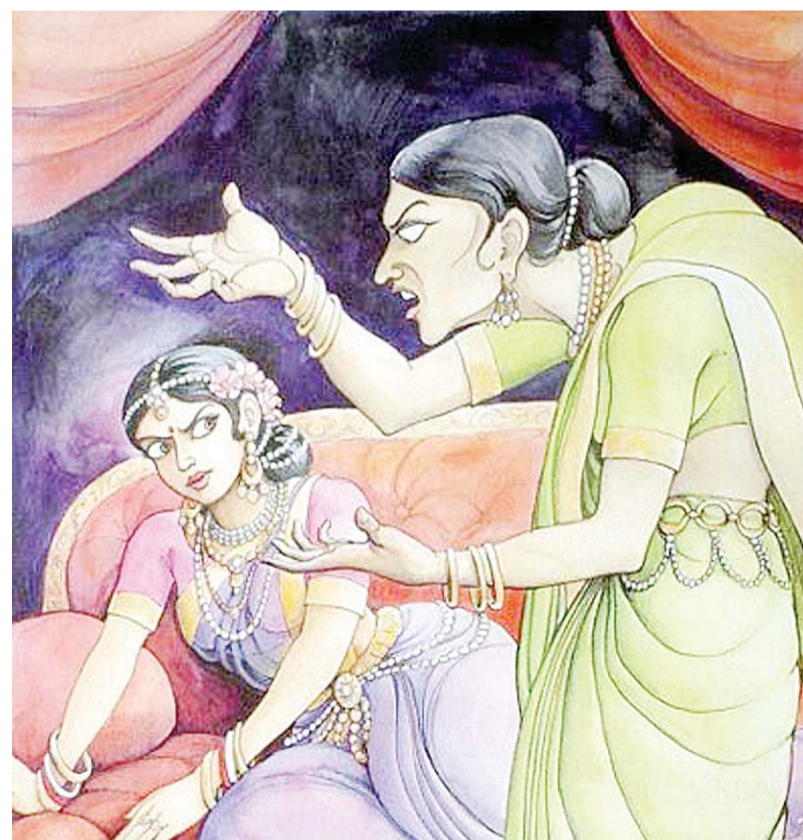
From passion to resigned acceptance



Shania Kapur
The writer is a translator of a lover of classics

Given the position that elders hold in our society, be it as parents or teachers or political leaders, you would imagine that, traditionally, we do not participate in the cult of the young and lovely. In the stories that we valorise and tell over and over again, age takes precedence over beauty, wisdom is more important than energy. But despite the apparent respect we have for older people, we don't have many stories about how people age in love and in togetherness or how they adjust to a world that changes around them. Our love stories Nala and Damayanti, Savitri and Satyavan, Rama and Sita, are all about young people, their love in its first rosy flush, their romance in its first delicate bloom. Heer-Ranjha, Laila-Majnu are interrupted by death before they can be reunited and grow old together. They remain forever young - forever in love.

The young and the beautiful
In Sanskrit stories, lovers are almost always described in formulaic phrases that translate as 'endowed with youth and beauty'. We rarely hear about them as older people who have learnt that a rose has thorns; that there is a pain not only in separation but in love itself. Of course, we do not expect the gods to age but we know nothing of how mortal lovers in these stories age together. We don't even know if they age like us, with grey hair and wrinkles and creaky bones. The universe of 'story literatures' tends to be more realistic in terms of older people falling in love. But the older woman who falls in love with a younger man, even if she is a courtesan becomes a laughing stock while the older man besotted with his young wife (who is usually



Envious Manthara sways Kaikeyi.

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#TRANSIT
ples grew old together: Gautama turned his young and lovely wife into a stone because she had sought a more attractive lover and Vishwamitra abandoned both Menaka and their daughter in his quest for ascetic superiority.
The heartbreaks
Where we do encounter husbands and wives growing old together is in the Ramayan and the Mahabharata, the epics remain silent on how old couples actually are - we calculate through other indications that Rama is about 16 when he marries Sita and that he is about 24 when he goes into exile. The hyperbolic Bala Kanda of Valmiki's Ramayan tells us that Dasharatha is 60,000 years old when his children are born, but in the more reasonable and realistic Ayodhya Kanda, when Dasharatha is ready to crown young Rama he tells the assembled kings that he wants to give up his duties because he's grown old in the shadow of the royal umbrella. Although Dasharatha has three wives, it is clear that in these later years of his life, it is Kaikeyi who has the king's heart. Kaikeyi summons Dasharatha after his proclamation of Rama's coronation. Innocent of the cataclysm that awaits him, he enters the room and sees her lying on the floor. "He caressed her gently, with deep humility, as a tuskier might stroke his mate who has been injured by a hunter's arrow. The lovelorn king spoke anxiously... "Could I have displeased you in any

way?...Is there anything I can do to make you happy? Would you like an innocent man punished? Or a guilty man set free? I will do anything you ask, even give up my life!" ...Dasharatha, who was held completely in thrall by his younger wife, smiled and said: "...You know how much I love you. Ask me for anything and lift my heart from the depths of despair: I swear by all the merit I have earned for my good deeds that I shall do whatever you ask!" Dasharatha, the noble, wise and just king, is willing to stake his reputation in this world and his merit in the next world just to keep his young wife happy. Perhaps because it is with her that he feels young and loved, a man rather than a king.

In the throes of passion

The king's infatuation appears to be a well-known fact in the palace, judging from Lakshmana's reaction to the news of Rama's exile. He says to Kaushalya, "I do not like the fact that Rama has to give up the kingdom and go into the forest because of a woman's whim. The king is old and senile, and succumbs to his lust. Who knows what he might say in the throes of passion!"

A mother's agony

Kaushalya, Dasharatha's senior wife and royal consort, is painfully aware of her own place in the king's life and heart. When Rama tells her that he is going into exile, Kaushalya is devastated. She says, "Earlier too, I had neither the good fortune nor the happiness of being my husband's favourite. But I waited for the joy that would arise from

arms, rejecting the other woman to whom he had previously surrendered in a similar way. As with Gandhari and Dhritarashtra in the Mahabharat, the ageing king and queen in the Ramayan come together with resignation rather than love, with an acceptance that one's old age should be spent with familiar if not beloveds, with a weary gratitude rather than with a remembered passion. They mourn the loss of their children together, a bond that far exceeds any other infatuation or distraction. After the bloody war is over in the Mahabharat, Kunti walks with Gandhari and Dhritarashtra towards a blazing forest and we assume that all three are consumed in those flames. Dasharatha dies soon after Rama's departure but Kaushalya is reinstated as the Queen Mother after his death.

The last years

This picture of how people spend their later years is not the most exciting. But set this against the prescription of vanaprastha, the forest life suggested for those who have fulfilled their worldly responsibilities - married off their children, paid their debts, settled their dues, both karmic and temporal and perhaps the lack of continued romance has a larger context. Older people retire from domesticity and while they might continue to live together, their focus shifts away from each other.

A celibate togetherness

Layer this further with the ideal of asceticism and celibacy, and you can imagine that older people are



The Death of King Dasharatha, the Father of Rama. A folio from Ramayana.

the birth of a son. Though I am superior to all the king's other wives, I have had to tolerate many remarks from them that have wounded me deeply. Whose sorrow could be greater than mine? I have been insulted while you are still here. Imagine what will happen when you are gone!"

Love begets hate

Sumitra, the mother of the twins, Lakshmana and Shatrughna, is practically non-existent in the story and it is to Kaushalya that Dasharatha turns when Rama leaves the city. As the three queens lead him back into the palace, he lashes out at Kaikeyi, "Do not touch the assembled kings that he wants to give up his duties because he's grown old in the shadow of the royal umbrella. Although Dasharatha has three wives, it is clear that in these later years of his life, it is Kaikeyi who has the king's heart. Kaikeyi summons Dasharatha after his proclamation of Rama's coronation. Innocent of the cataclysm that awaits him, he enters the room and sees her lying on the floor. "He caressed her gently, with deep humility, as a tuskier might stroke his mate who has been injured by a hunter's arrow. The lovelorn king spoke anxiously... "Could I have displeased you in any

certainly expected to turn away from each other's physicality and sublimate whatever sexual desire they might have had for each other. Rama and Sita meet many sages and their wives during their time in the forest. These virtuous couples live simple lives in peaceful communities with other people like themselves; their days and nights punctuated by the rituals of fasting and praying. The sages are wise and mellow (unlike Durvasa, Narada and Vishwamitra, who are not married), their wives are gentle, providing succour as well as companionship. While the setting for their lives might be idyllic, it might even be an appropriate preparation for the great journey ahead, it is anything but romantic.

Spectrums of love

It's probably worthwhile to remember that what we find in the Hindu epics and Sanskrit literature are descriptions of upper-caste lives and loves, pertaining to Brahmins and Kshatriyas primarily, and perhaps a merchant or two. Our robust folk tales, which come from across the spectrum of caste, class and creed, possibly speak of a more lively future for those of us who continue to love and lust into our old age.

Resigned tenderness

Dasharatha's last days are filled with a tenderness for a wife he never loved but who stood by him despite that. Kaushalya's bitterness is eased somewhat by the fact that her husband eventually died in her

World UFO Day

If you're a fan of little green men, you're going to be stoked for World UFO Day. One of these days we just know that we're going to finally meet our neighbours in the universe and that day will be phenomenal beyond imagination. Whether they're flying around in saucer shaped vessels or something more akin to the massive ships we've seen in Independence Day (1996 film), their arrival is going to change the way everyone views the universe. Let's just hope they're friendlier than those tentated beasts from Independence Day!

#MOVIE REVIEW

Thar: a saga of crime & retribution

Thar
Director: Raj Singh Chaudhary
Production: Anil Kapoor Films and Communication Network
Starring: Anil Kapoor, Harshvardhan Kapoor, Fatima Sana Sheikh, Satish Kaushik
Cinematography: Shreya Dev Dube
Genre: Thriller, Western
Streaming: Netflix

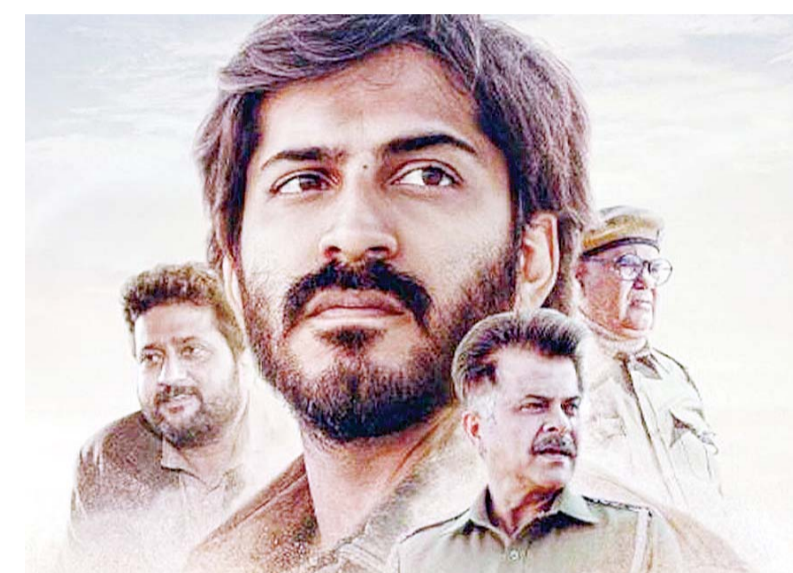


Dr. Nilanjana Mukherjee
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Bhagat Singh College
University of Delhi

The Western is a movie genre which particularly came up in Hollywood in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries dealing with the 'Wild West' or the 'Old West'. The Westerns came up as a major defining genre of the American movie industry depicting themes about the conquest of wild western frontiers of America.

Recognised by their racy, pulsating plots of crime, thrills, intrigue and action, cinema of this kind were pictured on rugged landscapes, invigorated by cigar chewing tough men on dust-stirring, galloping horses donning cowboy hats, rolled up sleeves and roughshod boots. In a way, this kind of cinema glamorised a colonial-patriarchal control of an unclaimed, uncharted landscape, which was essentially perceived as a wasteland, until it could be owned, occupied and tamed by a disciplining territorial gaze. This genre was adapted in a variety of ways all over the world including in India. One of India's most iconic movies, Sholay (and the one, present movie under discussion, refers to several occasions) can be squarely placed in the category of the Dacoit Western. It is a bit uncanny, however when the Westside is packaged and comes home as a Neo Western Noir adapted to include the rugged West of India: the arid terrain of the Western part of Rajasthan, the Thar Desert. Yet, the landscape showcased here is very different from the usual sand desert which exists in popular mainstream Indian cinema.

Filmed in locations across Pali and Udaipur districts of Rajasthan, the movie showcases an alternative geography to the sandy dunes or the Rajpootana splendour, usually associated with the state of Rajasthan. The biggest merit of this movie is its cinematography, a combination of slick camera work and captivating drone shots which glide over horizons, capturing kilometres of empty land, devoid of vegetation, untrammelled by people's presences.



The very first scene of the movie and its introductory voice over gives a historical context to this location. The people of this settlement are likened to the ever-shifting grains of sand, who with the Partition of India, have crossed over from the other side to settle on the Indian side of the border. The hamlet is jerked out of its inertia when a couple of murders take place.

Historical Context

The narrative unfolds through the perspective of Police Inspector Surekha Singh played by Anil Kapoor whose many conversations with his aide, Bhure, played by Satish Kaushik, propels the investigation forward. As the plot unfolds one finds this settlement at the centre stage of a network of crime. At one level, it is caught in the racket of cross border narco smuggling. But that too is only on the surface. At a deeper level, there is an undertone of a more rooted malaise connecting it to the dark urban underbellies, marked with crime and murk of the most heinous nature.

The barren region's nemesis is the presence of rapacious migrant men who go off to the cities on questionable callings of undisclosed work and of the identity. Bhure and Inspector Singh's friendship and camaraderie provide the most endearing moments in the film jogging our memories of Mr. India. Both Anil Kapoor and Satish Kaushik play their parts convincingly. Harshvardhan Kapoor's Siddharth, is however, the most difficult to come to terms with. He is meant to be this enigmatic swashbuckling stranger with dark secrets but only appears to be an expressionless urban gentleman with deep innocent eyes. His menacing and repugnant actions in the story are a mismatch with his meek and subdued performance. It is for Anil Kapoor's Inspector Singh, then to assume the role of the freebooting hero of the Westerns, albeit a desi version, riding along the desert in his bullet, sun glasses and leather jacket, noting things down in his tiny red hardbound notebook at the fog end of his long stint as Inspector of this region. He shoulders much of the responsibility of his production's success on his own but with elan.



Anil Kapoor & Harshvardhan Kapoor in Thar.

carcass, eyes open and fixated, punctuate the narrative. The gliding eagle over miles of empty nothingness below are equally breath-taking. The cruelty of the landscape is matched with the depictions of heartless violence. Thar becomes the eponymous protagonist of the movie. As referred to earlier, the barrenness, destitution and infertility of the landscape resonates with the barrenness of the female body here until a retributive action remedies the wrong. The genre of the Western with its reverberating theme of control of wild geographies, becomes all the more appropriate in this way.

Friendship and Camaraderie

It feels strange also to see rural Rajasthan women in full public gaze, without veils and men without their usual caste marker pagris. In fact, there is little reference to caste in the dialogues too. In a society which is ridden with caste practices till today the idea of a historical setting goes for a toss because one would expect visibility of such practices in a much more obvious way. There are a few references to caste in the forbidden inter-caste love affair, in one of the early scenes, and later in Bhure's love for his uniform which allows him to elite caste



Fatima Sana Sheikh in Thar.

Revenge Tragedy

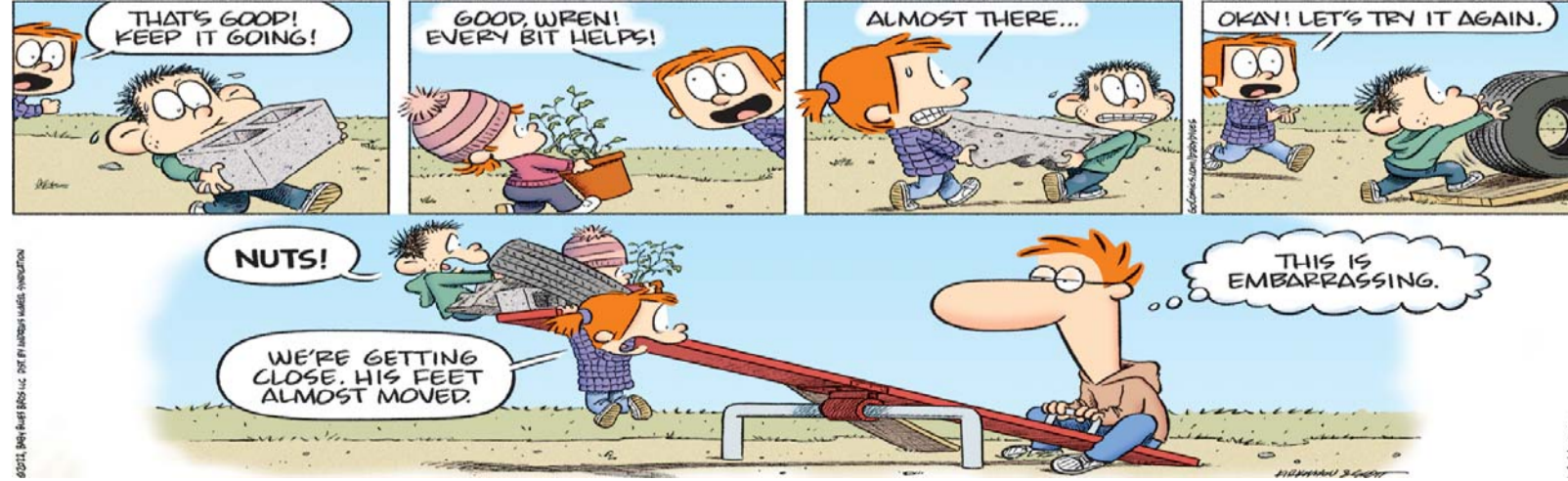
This movie is also a revenge tragedy. In a regimen which begets and justifies crime against crime, the violence perpetrated by an outsider is ostensibly legitimised as a reaction to an earlier one. What is interesting here is a recognisable pattern of an age-old presumption about equating migrancy with discipline, lawlessness and moral degradation. Just as the British colonial law implicated mobile people from this region with penal categories of criminal status on paper by notifying them so, such free moving people who become part of a fluctuating urban labour class are no less seen with suspicion even to this day. Unfortunately, cinematic representations often reinforce such stereotypes. Panna (played by Jitendra Joshi) and his friends are migrants who can go to any length for money or fall to any degree for lust.

Director Raj Singh Chaudhary's personal acquaintance with the place adds another dimension to this scenery. Captured over a time lapse the poignantly haunting scenes of a slowly dying, static and lifeless bison, reducing into a

THE WALL



BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman