

“Lion”

Saroo is a 5 year old boy living in a dusty and benighted village in rural India. One day he goes with his older brother to a nearby town. He gets lost and ends up locked inside an empty train. Over 1,000 miles later the train reaches Kolkata (Calcutta), its' only passenger a frightened little boy.

Saroo has now joined a legion of lost children wandering the streets of India. Finally, he ends up in an orphanage. It is a dismal existence but becomes a path to salvation when it leads to his adoption by John and Sue Brierley, an Australian couple from Tasmania.

Twenty years later Saroo (Dev Patel) is a typical Aussie. But nagging at the back of his mind is the memory of the family he left behind. Then one night he learns about Goggle Earth. It galvanizes him into action. He is looking for the proverbial needle in the haystack but undaunted he forges ahead.

His best recollection is that he was on the train for some 16 hours. The next question - what was the average speed of trains in India 20 years ago and how many rail lines radiate out of Kolkata? The walls of his apartment are soon plastered with railway time tables. Then one night, four years into his quest, he thinks he has found a landmark from his childhood. He heads for India. What happens next (and this is all based on a true story) is one of the most emotional reunions imaginable. Unless you have a heart of stone, bring Kleenex.

Among the many virtues of “Lion is its’ vivid and unflinching portrait of Indian life. If Ansel Adams was re-incarnated as a cinematographer, and chose to show the world of sprawling India rather than the glories of nature, this film would do him proud.

(Amazon Prime)

Reading: If you are interested in the lives of the Indian underclass you cannot do better than Katherine Boo’s account of life in the slums of Mumbai – “Beyond the Beautiful Forever”. She is a journalist with the gifts of a novelist.

