alert and upright beside the driver as they rattled past little gangs of children in the street. He hoped they saw him. Soon they stopped to collect two little girls, younger than Sanjit, who sat very close together behind him and giggled to each other.

The driver stayed silent, and Sanjit was shy of speaking to him. The little girls chattered to each other in low voices and eventually seemed to run out of things to say, but Sanjit was content to look out at the dry hills and bare landscape. Sometimes he saw a boy like himself leading animals to water or fetching and carrying, or ploughing. He had more than that to look forward to.

He had nibbled some chapatti when they came to a town noisy with car horns, bicycle bells, animals being herded to market, and street traders haggling. Sanjit tried to look in all directions at once. There were temples, and tall hoardings glaring with posters. Traders haggled on pavements. The van turned down a quiet street, then another, and parked.

“Are we here?” asked Sanjit. There were buildings all around them, and he didn’t know what a carpet factory looked like. “Is this the place?”

A busy street scene in the Indian town of Varanasi, mirroring the view of Sanjit as he arrives in town.