

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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GENESIS (1986)

Mrinal Sen (1923-2018)

Hindi language

Film link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqwfNDJNAvk>

OVERVIEW

Director Mrinal Sen made his first feature film in 1953 but was slow to come into success as his first few films didn't fare well at the box office. Eventually, he tasted both success and controversy with *Baishey Sraavan* (*Wedding Day*, 1960) and *Aakash Kusum* (*Up in the Clouds*, 1965). Soon after, *Mr. Bhuvan Shome* (1969), a landmark film, radically altered new cinema and art-house cinema in India. Other films such as *Mrigayaa* (*The Royal Hunt*, 1976) and *Aakaler Sandhane* (*In Search of Famine*, 1980) still retain their impact. Sen won awards at all the major international film festivals, including Cannes, Venice and Berlin. His films usually have a signature shock treatment style that is both cerebral and hard-hitting, coupled with technical jugglery and gimmicks. He was both loved and hated for his uncompromising political stance and critique of the contemporary communist government in West Bengal. Along with Satyajit Ray and Ritwick Ghatak, Sen is considered one of the trio of great Indian filmmakers both domestically and internationally.

Film In 1985, Sen was quite unexpectedly approached by the French Minister of Culture, Jack Lang, to make a film funded by them (via Scarabee Films); later, the project became multinational, with Belgium (Les Films de la Dreve) and Switzerland (Cactus Films) also promising to finance the film. As it was to be an international collaboration, Sen felt that he needed a story with a broader, more timeless scope than the typical problems of the Bengali middle-class that he had focused on recently. Also, inspired by pioneer filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein's plans to make a film on *Das Capital*, Sen wanted to make a film based on the origins of family, property and state as analysed in Friedrich Engels's 1884 book on the subject. He also wanted to work on Samaresh Basu's short story, *Utaria* ("One who overcomes"). Together with Mohit Chattopadhyay, Sen came up with the script for *Genesis*, by far the most striking instance of "decolonization of the mind" in Sen's oeuvre.

Background Finding the perfect location which could serve as a cradle for civilization on the ruins of another proved to be a challenge; it was by sheer luck that Sen was led to an abandoned village far from Jaisalmer, Rajasthan, in western India, which serves as the primary location. It was locally infamous as a cursed village: in fact, Sen himself, along with three other core crew members, narrowly escaped death when unexploded dynamite almost blew them apart after the Border Security Force had cleared the location after the last shot. No one could provide an explanation for this near-tragedy that put all except Sen in the hospital.

Despite the prestigious international collaboration, *Genesis* faced several problems and failed to perform as expected. Both France and Belgium's agencies insisted that he complete post-production work there; the language barrier and varied work culture made that a difficult and time-consuming task for Sen. Further, as it was an international collaboration, the film could not be screened at the Indian National Awards, which had become a staple for Sen. In fact, the film was never released commercially in India, much to Sen's dissatisfaction and regret, as his Indian partner Ramasamy ran into some financial difficulties at the time. The film remains unreleased in India to date. At Cannes, too, the film got a poor reception, with critics and audience remaining unimpressed by the film. At home, actor Naseeruddin Shah raged against the film in strong language, calling it a "load of crap" and neither he nor Om Puri worked with Sen again. Only Shabana Azmi would feature in Sen's next film.

SYNOPSIS

Two men, Farmer and Weaver, somehow escape the clutches of an oppressive Owner (feudal lord/ Seth) and set up their own little compound in the ruins of a village in the middle of a desert. They are best of friends, though that is revealed more in their constant bickering. Each works hard at his trade;

watering and planting seeds in the barren soil or weaving blankets. Trader is their sole, occasional visitor. Trader brings them essential commodities like food from the city and also seeds for Farmer and yarn for Weaver.

Suddenly, one day, a refugee woman comes to their homestead. She has escaped a flood and epidemic which killed her husband and child. After some initial hesitancy, the men accept her into their household and all three of them live a more-or-less content life, though she is usually morose in nature. The woman takes on many chores and helps the men in their trades. One day, she tells the men that Trader is taking advantage of them and reaping a huge profit from their labour which he doesn't share with them and that there is more to life than survival. Trader, for his part, also sows seeds of discontent and insinuates that she is a barrier in their friendship. Farmer and Weaver should be grateful to Trader for taking care of them, he says, and for keeping predators away from their village with rumours of curses and ghosts. Eventually, the woman accepts the sexual advances of both Farmer and Weaver and soon gets pregnant, which the men initially celebrate. However, needed by Trader, Farmer confronts the woman about whether the child is his; Weaver also asks her the same question. They have an ugly and heated altercation; Farmer calls her a "whore" and wants nothing to do with her "bastard spawn". The woman tells them, sadly, that they are making the same mistake as Owner by claiming ownership over the child as it shouldn't matter whose it is; in fact, if anything, it is hers. She leaves that night, just as she had arrived, with a small sack of her own belongings. The next day, discovering her absence, the men argue again and come to blows. Suddenly, they are ambushed by Trader leading a group of mercenaries on camels. After a one-sided fight, they are tied up with ropes, possibly to be sold into lifelong indentured labour. The parable-like, medieval (almost timeless) setting of the narrative is unexpectedly fractured by modern construction equipment which razes the ruins to the ground.

CHARACTERS [Note: no personal names are used]

Farmer	played by Naseeruddin Shan
Weaver	played by Om Puri
Woman	played by Shabana Azmi
Trader	played by M.K. Raina

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

The woman

The unnamed woman is a refugee and migrant, having lost her family and entire village to floods and the resulting epidemic. She arrives suddenly one morning to Farmer and Weaver's compound and just as suddenly leaves one night.

Determined Soon after she arrives, we hear her heart-wrenching story; she, after losing her husband and child, escaped from a flood and an epidemic— village after village of stinking, rotten corpses of humans and animals alike— almost by sheer strength of will as the idea of becoming a stinking corpse herself disgusted her. So she kept walking and walking and reached the compound purely by chance.

Morose The woman is of a morose, melancholy nature, perhaps due to her life circumstances; we rarely see a glimpse of a smile from her. When she meets initial resistance/ hesitancy from the men in accepting her, she starts walking again, this time to the nearby crematorium, so that she could finally die. Even after she is accepted, she mostly keeps her to herself and doesn't engage much in the men's typical jollity.

Nurturing The woman tells us that she was a loving mother and wife in her past life and assumes a gender-typical role in the compound. She cooks for the men, grinds grain, helps them plant seeds and weave yarn, fetches water and so on; though of course the men do many of those tasks in turn, as well. Further, she is a symbol of fertility in the barren landscape; her arrival brings a heavy rain and a bountiful harvest is matched by her pregnancy. Trader even commends her for "making men" out of Farmer and Weaver.

Insightful She is extremely, somewhat uncharacteristically, insightful about how the world works, though this would ultimately end up being a reason behind the end of the compound. By pointing out to the men that Trader was cheating them all along and that they deserved a better life, she may have sown seeds of greed in them— this is, of course, assuming that the men were total

simpletons who had no idea that could be the case. But her accusation causes a chain reaction when Farmer and Weaver confront Trader and the latter finally decides that leaving the compound alone, as he had done so far, just wasn't worth it any more. She also alerts the men about the degradation of their own morals once they start bringing her little gifts. Where once they were best of friends, they now lie to each other and keep secrets. And at the end, she makes the most impact by her insightful and sophisticated argument about the men's ownership over the unborn child, which somewhat contradicts her earlier position on the men having more right to the fruits of their own labour, as in owning private property. While there can be no qualitative comparison between a towel and an unborn child, the issue is the same: both are fruits of the men's labour on which they should have some claim. But she negates their claims altogether once she herself is disrespected and leaves, rather than continue to be insulted.

Farmer

Farmer occupies more screen time than Weaver and acts as a foil to him. He is impulsive and spontaneous; quite easily roused to emotion and has severe anger management issues.

Angry Anger is Farmer's most predominant expression of emotion. For example, when he encounters the woman for the first time, he is brusque and rude, almost scaring her off. He shouts at his compatriots numerous times and often resorts to violence, like breaking apart the swing that they had made for her and dashing her anklets to the ground.

Spontaneous Farmer is spontaneous in everything he does, from picking up a skull on whim as a macabre role-playing toy (the scene was inspired by *Hamlet*) to shouting and running joyously through the fields that he had sown and watered to a plentiful harvest. He is also generally light-hearted (unless he's angry) and enjoys visiting the fairground and his isolated life in general.

Jealous Farmer is easily aroused to jealousy and suspicion, as well, even before the woman arrives on the scene. He is quite dissatisfied with Trader and complains to Weaver about him, and is only partially assuaged by Weaver's assurances. And once both men become enamoured of the woman, raging jealousy is only a step away as they begin lying to each other and keeping secrets. In fact, insulting the woman was perhaps more an act of jealousy than any upholding of male ego, as it is clear that Farmer loves Weaver as a friend and brother and by that token, should have been a little more open to disregarding the child's paternity.





THEMES

Parable In contrast to Sen's previous films which are firmly tied to their context (late 20th century Kolkata/urban India), *Genesis*, as its name suggests, is an exploration of spaces, times, people, characteristics, plot and ethics that are almost timeless or eternal. The parable-like nature of the narrative is underscored by every single on-screen element. The space itself, the desolate ruins of a long-forgotten village in the middle of an arid wasteland and surrounded by desert, is almost untouched by civilization and an apt, isolated cradle for beginnings and endings, cut off from the rest of the world. There is little indication, until the very end of the film, as to when this story takes place— it could have happened at practically any time after the rise of the feudal system. Likewise, the peripheral spaces, events and characters are also almost timeless, such as the entertainment and wares sold at the dusty village fairground, the mercenaries on camels and the Owner's minions taking down the thumbprints of many villagers who willingly sell themselves into indentured labour. Further, Farmer and Weaver ply their old-as-time trades with antiquated implements and the woman also assumes a very conservative role. This leads to more streamlining and starkness in the plot and lends story elements a symbolic quality that is hard to miss. For instance, both Farmer and Weaver agree, at the beginning and the end of the woman's time with them, that accepting her was "The First Sin". Biblical symbolism is also strong in the appearance of the snake at two crucial points, foretelling betrayal and dissonance insofar as the core characters, Farmer and Weaver, are concerned. Then there is the striking symbolic association between the woman and nature in terms of fertility: she appears right after a bout of heavy rains drench the earth for sowing seeds and she literally drives the men to a fruitful harvest (as seen in the most iconic photograph from the film), both on the land and in her womb. All these elements build towards making the convoluted central issue, "ownership" over the unborn child, a little more believable. The woman makes an extremely sophisticated feminist argument about why it's irrelevant who the father of the child is; to demonstrate that level of resistance towards both patriarchy and feudalism is otherwise almost unimaginable in a woman of her class and circumstances.

Power- Oppression Like "Big Brother", Owner's power is almost limitless yet mostly invisible, unless one is in its direct path. *Genesis* begins and ends with two heart-wrenching events of oppression, quite unlike Sen's typical intellectual and non-melodramatic treatment of story elements. The film begins with row upon row of villagers selling themselves into indentured labour in exchange for subsistence living. One by one, they line up and mark their thumbprints in ink on a blank scroll of paper, that the Seth (Owner) can fill out with whatever details he wishes. The helplessness and exploitation are subtle yet striking, especially when, a little later, Farmer and Weaver joke with the

skull about taking its thumbprint in exchange for a drink of water. The ending scene, set again the film's plot of mostly serene imagery, thus strikes with a visceral impact: a group of men riding camels and shooting guns invade the Farmer and Weaver's compound. Then we see Trader, the Judas, pointing a gun at them and ordering the mercenaries to beat and tie them up. Farmer and Weaver flail around and fight with the men in the dust, but they are quickly and efficiently restrained and tied up with rope. Trader rages on about how he was keeping the greedy Owner away from Farmer and Weaver, but they angered him and this is just deserts for them and so on. Farmer and Weaver initially became friends and found the desolate ruins and lived together in extreme hardship for only one reason, so that they did not become anyone's slaves— thus their final enslavement is as ironic as it is unexpected. Was this ending of their lives a just retribution for their insult of the woman? The film leaves that question open-ended.

Class- Marxist ideologies *Genesis* has largely been lauded or derided, depending on the critic, as “a small, hard, unflawed gem of movie” (Alexander Walker) or a “regression (and an) awful kind of...Marxist primer” (M.K. Raghavendra). The events and characters arguably move according to Engels's theory of the emergence of private property and the nuclear family. A dialectal movement is also identifiable: the creation of the paradise-like compound is the thesis. Trader offering money to the men is the antithesis. And the final destruction is the synthesis. Introducing the concept of money and a standard of living beyond bare subsistence is quite literally, the “root of all evil” in the film. In the beginning, there was only exchange in kind between the Farmer and Weaver unit and Trader. But as soon as Farmer and Weaver get a bit of extra money, they start buying small trinkets for the woman (like the vermilion *alta* and a set of pretty anklets) and hiding these little gifts from each other, something that the woman notes, with sadness and regret. Of course, money doesn't only mean economic independence but also ownership. The moment Farmer and Weaver start buying gifts for her, she becomes akin to a possession and any prior sense of equality is lost. At the end, Trader is easily able to ambush them and take over the compound because of the infighting, proving another Marxist axiom: exploitation by the capitalist Owner becomes possible when there is lack of unity amongst the working class. This is what the woman meant when she told the men in no uncertain terms “the enemy is within”. Indeed, the eloquent rebuttal that the woman presents to the men's slander about her character and ownership over the child borders on textbook Marxist feminism and a symbolic return to matrilineal roots: as the child is within her body, she is, for the time being, its sole owner and protector. That said, for Sen, whose aim was to show contemporary action within the framework of a parable, the application of Marxist principles mattered more than the theory.

Marriage Gender roles and the depiction of polyamory or polyandry possibly remains the most shocking element in *Genesis* for its audience, for whom patriarchal-capitalist-heterosexual monogamy over all other kinds of romantic and sexual relationships largely remains the norm. Even setting aside core tenets of Marxist feminism which inspired Sen, it is clear that the parable-like, near-archetypical format also supports exploration of these alternative gender roles and expressions. The men, driven by the need for a gentler human connection and sex quickly develop a soft spot for her, each in his own way. The woman, for her part, keeps her sexual relationship with both men under wraps, but accepts them both equally without preference. As such, the relationships here are reminiscent of some imaginations of a communist utopia with “free sex” and non-nuclear households; there is also the unmissable parallel to *Mahabharata*'s Draupadi-Pandavas relationship. In the ancient epic, the Pandava brothers were ordered by their mother to wed Draupadi and bed her in turn. The brothers evolved a complex system to keep things as respectable as possible; in fact, Arjun accidentally violated one of these tenets of respectability and had to remain in exile for years disguised as a woman, Brihannala— considered the archetypical Indian transgender. Although in *Genesis*, the violation of the woman's respectability leads to a different kind of exile altogether: she leaves, rather than have her child be treated like property. The men, too, lose ownership over themselves when they are sold into indentured labour— an exile from one's own self, so to speak.

Friendship Farmer and Weaver are the best of friends, as we see from the opening scene where Farmer runs to Weaver with a skull that he has just excavated. Indeed, Farmer runs to Weaver many times during the film to consult him on some topic or the other. They are a foil for each other; Farmer's spontaneity, anger and roughness is balanced by Weaver's calm, mature and gentle demeanour. Together, they shout at the planes flying overhead, cursing them and refusing to become anyone's slaves. Together, they water the parched earth and bring forth a big harvest. Sometimes they bicker and fight, but that is also normal among close friends. They mostly coexist peacefully and help each other with daily tasks and chores, visiting the market together and so on. Despite their similar beliefs and ideas, however, they also become each other's worst enemy once jealousy enters the equation in

the form of the woman. After she leaves, they try and fend off Trader's ambush, but they fail this time as the infighting has weakened them.

Sexuality Given their circumstances, Farmer and Weaver are homosocial; that is, they prefer the company of their own gender to that of the opposite gender. But going beyond that, the not-so-subtle homoerotic tension between Farmer and Weaver is unmissable and a common feature in much Bengali literature of the time, comparable to the American concept of "bromance". These Bengali liaisons would never develop into a fully-fledged *homosexual* relationship; however, the emotional charge of such relationships parallel conventional heterosexual relationships, with jealousy, anger and possessiveness being similar. A noticeable homoerotic element of the original short story on which *Genesis* is based, and which features two male wrestlers, is retained in the wrestling scenes between Farmer and Weaver. After the woman has left them, they take to their fists to appease their egos. They hit and kick each other, sometimes brandishing a stick, throwing stones and dust, calling each other names and rolling around in the dust, but it's clear that neither intends to severely injure the other.

Deception In the beginning, there was only truth and honesty, as Farmer and Weaver like to believe, having escaped from the great deception of the Owner who promised a good life but delivered slavery to all the impoverished farmers and tradesmen under his jurisdiction. After setting up their own little compound, their life is in a state of stasis, interrupted only occasionally by Trader, who Farmer suspects of deception early on but Weaver trusts. Once the woman arrives, again initially they settle into a comradely coexistence. But she alerts them of Trader's deception of lying about his profits off their labour, which in turn prompts Trader to manipulate the situation with extra money. Then, once sexual access, bolstered by buying power enters the equation, the woman regretfully notes to both men that they have begun to lie and deceive each other over giving her little gifts (in exchange of her feminine company and sexual favours, though she keeps that part unsaid). This insight and honesty prompt the men to temporarily see the error of their ways and apologize to each other. But once the woman gets pregnant, the deception begins again, as each deceives himself that the child is his own. They do not realize that biological paternity is irrelevant in the situation, as the woman correctly argues; practically speaking, had they continued cohabiting, ideally both men would have played father to the child. She could have taken the easier path of breaking one of the men's hearts by pinning the child on the other, but she does not engage in that deception. Ultimately, this leads to the woman telling them that they were their own worst enemy and used to be good men once, but no longer are. The final act of deception comes from the Trader, of course, who ambushes and sells them without warning, having promised many times earlier that he was just looking out for them. So, for every instance of trust and honesty, there is an act of deception, which makes *Genesis* itself a deceptively simple film.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) Do you think *Genesis* works as a parable? Discuss plot, setting and ethics in your answer.
- 2) Which symbolisms or contrasts were most noticeable to you in the film? Discuss any two.
- 3) Do you think Farmer and Weaver's reaction to the woman's pregnancy and the issues she raises are justified? Discuss.
- 4) Why do you think Trader turns on them at the end and not at any time prior?
- 5) During filming, Naserruddin Shah, who plays Farmer, was dissatisfied with his role and argued with Sen about "who is the hero of the film." Sen answered that the land was the hero. According to you, who is the protagonist of the film and why?

SCENES

The beginning The voice-over narrator, in the mode of a fairy tale, starts a story about drought as we see a long sequence of the parched earth. Then, “heaven’s messenger” comes to deliver the people, by taking their thumbprints on a blank sheet of paper. All the villagers line up and sell everything, including themselves, into bonded labour forever. But there were two angry men, one a farmer, the other a weaver, who leave it all behind and find a desolate, abandoned village to inhabit in the middle of a desert.

Farmer, Weaver and the skull Farmer digs up a human skull, then runs through the destroyed village of half-walls to bring it to Weaver. Inside Weaver’s hovel, they put it on a stick and laugh about its identity: whether it belonged to a poor villager or a “shiny-shoe” landowner’s minion, all are same after death. They playfully pray to it for water and role-play, giving it a sip of water and bathing it (as one would an idol of a Hindu deity). Farmer asks the skull for a thumbprint but Weaver says that there would be no difference between them and the oppressors if they, too, demanded eternal slavery.

“We are no one’s slaves” Then they smash the skull to the ground. The sound of the skull shattering is drowned out by a loud noise of planes flying overhead. They run outside and curse the noise, throwing stones and yelling that no one can displace them from their land; they are no one’s slaves.

The Trader Farmer fetches water from a well with some difficulty. On the way, he talks to Trader’s camel. Trader discusses inflation and rising prices with Weaver, who still refuses to compromise with his craft and make three items from the materials for two. Trader says that he’s doing them a favour by coming so far out to bring them their necessities. Farmer is still watering the fields. ‘Its thirst is never quenched,’ says Weaver. Weaver helps Trader get on the camel and Trader leaves.

The Woman Farmer and Weaver get drenched during heavy rains; they dance and shout, overjoyed. The next morning, stepping outside, Farmer is surprised by a woman. He roughly asks her who she is and why she’s there. She appears to be afraid of him and doesn’t respond. Farmer runs and wakes Weaver. They can’t find her, so Weaver accuses Farmer of imagining it as “he wanted a woman”.

Getting acquainted After running around and searching the ruins for a while, Weaver finds her hiding and asks her if she fell from the sky or sprouted from the ground. They keep yelling at her, asking why she came there. She starts sobbing, then faints. They offer her a meal and some water and leave her alone. She is startled by a snake, which the men chase away.

Shelter At night, the men decide to ask her to leave after spending the night there. It’s very cold outside and they tell her that there aren’t any vultures or foxes to take care of her corpse if she dies from the cold. The next morning, they hope that she has left and go and check the hovel. There’s only a cot there, which presumably they set up for her the night before. Farmer speculates that she must have been afraid of him to run away. At least she didn’t take the blanket or cot, he says, relieved. Weaver is more cynical and says that she couldn’t do the heavy lifting and didn’t seem like someone who would stick around.

The First Sin They keep debating about the woman. Farmer is dissatisfied. Weaver says she must be nearby, eavesdropping. They run around the ruins, (accompanied by Ravi Shankar’s signature background score). Afterwards, while resting, Weaver becomes concerned about her well-being. They could have given her shelter, but they refused: “It’s our first sin”, Weaver says. Farmer climbs on Weaver’s shoulders to reach the top of a temple and spots her. They catch up to her. She tries to walk away towards the cremation ground. The men shout at her to stop. Sobbing, she tells them to let her die. The men look remorseful.

The flood and the epidemic The woman sits across a fire from the men. We see heavy rains leading to a flood, from which the woman says she has escaped. After the waters receded, there were only corpses of people and animals. Farmer says that he experienced the floods, too. After the flood came the epidemic, she continues in a sad monotone, and one day her husband also died, followed by her child. There was no one to move or cremate the bodies. She alone remained alive in the land of the dead. She was so disgusted with the rot and the stink of the bodies that she refused to die. Instead, she kept walking and finally reached this place. Weaver says it’s the same story everywhere. She is unable to tell them which direction she came from.

The woman and Trader meet Trader visits but the men are not at home. The woman hides and follows him without revealing herself, but gets caught. Trader is surprised to learn that they have built a home together. Trader asks her to bring him some water, which she does. He reassures her that he is not a frightening person and she is doing well to reform the others into proper humans. Trader leaves some raw ingredients and cooking oil for them, instructing the woman to cook good meals.

A family meal Later that night, she cooks and serves them food. The men discuss why Trader comes around so often. Weaver says it's for them, but Farmer counters that it's for his own agenda. They keep arguing that Trader isn't their owner, though they are beholden to him for weaving materials and seeds. The woman tells them not to bicker and they shut up.

Settling into a routine The woman grinds grain. All three of them happily clear a field of stones. The men, bare-bodied, pull a plough. The woman makes string with an implement. Farmer complains that his cotton towel is torn through. The woman tells him to ask the Weaver to make him a new one. But the materials are owned by the Seth (feudal lord), Farmer says, so Weaver can't help. Farmer is grateful that Trader brings them everything, but the woman says that isn't enough to live by. She brings the thread to Weaver.

To market Another day, the men dress up in their nice clothes and head to the market (to check market rates), leaving her behind. They reach a bustling and loud fairground-cum-market. At the end of the day, they rest at the wayside as a group of traders riding camels pass by them. Weaver says that they are getting ripped off by Trader, who sells his blankets at the market for a much higher rate. It's evening and they get lost on the way back. They shout loudly and the woman hold aloft a lantern to lead them back home. They are all laughing, happy.

An altercation with Trader Trader shouts at them for going to market without his permission. Trader tells them that the place is cursed and yet he risks his life to bring them whatever they need. He says they should be grateful to God that he's helping them. Farmer throws the torn towel at his feet and shouts that he needs more than bare subsistence. Trader softens his tone and gives Weaver permission to make a new towel, plus some extra money, telling them to be careful. He is only looking out for them, he says and then leaves.

Buying dreams with money At night, Weaver hears the sound of anklet bells and goes outside to investigate. He finds Farmer, who also says he heard the same thing (anklet sounds is a common trope for Indian female ghosts). Weaver tells Farmer that they were dreaming while wide awake, as they can now buy dreams with money. The men visit the market again. Farmer buys a bottle of *alta* (vermillion liquid for decorating feet). They hide and listen to the woman stitch some embroidery while singing a pretty folk song about peacocks dancing, anklet bells ringing as she taps her feet.

Keeping secrets Farmer is suddenly, inexplicably angry at the woman and throws and breaks the bottle of *alta*. While she cleans it up, he tells her that he bought it as a gift for her without Weaver knowing, as Weaver must also have given her a gift without him knowing. The woman says that it isn't good that they are keeping secrets. Weaver walks by, looks at them but doesn't comment. Farmer apologises to Weaver, who admits that he also lied.

Happy days The men make a makeshift wooden swing for the woman. They laugh and swing her to and fro, all of them happy. But the mood soon changes, when we see the woman sad and alone at night. Farmer visits her. She surrenders to his advances, sobbing. Another day, while she's carrying a bundle of firewood outside, Weaver approaches her and lays a hand on her shoulder, then walks away. She follows him.

A strange mood While preparing a meal together, the men joke about burying more bodies. The woman says she's more afraid of fate than skulls and ghosts. She has seen men fight each other and fears that might happen here, too. The men laugh it off. In the morning, Farmer asks her about her strange mood while she scrubs the ground.

Sowing discontent Trader looks at the woman through binoculars; she's bathing and scrubbing herself. Trader tells Farmer that she has changed them for the better and they're treating her like a queen, even making a swing for her. But who's the king? he asks, as she comes out of Farmer's room wearing clothes that Weaver made for her. Suddenly, Trader almost steps on the same snake that we saw earlier, but it slithers away. Trader is scared off, swearing that he will come again. Farmer tears the swing down, breaking the seat to pieces. Weaver walks away.

Changes The farm is full of ripe golden wheat. Farmer eats a few ears of wheat, while Weaver yells in joy. At night, Farmer goes to her room and finds her missing. They search for and find her. She asks them why they have come looking for her. Everything has changed between the two of them; they've started lying to each other and she's afraid. Farmer gently asks her to return home.

Harvest time They harvest the wheat. Farmer and Weaver glare at each other. The woman carries a bundle of hay. Weaver gets water from the well. Farmer helps her pick up and carry a load of hay. She seems unwell. Suddenly, she collapses; Weaver, who was passing by, helps her. She doesn't tell him what's wrong but walks away.

Dilemma Farmer sees the interaction. He finds her afterwards and shouts at her. Weaver tells Farmer that she is unwell. She tells the men that she can't lift heavy things for some time. Farmer is clueless. That night, all of them remain awake. In the morning, Weaver asks her gently whose child it is. She can't answer. Farmer has overheard the conversation. He wants her to confirm that the child is his. But she tells him to ask himself and his friend instead of her.

Climax Farmer, furious, runs out and starts accusing Weaver of treachery and tells him to take care of the "whore". He wants to have nothing to do with her and her "bastard spawn". Weaver also refuses to keep her. Trader passes by on a camel, stopping their argument. The woman asks them what difference would it make if they knew who the father is. She tells them that she doesn't know who can rightfully claim the child, but they were good people once. She embraced both of them and the three of them were happy together. But now they want to claim their rights and become an owner. So the real enemy is within them; it doesn't matter who is guilty. The child is hers, she asserts.

The end In the middle of the night, she leaves, just as she had come, with a small sack. The next morning, Farmer finds her anklets but not her, and throws away the jewellery in anger. Weaver chastises Farmer for calling her a "whore". They both look remorseful, separately. Farmer says, "First Sin" and tries to hit Weaver with a stick. They hit each other and keep fighting in the dusty ruins. A loud gunshot breaks up the fight.

Closing scene Several other gunshots follow. A group of men on camels enter the ruins and capture Farmer and Weaver by force. Trader, leading the men, points a revolver at them as they flail around, helpless. They are bound up (possibly into slavery) and the ruins are blasted away. Modern construction equipment is put to work. The film ends with a bulldozer levelling sand.