



Agiye Chalo

(Let's Move Ahead)

*A Play by
Sudhanya Debbarma*

*Edited & Translated
Somdev Banik*



**Tribal Research and Cultural Institute,
Govt. of Tripura, Agartala.**

Born in a small village, Sutarmura in Bishalgarh, Sudhanya Debbarma was a political and cultural activist, a communist leader, a writer and a pioneering intellectual of the indigenous Twipra community of Tripura. His dream to liberate the hilly tribal people from years of oppression and neglect under the Manikya dynastic rule, gave birth to a literacy cum freedom movement in the history of Tripura, the Jana Shiksha Andolan. Agiye Chalo is a book based on many real life experiences of Sudhanya Debbarma, when he was forced to go underground under severe pressure from the King and the Indian military combined operations to arrest him. He was also a pioneer of the Leftist movement in Tripura and was elected as a member of Legislative Assembly.

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Preface

The literary history of Tripura is inextricably intertwined with the politico-social history of the land. Tripura, though one of the smallest states in India, was home to one of the oldest royal families of the Indian sub-continent, the Manikya dynasty, which ruled Tripura from 1280 to 1949. The decade of Forty was tumultuous not just for World history and India but for Tripura as well. World War II, imminent Independence of India, uncertain future of the Princely states, spilling of communist movement into the interiors of Tripura from Bengal, growing dissatisfaction and unrest among the hilly people over hundreds of years of neglect and suppression, all these and more had catapulted Tripura to the brink of history. With the last ruler, Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya Bahadur's untimely death in 1947, political instability snowballed into a major crisis forcing the widow Queen Kanchanprava Devi to accept the proposal of accession to India. She was appointed the Regent Queen for two years leading to the accession in 1949.

The subjects of Tripura state or Hill Tipperah, with its capital at Agartala, were mostly hilly tribes. The people were traditionally very reverential to the king, accepting him as God. In spite of such deference, the Kings of Tripura had extorted the poor subjects for revenues for centuries, though the latter were dependent on the resources of forests and jhum cultivation for their survival. Educational, medical and other civic facilities were

non-existent in the hills, excepting a few within Agartala, catering to the interests of the ruling clique of Thakurs, Kartas and Sardars. Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya, in his last years, was very apprehensive about the effect of widespread education and literacy among the masses. He rather promoted tribal factionalism and parochial politics to offset the growing demands for democracy and basic rights. But time was not in favour of royalty, it was the decade of freedom, democracy and cultural revivalism.

The fight for education and self-rule among the hilly tribes of Tripura was spearheaded by Jana Shiksha Samity established on 26th December 1944, under the stewardship of Sudhanya Debbarma, Dasaratha Debbarma and Hemanta Debbarma as the President, Vice-President and Secretary respectively. The next few years saw these young leaders resist the King-Thakurs-Karta combine and spread the fire of rebellion and self-assertion throughout the hills of Khowai, Kamalpur and Sadar sub-divisions of Tripura. It's also during this time that the leaders of Jana Shiksha Andolan were inspired and assisted by the leaders of the Communist Movement of undivided Bengal, like Biren Datta, Banshi Thakur etc. Communist ideology reinforced the mass literacy movement and situated it within a class conflict paradigm. Such a propaganda gained momentum, when after the accession, the Indian government led by Congress party decided to suppress the spontaneous mass uprising with military and force. Villages were burnt and evacuated, poor villagers were incarcerated and maimed, women raped and beaten up. Driven to the wall, the Jana Shiksha Samity decided to launch Tripura Rajya Ganamukti Parishad (Tripura State People's Liberation Council) in 1948 to defend unarmed villagers against the atrocities of the military. The Jana Shiksha Andolan not only confined itself with building

of hundreds of schools throughout Tripura, but also persuading the people of rejecting superstitions, blind faiths and subjugating social practices like Jamai Utha and Titun practice. Jamai Utha was a folk practice where the future father-in-law could appropriate the labour of the prospective son-in-law for five six years in lure of giving his daughter in marriage. But over the years it evolved into a tool of exploitation of young men in the name of marriage and denying at the end. Rendering titun was another system where poor villagers were obligated to carry the burden of royal staffs free of charge. Jana Shiksha Andolan resisted against both these practices forcing their annulment.

Sudhanya Debbarma, who was one of the founder members of Jan Shiksha Samity, later became the Speaker of Tripura Legislative Assembly and a Minister in the Left Front Government. He wrote *Agiye Chalo*, the first play in Kokborak, native language of the indigenous people of Tripura, to record the historical contribution of Jan Shiksha Samity in transforming Tripura from a feudal princely state to a progressive, liberal democratic state with a high literacy rate within the country.

Agiye Chalo is a bi-lingual play, written both in Bengali and Kokborok. Mention must be made of some of my students who helped me understand the nuances of Kokborok tongue for rendering into English specially Anjan Debbarma. The play records faithfully the turbulent forties in the history of Tripura. I hope I have done justice to the original and readers will like the work. That is all a translator can hope for.

Agartala

Dr. Somdev Banik

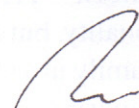
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FOREWORD

Sudhanya Debbarma, one of the architects of Modern Tripura was not just a political personality, but a literary genius of our times. Born in a very modest family in a small village, Sutarmura in Bishalgarh, Sudhanya Debbarma received his school education from Umakanta Academy. Right after his college days, he got involved in political agitations for the cause of uplifting the condition of hapless tribal citizens of the erstwhile Manikya kingdom of Tripura. He was one of the founding members of Tripura Janashiksha Samity, and worked very hard in securing the right to education of the common tribal people and setting up of numerous schools across interior hills of Tripura. He was influenced by Communist ideology very early in his life and joined Communist Party of India later on. Sudhanya Debbarma became the speaker of Tripura Legislative Assembly during the reign of first Left Front Government in Tripura.

The first Kokborok magazine, "Kwtal Kothoma" was edited and published by Sudhanya Debbarma in 1954, where many writers of that period published folk song, folkatles, and articles. *Chethuang*, a mythical novel by Sudhanya Debbarma, was published in serial form in the magazine. His *Hachuk Khurio* is the first Kokborok novel published by Kokborok Sahitya Sabha and Snskrit Samasd in 1987. *Agiye Chalo* was written by Sudhanya Debbarma on request from his friends and well-wishers to document those days of Janashiksha Andolan as inspiration for progeny. It is not a fictional play, but to a large extent based on his-

torical record of the struggles of Janashiksha Samity. It is valuable to the future generations of Tripura not for its literary merit, but also as a historical document. This translation of *Agiye Chalo* will once again shift our focus to the contributions and achievements of legenday leaders of Tripura like Sudhanya Debbarma, Dasarath Debbarma and Aghore Debbarma in rebuilding modern Tripura.



(**S. Debbarma**)

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Characters

[Male]

- ◆ Rajen- Patriotic leader
 - ◆ Brajendra- Patriotic worker
 - ◆ Amar- Patriotic worker
 - ◆ Prafullah- Rammanikya's son (social worker)
 - ◆ Bikramendra-Maharaja of Tridip
 - ◆ Ganapati- His advisor belonging to Bengali community
 - ◆ Ramesh- His secretary belonging to Bengali community
 - ◆ Madan- Police officer
 - ◆ Nihar- Inspector
 - ◆ Pranbhallav-King's attendant
 - ◆ Jyoti- King's attendant
 - ◆ Murari- King's attendant
 - ◆ Rammanik- Village Sardar
 - ◆ Vardhaman- Villager
 - ◆ Punkhiray- Villager
 - ◆ Hariray- Villager
 - ◆ Rahman- Farmer
 - ◆ Mahananda-Moneylender belonging to Bengali community
Congress leader, Police, Villagers, IB informers etc.
-

[Female]

- ◆ Prava- Woman organiser, teacher from Bengali community
 - ◆ Suniti- Women worker
 - ◆ Rama- Women worker
 - ◆ Urmilla- Rajen's mother
 - ◆ Gayalakshmi- Rammanikya's wife
 - ◆ Court Dancer
 - ◆ Female Attendants
-

A *giye Chalo* is the first Kokborok drama written bilingually, in Bengali and Kokborok on an experimental note to test if “the language can be suitably used as a medium for a full length play” (Sudhanya Debbarma: Author’s Note, 2005 edition). Though the dialogues in most of the scenes are in Bengali, indigenous characters are made to converse in Kokborok between themselves, as the case would have been in real life. The play was originally published in the first Kokborok magazine ‘Kwtal Kothoma’, edited and published by Sudhanya Debbarma himself in 1954. Five decades later, Kokborok Sahitya Sabha republished the play in 2005.

ACT-1

Scene-I

(A Room in Samity's Office)

[Photos of different leaders are hung from the walls all around, books arranged in an old Almira; a big rectangular study table with chairs around; Rajen is writing something, Brajen and Amar reading newspapers.]

(Rahman enters the Samity office in abject misery to lodge a complaint)

Rahman : Babu, How will we survive, babu? They are killing us, sucking off even the last drop of blood.

Amar : Rahmankaka, now what has happened to you?

Rahman : What to say! We poor folks, there's no hope of our survival if they continue like this.

Brajen : Tell us, what's the problem?

Rahman : We live from hand to mouth, babu, poor peasants, with a few kanis of land. It is difficult to save grains enough for a year even; tell us, how much do we have, babu?

- Brajen : Okay, okay, now tell us, what has happened?
- Rahman : Spare our lives, babu, do something. The children will starve to death. Lastly even I will have to hang myself.
- Brajen : Oho! Come out with it.
- Rahman : Babu, they have taken my two oxen saying I don't pay taxes. Tehsildarbabu says if I don't pay them right now, he will not leave them. What do I earn to pay them? My two oxen, I plough with them somehow, now I have to die of starvation. Babu, find a way out.
- Brajen : Tehsildar will not release the oxen, if you don't hand him the money, is that so?
- Rahman : Ha babu, if only I put fifteen rupees in his hand, without a word he will leave them.
- Rajen : Wonderful.
- Amar : The main motive is bribe, not tax, it seems.
- Brajen : That's the only way available to them. The administrative system is responsible for it.
- Amar : It has become a raj of the corrupt and the mafias.
- Rahman : We will soon die if we continue paying bribe in this scale, today we have to pay bribe for cutting thatch, bamboo, everything. How much more can we give? There is no end.
- Brajen : In fact, in this way only you have helped them grow this habit.

Rahman : Is there any other way, tell us, those are my oxen of the yoke, if I don't get them back, I am sure to die.

Rajen : By paying bribe you can't solve this problem, Rahmankaka. You people have to stand up against such injustice. It won't be right if you bail out your oxen by paying bribe. Amar, you go with Rahmankaka.

Amar : Come Kaka, let's go to your village and see if anything can be done.

Rahman : Babu, you are our protector. Selam, babu, selam.

(Exit Rahman and Amar)

Rajen : In this way, how many Rahmans, Takhirays, Punkhirays have been driven to the streets! They can't find a way out of this vicious cycle. Poor people! They will blame everything on their fate and continue to remain poor. Can't even imagine of resisting all these.

Brajen : Rajenda, we need to organise them.

(Enter two drunkards, quarrelling with each other)

Punkhi : To hell with you, you swine.

Hari : What are you saying, you shameless?

Punkhi : Am I as shameless as to enter your wife's house?

Hari : How could you say something like that? You swine?
(hits him with hand)

- Punkhi : Oye, shall I hit you with this bottle?(hits him with the bottle)
- Hari : Oh my mother! (Bleeding and swaying, he gets up to complain) Babu, you have to do justice.
- Brajen : You both are drunkards, how can you ask for justice against one another.
- Hari : I hit him with my hand, but he hit me with a bottle, you must judge.
- Brajen : Drinking so much, both of you have become like pigs. You go and drink more.
- Punkhi : Let's go to your mother's house.
[Exit both of them still quarrelling]
- Brajen : It's not wine that they drink, rather wine that is feeding on them. Intoxication has taken them to eternal slumber. We have to declare jehad against alcoholism; otherwise liberation movement is not going to deliver any fruit. Our primary curse is illiteracy, the secondary one is poverty. We have to free ourselves from both these curses. We need to eradicate superstition and corrupt practices from society to gain freedom in the truest sense. Come, Rajen, let's take a round.

[Exit both of them]

Scene-II

Place- The King's counsel Chamber

Maharaja and Ganapati in their seats

Maharaj : Ganapatibabu, did you find any way out? India is going to achieve Independence, and the Congress leaders are issuing threats that they are not going to accept the rule of Indian provincial kings anymore.

Ganapati : Maharaj, the situation is really worrisome.

Maharaj : Congress is already talking about forming Council of Ministers with people's representatives, all those shit about responsible governance etc.

Ganapati : If the subjects unite, they may snatch away power at whatever cost.

Maharaj : Do we have to eventually survive as puppets in their hand? Who knows whether there will remain any sign of our existence in the future?

Ganapati : When the British withdraws from India, it's still not clear though, if they will put up any system for the provincial kings.

- Maharaja : Then, what's to be done, Ganapatibabu? Our future seems to be very bleak. The kings will no longer have any kingdom, neither any power. Is time changing so much as it seems?
- Ganapati : Maharaj, we need to apply some political ploy to keep the subjects with us, may be through the formation of some party.
- Maharaj : Can anything be achieved through that? I have formed enough parties in my life. What's the point in another party?
- Ganapati : This party, Maharaj, will be a political one. All the office bearers in this party should be your nominees.
- Maharaj : Through this can we achieve our end, Ganapatibabu? Whatever we do, it's certain that the King will not remain the sovereign authority any more.
- Ganapati : It is yugadharma, Maharaj. To prevent the future from overpowering, one needs to adapt oneself with the need of the times. This servant of yours would advice you, Maharaj, to form a party of your close confederates. The only thing needed, Maharaj has to spend some money to bring them together.
- Maharaj : Money is never a problem, Ganapatibabu, if it serves the real purpose. But, honestly, I can't get over my apprehensions yet.

Ganapati : Maharaj, no need of worrying. Congress is a party of rich people. Whatever grand promises you are hearing from their mouth, will turn out to be hollow soon. This Congress party after all has to run the government in liaison with the kings, zamindars and industrialists. Otherwise, they cannot exist. In fact, zamindars, kings and big industrialists would not have had a better time yet.

Maharaj : Really, it's so uncertain though, Ganapatibabu. Let's see, how things turn out to be! Okay, you may leave.

[Ganapati bows and leaves]

Maharaj : Who is there? Who is there?

(One lady attendant enters with drinks and serves the king. Pranballav, Jyoti and Murari enter)

Serve them also.

(All of them bows to the king and take their drinks)

All : Let victory be to Maharaj.

Maharaj : One can't be so sure of victory or defeat these days. Do you think that your days will continue like this? You are all blind. Can't you see that times are changing?

Pranballav : We are at the mercy of the Maharaj.

Maharaj : This attitude itself has crippled you. You don't even possess the strength to stand on your own

feet. Days will not remain like this, I warn you, it will not go on this way.

Murari : We are not scared of anything as long as our Maharaj is well disposed towards us.

Maharaj : Think of the day when your Maharaja will not be able to grace you with such benevolence.

Jyoti : No one can dare to seize power from the Maharaja, let alone the Congress party.

Maharaj : You do not understand, how times are changing. You don't have eyes to perceive that. Anyway, forget all that, Pranballav, go and arrange for a dance.

[Exits Pranballav and re-enters with a court dancer, followed by dance and song]

(Courtesan sings)

O! my beloved dear!

Take this glass of beer.

My youth of prime,

To drink is no crime,

O! my beloved dear!

O! my dear, I swear,

To die for you will never mind,

Even if you be so unkind,

But don't break my heart,

Accept my wine of love,
O! my beloved dear.

Bask in delight, O dear!
Revel in life, why fear?
Pulses of my payel awhile
Will make you more virile,
Nip my flame of bosom tight
Days of delight, dazzling bright.

(Light dims)

Scene-III

Place-Rammanikya's residence
(Rammanik is smoking his bamboo hookah)

- Rammanik : O Prafullah's mother! O Prafullah's mother!
Oi Goilakhi, did you give them anything to
drink, O Goilakhi?
- Gayalakshmi : Why are you calling my name so
shamelessly at this time of the day? Don't
you have any sense of time?
- Rammanik : I called your name two times only. Why,
can't I call your name?
- Gayalakshmi : Go away! You shameless!
- Rammanik : Enough, enough, I am not so shameless.
(Takes a drag on his hookah) Has Prafullah
come back home?
- Gayalakshmi : No, he hasn't.
- Rammanik : Not yet! When he returns, don't give him
food. He is always loafing around, here and
there.

Gayalakshmi : We haven't settled his marriage yet. That's why he is roaming about. This year we must get him married.

Rammanik : Marriage, marriage! You are only keen in getting a daughter-in-law at home. Have you ever thought of the expenses a marriage would incur? Where will the money come from?

Gayalakshmi : Well, take a loan.

Rammanik : Loan! If I take a loan, how will I pay it back?

Gayalakshmi : How will I know about that? With every day he is getting older and idle. All his friends are getting married. Doesn't he feel ashamed to remain a bachelor for so long?

[Enters Vardhaman]

Vardhaman : Thakur Rammanik, O thakur Rammanik! Are you at home?

Gayalakshmi : Yes, he is at home. Come inside.

Rammanik : Sit down, Vardhaman. How are you doing?

Vardhaman : Getting on somehow by the blessing of god. Times are changing, Thakur. I am forced to see all the things which I don't want to see, to hear all those which I don't want to hear. Who knows what more these eyes will

have to witness? Trains, aeroplanes, ration shops, revolutionary movements; I can't even remember all their names. Even my fourteen ancestors hadn't even heard of all those.

Rammanik : Koli yug, Vardhaman, terrible koli yug. With little learning all around, it has become even more dangerous.

Prafullah : (inside the wing) Mother! O mother! I am hungry, bring me some food.

Gayalakshmi : Get lost, you vagabond! All the time asking for food, food; and you don't even work. You don't even get married! For how many days will I serve you like that? Can't you see, even I am getting old? Now it seems, I will not be able to see my daughter-in-law's face before I die. Such unfortunate fate!!

[Exits]

Rammanik : Your sister-in-law is so eager to get home a daughter-in-law. Day and night, she is consumed with one thought, marriage of her son. She doesn't even worry about the money and the expenditure a marriage will entail. She wants me to take a loan for the purpose, can you imagine? And here, I don't even have the means to hire a labourer to work in my fields. Neither can I work myself. How will she understand?

Vardhaman : No, Thakur, if others see you working in the fields, what will they say?

Rammanik : True, who doesn't know me about this place? Go to the market and ask anyone my name. Even if you go to Agartala and enquire, you will find people who know me. Do you know, I have even spent money and gone to Agartala to drink liquor. Now tell me, will you find anyone else in this village who goes to Agartala and lives like me?

Vardhaman : What else can I say, Thakur? In this village, there is none who can speak like you do. Even the younger generation will fail in comparison with you.

Rammanik : The less we talk about the younger generation, the better. They don't abide by rules and regulations. With little bit of knowledge, they are so proud. Some are Matric pass, some B.A. pass, they don't care to look at the ground they tread, always raising their head haughtily. Without formal education we know better than them. We have faced all the trials and tribulations of our times, which they can't even withstand.

Vardhaman : Very true Thakur, you have resolved so many issues related to social problems, family matters, separation cases too, in your capacity as the village Sardar. We can't even count all the good things done by you in this village.

Rammanik : You are the only person, Vardhaman, in this village who speaks the truth.

[Enters Rahman]

Rahman : Dada! Are you at home?

Rammanik : Yes, come. Sit there. Tell me what brings you here.

Vardhaman : Rahmanda, hope you are fine.

Rahman : Good! As it is, do you think times are such that anyone can be good anymore? Our forbearers haven't ever heard of these things. The price of every damn thing has gone up four to five times. It's impossible for subsistence. All the more, they talk about Contol, contol. Why, does anyone get anything at contol price? No, you won't get that. All thieves and thugs have bloody well swelled up by selling everything in black market.

Vardhaman : Rahmanda, I'm hearing that the Government is planning to cease our paddy, is it true?

Rahman : Why won't they? Our paddy is cheap for them. They will buy paddy for seven rupees, rice for seventeen rupees, what can you say? Let them decrease theirs, why seventeen, we will sell ours for ten. The fact is we can't go on suffering like this anymore, we have to listen to the leaders. All the people of

the state should come together to resist. Without a movement there's no way out.

Rammanik : What are you saying, we will be finished then!

Rahman : Finished! See, either way death is staring at our face. Do you still nurture any hope of survival, dada? They have fleeced away everything. How long can we be patient? Death is inevitable, so why fear dying? Don't you think, it is better to die fighting than die sitting at home. All those babus will walk in their shining shoes, and we will sweat out our last blood and die starving!!

Rammanik : Maharaj is the manifestation of God, Lord Narayana himself. Can we succeed against him?

Rahman : Why worry so much, the leaders are there to show us way. We only need to stand together.

Rammanik : Useless! It will not work out, brother, take a drag! [Gives hookah to Rahman]

Rahman : That day Tahsildar babu snatched away my two oxen, didn't he? The moment we got together for that, babu started to shiver. Without wasting a single word, he gave back my oxen.

Rammanik : He must have got scared.

Rahman : Yes, that is true. These fellows are wooer of the mighty, tormentor of the weak. Even the cat will shit, when the soil is soft.

Vardhaman : Rahmanda has spoken rightly. You can't lift ghee with a straight finger.

Rammanik : Better watch out, lest you break your finger.

(Light dims)

Scene-IV

Place-Rammanikya's residence

[Prafullah is reading a Bengali primer of alphabets and Gayalakshmi is chopping vegetables with a dau]

Prafullah : "Lekha padha kore je; gaadi ghora chore se"; (spells out loudly the word *Lekha* meaning writing)

Gayalakshmi : What is it you are saying? (ridicules him by imitating the spelling of the same word)

Prafullah : I am studying. (spells another word *padha* meaning studying)

Gayalakshmi : It's useless. What will you do after studying? Studying won't bring you food, will it? Instead get married. I can't wait to see the face of my daughter-in-law.

Prafullah : Don't tell me about marriage! I am not going to get married. You have never given me any opportunity to study. I want to be educated like Rajenda and Brajenda. I don't want to get married. I also want to dedicate my life for the country like them.

Gayalakshmi : What kind of nonsense is that? Don't say you are not going to get married. You are going to dedicate your life for the country? Do you think the people will feed you?

Prafullah : I can't argue with you; but if you listen to Rajenda and Brajenda, you will understand that they mean well for me.

Gayalakshmi : I don't need to listen to them, neither understand what they are talking about. Let Rajen and Brajen do what they want, I am telling you, get married and lead a peaceful life. Don't be mad.

Prafullah : (Putting down his book, gets up) I will not marry, not marry, not marry. I am swearing thrice, I will not marry.

Gayalakshmi : (Pushes aside the dau and gets up) If you don't, then go and hang yourself. Aren't you ashamed, you old boy! All your friends have already got married.

(Enters Brajen)

Brajen : Mother, you are very eager to get your son married, in fact you seem to be more eager to see your daughter-in-law's face. If you get him married at this young age, it will harm him. That will be a loss even for our society. When he comes of age, he himself will find someone and get married. Now, Prafulla, do you remember, what job was entrusted to you. See, we have very little

time, you can't afford to waste time, brother.

Prafullah : Yes, I remember. The responsibility of publicity for the meeting was mine. See, I can't give lecture-lecture. I will take the news of the meeting around among the villagers.

Brajen : If you can do that much, that will do. Don't worry, one day even you will master the language and know how to give a speech. We need to train you on every aspect of leadership.

Prafullah : Da Brajen, this is your cup of tea, I can't go to that level.

Brajen : Yes, of course, even you can achieve. Anyway, I am getting late. I will train you to be a political activist one day. See you soon.

(Exits Brajen)

Gayalakshmi : I don't understand what they speak of. God save the mother that had given birth to them, they are going crazy in the name of homeland. They aren't interested in marriage or leading a family, and they are neither attracted to women. Strange fellows they are.

(Exits Prafullah and enters Rammanik)

- Rammanik : Where is your worthy son going to?
- Gayalakshmi : If you don't get him married, can you expect him settled at one place. Should I talk to Shyamarai for his daughter?
- Rammanik : Your son is a rover. Who will give daughter to him, tell me? He doesn't stay at home even for a while.
- Gayalakshmi : Without a wife at home, what do you expect him to remain at home for? Get him married today, and you will not see him wandering any more. You don't understand children's mind at all.
- Rammanik : What do you women know? You are in a big hurry to bring a bride in the house. Don't you know about our financial condition? We can't even afford new clothes. Your eagerness will not help in this matter. You women folks are like that, you don't have worries in life.
- Gayalakshmi : Whenever I ask you about marriage, you give this excuse or that. Why, only you have children? Aren't others getting their children married? Shameless!!
- Rammanik : Aha! Why are you getting so agitated?
- Gayalakshmi : Why shouldn't I? You are always saying the same thing? There's no money. You then look after your son, I can't.
- (Exits Gayalakshmi in a fit of anger)**

Rammanik : This is really worrying. How will I give his marriage? So much of money will be wasted on dowry. People from two three villages need to be invited. I can't even get my son married in a hush like those Bengalees. This is really worrisome. What should I do? Should I allow him to be a ghar-jamai? But that is shameful. What the heck? Should I worry so much about this? How are others marrying their children? I will give my son's marriage even if I have to borrow or take a loan. I don't care, I will face as it comes.

(Enters Mahananda)

Mahananda : Sardar thakursab, are you at home?

Rammanik : Come in, mahajan, come in, how are you? Didn't see you for a long time. Where were you?

Mahananda : So much work! There's no time to sit at home. I went to town for obtaining an agency of garments.

Rammanik : So, how was it? Do you hope to get it?

Mahananda : Let's see what happens. Arrey, money can get you everything, you just have to bribe them for that.

Rammanik : Mahajan, we seem to get neither any cloth or kerosene oil. We only hear about this contol (Ration shop), but don't get anything from this contol. *(Enters Prafulla)*

- Prafulla : How will you get? Everything is sold out in black market.
- Mahanahda : (with a grin) That of course is true.
- Prafulla : Till you make the common man aware of this, exploitation won't stop.
- Mahananda : I have noticed Prafulla, these days you are mixing with this Rajen gang. I warn, you might land up in jail. Why man? Being the son of an ordinary farmer, why get into all these things? These are not right, do your own work and live in peace.
- Prafulla : I don't know what is right or wrong? But I have understood this much that one should stand up against any wrongdoing.
- Mahananda : What wrongdoings are you talking about? What will you stand up against, tell me?
- Prafulla : Mahajan! What is wrong, do I still need to explain to you? Just think about the things you are doing, and you will know. You migrated to this part in a single piece of cloth; what did you have when you came here? You remember, you went from village to village building relationships. Calling us brother and uncle, you betrayed us. You sold us things on credit and charged twice thrice, gave us loan and calculated interest on interest; in this way you cheated the naive villagers and snatched away their land. You still don't understand what is wrong, is it? *(Exits Prafulla)*

Mahananda : Careful, thakursab, the boy has got into politics. Being in the company of Rajen and others, his head may go awry, and then you will not be able to save him. It will be disastrous, I tell you.

Rammanik : What can I say, these boys have changed. They say they will revolt against the wrongs of Maharaj himself. With little bit of learning, they have forgotten the distinction between life and death.

Mahananda : Rightly you have said. There is a saying, when ants grow wings, it is time for them to die. I warn you again, keep the boy away from them, otherwise his life may be in peril.

Rammanik : The boy needs to be married; otherwise it will be difficult to keep him at home.

Mahananda : That's right, you better get him married. Then you will see, he won't leave home at all.

Rammanik : But the problem is without money how do I get him married?

Mahananda : How can someone like you suffer from want? Anyone will lend you money.

Rammanik : Mahajan, you have to lend me some money, otherwise I can't get my son married.

Mahananda : (aside) You don't need to say that. I have always been looking for such opportunities. (louder) Thakursab, I don't have much money in hand, as I had already invested in various ventures; but as you are saying, you

being such an esteemed person, how can I refuse?

Rammanik : Mahajan, you can't refuse. You have to provide me some money.

Mahananda : Of course, you will get, don't worry. Okay, then, thakursab, give me leave. There is so much work at hand. I will come later one day. (*Exits*)

Rammanik : What is destined to happen will happen. I can't bear Prafulla's mother's barbs any more.

(*Enters Gayalakshmi*)

Now you see, I am taking loan for my son's marriage. I have decided to borrow from Mahananda.

Gayalakshmi : Should I inform Shyamarai then? Let's sit one day and decide. The girl knows stitching *pachra*, even lookswise, she is quite good. I have heard that she is well behaved as well.

Rammanik : Okay, send a word then. Tell Khepengrai's mother that one day we will visit them.

Gayalakshmi : As you say, I will inform them then. Should I light the hookah for you?

(*Exits Gayalakshmi*)

Rammanik : I know, I know, you are happy because you will get a new bride.

Scene-V

Place- A Chamber in the Palace

*[Madanlal, Nihar and other officers drinking, while
courtesans dance in front of them]*

Blooms the flower of youth,

Aroused by the fragrance of spring,

Wafting in the wind of south,

Fancies of kisses does it bring!

Rejoicing the richness of life,

Dancing to the tunes of gaiety,

Like the quail who sings all the while

Our prime knows no satiety.

Madan : Cheer up! Splendid, you ravishing one!
Pour one more here, boy, let the frolic not
cease!

Nihar : You lovely! come here. Bring one more
glass here.

- 1st Officer : (Starts dancing with the dancers, glass in hand) Keya baat! dance, dance, you lovely!
- 2nd officer : Wonderful, sweetheart wonderful!
- 1st Officer : Bah, bah, bah, swing your waist a little more.
- Madan : Whisky!
- 2nd Officer : Yes sir, aye, you boy, go and bring another bottle of whisky. Hurry up.
- Nihar : (in a drool) Blooms the flower of youth! Blooms the.....

(Enters Rameshbabu)

- Madan : Aha! This man will ruin all the fun. You there, come, come.
- Nihar : Sir, we had almost given up on your coming.
- Ramesh : What can I do, tell me? Maharaj has got so worked up. Sir, ask them to leave, we have something very urgent to discuss.
- Nihar : No problem, we will do that. But sir, first let us listen to a song. What do you say, Sir? (to Madan)
- Madan : If you permit sir, we can listen to a few more songs. This is not the council chamber in any case; shouldn't we have some time for entertainment? Only work and work. Those devils are making our lives miserable, it seems.

Ramesh : Madanbabu, this is only the beginning. Look at the world around, how it is changing. This time, the British government has to come to a negotiation with India under pressure from both within and outside.

Madan : The leaders will start scrambling for plum positions, and those league people will become more active, that's going to happen after all, isn't it?

Ramesh : And do you expect that the subjects of this small state of Tridib will remain unaffected by all these?

Madan : What really can happen in this tiny state in one remote corner of India? Isn't the state almost beyond the confines of civilisation?

Ramesh : Winds don't stop at borders, Madanbabu! Moreover, this red wind, it's spreading like fire everywhere.

Nihar : (Aside) Seems like their argument and counter argument will spoil all the fun. I was expecting a little bit of entertainment myself, and now even that's gone. (loudly) Sir, then, should I ask those dancers to take leave?

Madan : One more song at least we should listen from them. Otherwise they would leave us almost dud.

- Ramesh : Madanbabu, looks like you are quite drunk.
- Madan : A little bit of drink is stimulating, it doesn't intoxicate you.
- Ramesh : Niharbabu, let us not have any more sessions today, sending them off would be better.
- Nihar : So sir, you insist on sending them off?
- Rameshbabu : Yes, that's what I want.
- Nihar : Okay, then, you may leave now.
(officers and dancers depart)
- Madan : Do they really ought to go! (expresses his irritation)
- Ramesh : You will get enough time for entertainment later on, Madanbabu. At this moment, I need your valuable counsel.
- Madan : I can gather that. That's why I keep my eyes wide open. No one can escape my vigil.
- Ramesh : If you reach any important information to Maharaj's ears early, you may expect a promotion, I believe, you understand that.
- Madan : Yes, yes, that is the reason, like a mad dog, I am hounding all around.
- Ramesh : Could you gather anything as of yet? (enters one I.B agent with a paper in hand and delivers to Madan)

- I.B Agent : Sir, have a look at this; we could lay our hands on this. (Madan goes through the paper briefly and delivers to Ramesh)
- Ramesh : (reads attentively) Do you see it, seeds of trouble! We need to be very careful.
- Madan : I will show them, just wait. I have kept two persons posted like shadows after them, they won't be able to go far.
- Ramesh : Madanbabu, this is not the time for complacency. We can't remain content just by shadowing a few of them.
- Nihar : Everything is in our control, don't worry, sir.
- Ramesh : There are more than a few parties in our state. We need to follow each of them closely, never know who is thinking of what?
- Madan : We should be more concerned with those Samitywallas.
- Ramesh : Are they that active?
- I.B Agent : Active is too little to describe them. They are gaining ground among the public through their social reconstruction and mass literacy programmes.
- Madan : Hum! (shakes his head thoughtfully)

- Ramesh : Maharaj is very particular about this thing, we should inform him immediately.
- Nihar : Did you see the efficiency of these I.B people, sir? It is almost impossible to evade our surveillance.
- I.B Agent : Like a hunting dog, I chased them, till I got this red smell. Now, my job is to follow them closely and find more information out of them.
- Madan : Days of comfort are gone. All these days, there was no worry at all.
- Nihar : And now these samitywallas are making our life miserable! Out of now here they are growing like the Devil's party.
- Ramesh : We got to worry about them and use our intelligence to deal with them effectively. The freedom movement of India has reached climax and we cannot prevent that breeze from reaching here. Along with this wind, the red smell is also wafting in.
- I.B Agent : The smell of the red doesn't need to come from outside, sir. The seedlings are very much within.
- Ramesh : The saplings are here, that's right; but can't deny that the fertile winds from beyond are helping them grow fast.
- Nihar : We can't allow them to gain ground, we need to uproot them as early as possible.

- Ramesh : That won't be so easy. (to the I.B Agent)
What else? Could you gather anything more?
- I.B. Agent : No sir, nothing more as of now. It seems
there will be a meeting somewhere.
- Madan : May be in some godforsaken village.
- I.B. Agent : May be.
- Madan : I will trace them all around and soon find
out the location of the meeting, just wait.
- Ramesh : Are your agents dependable?
- I.B. Agent : Of course, how else do we get all the
information?
- Ramesh : At least one thing we could find out today.
Now let me take these papers to Maharaj
and see what he says. No doubt, he would
be mad. What is Maharaj's next move, let's
wait and watch. Anyway, Madanbabu, I will
take leave now; I had to stall your
entertainment, sorry for that.

(Everyone leaves; Curtain falls)

Act-2
Scene -I
Place-The King's Court

[Maharaj and Ganapati conversing]

Maharaj : I have thought over the advices provided by you all. Congress probably won't allow smaller states like ours to remain sovereign. In this context, I believe it would be better if we try to form a Union along with other kingdoms like Manoa, Bhojbihar, Khatiya etc.

Ganapati : Maharaj, for that we need to initiate a dialogue. At this moment, it seems to be the most logical step.

Maharaj : I am going to Shillong for a few days, we can have a discussion over there, I guess. My health is deteriorating these days. If my health permits me two more years, I will be able to do something in this regard, I hope.

Ganapati : God will of course give Maharaja a long life.

Maharaj : I think through the British lord we can persuade Congress to allow formation of a Union of states. What do you say, Ganapatibabu?

Ganapati : Maharaj's ideas are very logical and timely as well.

Maharaj : Do you think, the British raj whom we had served so faithfully all these years, will renounce the local kings in this moment of crisis?

Ganapati : Your Majesty, the British government hasn't acceded to the liberation of India without the Lord Viceroy playing an active role in it.

Maharaj : I should meet the Lord Viceroy and appeal to him, what do you say?

Ganapati : That would be appropriate, your Majesty.

Maharaj : Ganapatibabu, there is no match for the education and intelligence of the Bengalis. You have always been strong pillars of this state and contributed immensely in enhancing the revenues of the state.

Ganapatibabu : We are your servants only, Maharaj.

(Enters Pranballav, Jyotithakur, Murari etc with drinks and accessories)

Maharaj : So you all have come? (to Ganapati) Okay then, you may leave now. Do as we have discussed.

Ganapati : As you wish, your Majesty.

(Exits after bowing)

Maharaj : Pranballav!

Pranballav : Your Majesty! (advances a glass of wine towards him with both hands)

Maharaj : (taking the glass) I am not keeping well these days, god knows how long will I survive? Shall I remain the last king of Tridib state, who knows? If I survive for two more years, I can come with a way out. But my apprehension is that I will not last that long. My health and mind, neither of them is well. You are members of the royal family, my own relatives, my hopes and encouragement.

Pranballav : We are ready to sacrifice our lives for your Majesty.

Jyoti : We are poor servants of your Majesty.

Murari : At your Majesty's order, this servant can jump into fire as well.

Maharaj : This is not the time for sacrificing your lives, neither jump into fire. This is the time to

set your house in order. Have you kept your eyes shut to the surroundings?

Jyoti : Your Majesty, are you talking about those Samitywallas? It's very childish.

Maharaj : What childish? A poisonous snake is always poisonous even if it is a child. One day it will grow, no doubt.

Murari : Those Hallungas are in my control, your Majesty.

Pranballav : Those Jamalis don't even sit without my assent, your Majesty.

Jyoti : The hilly people are afraid of us. They won't dare to disobey.

Maharaj : I understand all about your influence and control over the hilly people. But don't take that for granted. It will not take long for them to shift their allegiance from you to those Samitywallas.

Jyoti : Your Majesty, then what is your suggestion?

Pranballav : Your Majesty, we cannot allow them to proceed further.

Maharaj : Do you know what needs to be done? You should form a political party of all hilly

people, but the leadership should be in your hands. In this way you should try to keep all of them within your folds.

Murari : Your Majesty, kindly advise us how we can form this party?

Maharaj : You needn't worry about that, I will arrange that for you. We need to summon a large convention of all the hilly people. From that convention, you need to form a formal political outfit. I will provide you with funds; you just convene the assembly and form an organisation.

Pranballav : Your Majesty's plans are wonderful. I guess, then, with your blessings these servants of yours can start with the project.

Jyoti : The allegiance of the hilly people to your Majesty is unquestionable; they deem you as the avatar of God himself. We can keep them in our control in your name, your Majesty. The problem will come from other communities.

Maharaj : If you can keep one community in hand, then you can play around with the other.

Murari : They are puppets in your Majesty's hands.

Jyoti : (Aside) I wonder whether they are puppets in Maharaj's hands or Maharaj himself has

become a puppet in their hands.
(louder) Who would dare to disobey the
might of your Majesty?

Pranballav : Disobedience? Have the subjects forgotten
the lessons taught to the Royangs so soon?

Murari : Fine, we will teach them a lesson again.

Maharaj : Those days were different, when war was
going on, and one could get the assurance
from the British rulers. Times have changed,
don't you see? The Britishers are leaving.
What will Congress decide who knows?
The future of the provincial kings is very
uncertain, I can foresee. I don't have any
peace within, no peace within. I drink; may
be, I drink a lot. But I didn't use to drink
once, but today I am in the grip of wine.
There is no way out, I can't survive without
drinking. This drink has become my source
of sustenance, my companion- my hope for
tomorrow. (sighs) My prince Yuvaraj, god
knows what is in store for you? If I live for
a few more years, I can probably be able to
provide something for you, otherwise, there
is no hope. You Queen! (gets agitated) it's
your good fortune that you are the mother
of my son, otherwise- enemies, everywhere
enemies around me. I don't have anyone,
anyone with me. (Ramesh enters with a

sheet of paper) Ah! Rameshbabu, is there any news?

Ramesh : Yes, your Majesty, this paper.

Maharaj : What is there tell me?

Ramesh : We could intercept a letter from those Samitywallas.

Maharaj : What is there in that letter?

Ramesh : Severe criticism of your Majesty's functioning and administration of the state.

Maharaj : What are you saying? Give it to me. (in anger) Criticising my rule, Devil's party! Let's see, let's see, how dare you? You small fries! You dare to criticise my rule, which no one has dared till now! Ha!ha!ha! I will show you soon, just wait.

(Curtain falls)

Scene-II

Place-Rammanikya's residence

[Rammanik and Vardhaman sitting]

Rammanik : O Vardhaman, it's becoming difficult to bear the barbs of your sister-in-law. I have to do something right now.

Vardhaman : The only concern of these women is to bring home a daughter-in-law as early as possible. But, what about your financial condition?

Rammanik : I have to borrow, what else can I do? I have talked to Mahananda, and he has agreed to lend.

(Enters Mahananda)

Mahananda : Are you home, Thakur?

Vardhaman : Oh you Mahajan! Come, come inside.

Rammanik : Be seated Mahajan, my son's wedding is almost finalised. The relation is also good. Now, I am looking up to you for financial help.

- Mahananda : That can be given, don't worry. It's good that you have fixed your son's marriage quickly. That day the things I heard from his mouth, my god, in no time he has become quite a leader. After two more days god knows what may happen?
- Vardhaman : Whatever you say, their initiatives to build schools are helping the community a lot.
- Mahananda : That's good, but what will a farmer's son do by studying? How is that going to help him in cultivation?
- Rammanik : Leave aside all these talks, Mahajan. Tell me what will be your terms and conditions of loan. What will be the rate of interest and for what duration?
- Mahanda : How much do you need, Thakur, tell me, these rates and duration can be worked upon.
- Rammanik : A sum of two hundred rupees will do, Mahajan. What about the interest, now?
- Mahananda : Interest, why bother about interest and all? Just write down your ten kanis of land as bond and give me 40 mons of paddy yearly, only that much.
- Vardhaman : Will it be sabkawla registration, Mahajan?

- Rammanik : Will it be?
- Mahananda : No, it won't be exactly sabkawla. But you must give an application to the Registry Office. Once you pay back the amount, you will get back the land.
- Rammanik : Mahajan, it shouldn't be sabkawla, I caution you. You have to return the land as soon as I return the money.
- Mahananda : Okay, okay, as you say. Don't worry.
- Rammanik : Reduce the quantity of paddy payable, Mahajan, how can I give you such a huge amount?
- Mahananda : Okay, you give me 5 mon paddy less, since a person of your standing is requesting, how can I refuse?
- Rammanik : Mahajan is a good man, quite understandable.

(The following conversation between Vardhaman and Rammanik is in their mothertongue, which Mahananda can't follow)

- Vardhaman : Don't imagine him to be that good even. He is capable of doing many things later on.
- Rammanik : Oh! Is it? I thought him to be one of our own. Do you think he may do other things later on?

- Vardhaman : I am saying whatever I have seen.
- Rammanik : With me of course, he hasn't done anything of the sort till now.
- Mahananda : What you two are talking about, I can't follow. Are you talking about killing me or butchering me?
- Rammanik : No, Mahajan, nothing of the sort. Give me the money.

(Mahananda counts and pays the money)

- Mahananda : We should finalise the paper works before the marriage, what do you say, Thakur?
- Vardhaman : Let the marriage get over, Mahajan, why hurry so much?
- Mahananda : Okay, then, but inform me about the marriage; our Thakur's son's marriage, and shouldn't I come? Okay, let me take leave now.
- Rammanik : Okay, see you soon.

(Mahananda departs)

O Prafullah's mother! bring us a hukkhā to smoke.

- Gayalakshmi : I am bringing, wait.

(Offstage)

Vardhaman : What's the point of getting your son married by mortgaging all your land and properties? Will that be right?

Rammanik : Whatever is destined to happen, will happen. No one can resist that. I can't keep my young son unmarried at home for long.

(Enters Gayalakshmi with hukkah)

Gayalakshmi : Here, take the hookah. Vardhaman, will you send your wife one day, we can go to see that girl for Prafulla.

Vardhaman : She is always so busy with her children, I wonder whether she will be able to make out time.

Gayalakshmi : Arrey, this is for one day only. Will you not be able to spare her even for one day.

Vardhaman : Okay, Okay, you can take her along.

Gayalakshmi : I have prepared *chuwak*, taste it before you go. It's only two days old though, not very sure how it will taste.

(Exits Gayalakshmi)

Rammanik : That's very good.

(Enter few neighbours)

Punkhi : We have come to Thakursaab's house looking for some work.

Hari : Even being around big people, one can learn so many things.

Rammanik : Sit, sit, let's drink the *chuwak* which Prafulla's mother has prepared.

(Enters Gayalakshmi with a pitcher in hand)

Hari : So, you have got quite a good girl for Prafulla. Without our intervention that wouldn't have been possible.

Gayalakshmi : You are my hopes, you know.

Rammanik : Punkhiray, pour water in the pitcher.
(Punkhiray prepares everything)

Punkhi : Okay Thakursaab, now start.

Rammanik : Come, let's begin by offering our obeisance to all.

Hari : Now it is Vardhaman's turn.

Vardhaman : I bow to everyone before I start. (Drinks and comes back to his place) Now whose turn is it? Punkhiray or Hari?

Hari : It's Punkhiray's turn, after all he is going to be our brother-in-law.

Punkhi : If you go from that side, then I am senior in relation to you.

Hari : You are closer through the girl's side than this side.

Punkhi : Are you very far yourself?

Hari : Not as close as you are.

Rammanik : So, who will drink first?

Vardhaman : Hari should be given the chance first.

(Hari advances towards the pitcher)

Rammanik : Punkhi is senior to Hari by five years.

Hari : I got married at a late age, otherwise I would have been as old as you.

Punkhi : You think yourself quite old, don't you? Do you remember ever hearing about an earthquake that shook this part of the world once upon a time?

Vardhaman : Those were the days when we were learning to wear dhotis, you must have been kids then. You won't know.

Hari : Do you remember yourself about that earthquake? Oh! no! We forgot to ask our *bachui* whether she would drink?

Gayalakshmi : It's okay, it's okay, you drink. I have other works to do. I have caught cold also.

Hari : At least one gulp you take, the *chuwak* is well made.

Gayalakshmi : I don't drink, you carry on.

Rammanik : She is busy, leave her.

Vardhaman : Bachui is very happy, because she will be getting a new daughter-in-law.

Gayalakshmi : What rubbish are you saying?

Rammanik : Punkhiray, now it's your turn.

Gayalakshmi : Oh O! I forgot to get the hukka ready for you all.

Hari : Bachui, at least one, you take.

Gayalakshmi : It's okay, it's okay, you have.

(Gayalakshmi departs)

Hari : Bachui, bachui.

Punkhi : Let her go, it's okay.

Ramamanik : Remember, you all have to help me.

Hari : Do we have that ability to help you?

Punkhi : It's we who look up to you for help.

Rammanik : My ability is on the wane. I don't even have any one to work for me. The son that I had, is good for nothing. He is busy in movements.

Hari : Oh! so, that is the reason. That's why I see him going out every morning with a bag on his shoulder.

Rammanik : What will he do for the country? Like a vagabond he will wander from village to village seeking food from others.

Vardhaman : What kind of talk is this? If a few don't work for the country, how the country will develop. Actually, with a little bit of education, these fellows are rendered fit for neither this nor that. Without a job for long, they have become rudderless in life.

Hari : What have they done till now, tell me?

Vardhaman : Don't you see, they have set up schools around. Have you kept your eyes closed?

Rammanik : That's true, indeed.

Hari : Have they done that? The government has facilitated that.

Vardhaman : Their movement has forced the government to provide these amenities, no doubt about

that. When did you find so many schools around in the past, tell me? You could see them only around town and markets. Today you have schools even in the hills.

Punkhi : No doubt about that. There are many schools these days. (To Vardhaman) Your turn now.

(Vardhaman proceeds towards the pitcher)

Hari : We peasants need a yoke to plough the land, what do we need a pen for? What can we achieve by studying? We will never do a job.

Vardhaman : Even to do any work well, you need some education.

Hari : Why, how many among us have got a job after getting educated?

Vardhaman : Education is not only for getting a job. Do you know that while paying tax, you had written thirty rupees instead of twenty rupees?

Hari : I didn't check to find out.

Punkhi : Even if you had checked you wouldn't have found that out.

Agiye Chalo

(Let's Move Ahead)

Hari : Punkhi, it seems that you yourself would have found that out.

Punkhi : I am not as shameless as you.

Hari : Take care of what you say!

Punkhi : A shameless ought to be called a shameless.

Hari : This is not right. Just because you can speak, shouldn't be speaking beyond limits.

Rammanik : That's okay, Hari, go and have your turn. Why do you quarrel at every word?

Hari : Just because one doesn't need to pay to speak, should he be saying whatever he wishes. That's not right. Tell me Punkhi, do you send your children to school for all the fascination that you have for education.

Punkhi : Why are you repeating my name so many times?

Hari : Since I am elder to you through relation, I am calling you by name.

Punkhi : Get lost, you rascal.

Hari : Why do you intend to quarrel at every opportunity?

Punkhi : You are of such a low birth.

- Vardhaman : What on earth are you two doing?
- Hari : I know how rich your birth is? I can't stand all these rubbish.
- Punkhi : What will you do?
- Hari : Even I am the grandson of Koprani.
- Punkhi : Worthless caste, that is what yours are.
- Hari : What did you say?
- Punkhi : Come, come. (Both stand up, ready to pounce on each other)
- Rammanik
and Vardhaman : Aha aha! What are you two doing?
- Vardhaman : You are not doing the right thing, I tell you.
- Hari : I want to see the end of it today. Let's see what you can do? You low born?
- Punkhi : What did you utter? I warn you?
- Hari : I am Koprā's grandson. (beats his chest). Whose grandson are you? I will tell hundred times, you are low born. (Punkhiray gets up and pounds him on his back)
- Hari : O mother, he has killed me. I will kill you. (Both of them start a fight)

Vardhaman

and Rammanik : Aha aha! What are you doing! (try to restrain them, enters Gayalakshmi in anxiety)

Gayalakshmi : (slapping her forehead) It's my fate, it's my fate. Is this why I offered you chuwak? What are you waiting for, *O bura*, do something.

Scene-III

Place- Samity Office

[Amar and Rajen checking out papers, when Brajen and Prafulla enter]

- Rajen : What is the news? How was the publicity?
- Brajen : The gathering will be quite large, let's hope.
- Rajen : I think you have heard that Maharaja has convened a meeting with all the hill communities.
- Brajen : What's the matter? Can you guess the motive?
- Rajen : There will surely be some plan behind that. If required, Maharaja can try some backdoor dealing with the different communities.
- Amar : My apprehension is, there is a conspiracy.
- Rajen : Let's wait, we have to work accordingly.

(Enters Prava, Rama and Suniti)

Welcome, welcome; so what brings you here all of a sudden?

Prava : It may seem sudden though, but have you accorded any place for women in your movement?

Rajen : You yourselves have to create that place.

Prava : Rajenda, it's quite unexpected from someone like you.

Rajen : That means you have already concluded that we are quite indifferent about the women's cause, isn't it?

Prava : What else?

Rajen : Don't misunderstand us, Mrs Ray. You need to begin with constructive works to bring forth a women's organisation. You have come forward today, with you a women's organisation will also come up soon.

Prava : We have very few educated women activists, if you don't extend help, we cannot proceed.

Brajen : Pravadi, we will try our best.

Amar : Actually, the work pressure on us is very high.

Rajen : That is no excuse, we have to work with that.

- Rama : Brajenda, we don't see you visiting our locality at all these days.
- Brajen : I remain busy at other places.
- Rama : Even if you forget us, still do visit once in a while.
- Rajen : Mrs. Ray, what type of work are you doing?
- Prava : Nothing really significant to talk about. We are going around the villages emphasising the need to set up schools for girls. A few schools have come up already. I myself work in such a girl school.
- Rajen : That's very good, how are the schools running?
- Prava : Not that bad. But the fact is many in the villages still do not understand the significance of educating girl children. The girls are very keen in this respect, but it's the parents who are resisting.
- Suniti : Rajenda, this should be made into a law; so that the parents may not restrain their girl children from taking education.
- Rajen : It's not our government, legislation is not in our hands, you see.
- Amar : We should instil some amount of fear regarding this among the parents.

- Suniti : In spite of our wish to study, we aren't allowed.
- Rajen : Suniti, how far you read?
- Suniti : I have read half of *Balyashiksha* till now. Honestly, I never got an opportunity in my childhood.
- Prava : You will learn fast. You have the eagerness to learn.
- Rajen : Even you have learnt Tripuri language, it looks like.
- Prava : I can understand, but can't speak properly.
- Brajen : After a few days you too will become a good orator in Tripuri language.
- Prava : A good orator! come on. Anyway, Rajenda, we have come with a prayer.
- Rajen : Tell us.
- Prava : To build up an organisation, fund is required. May we hope to get some help in this respect?
- Rajen : Of course!
- Prava : That is heartening. Without help it is impossible. Okay, then, we will leave now, namaskar.

- Rajen : Namaskar.
- Rama : Brajenda, visit our side sometime.
- Brajen : Let's see.
- Rama : You can't avoid us saying this, I tell you, you have to come. (exit Prava, Rama and Suniti)
- Amar : What is it Brajen? Looks like, it's not a very casual invitation.
- Brajen : Ah! Nothing.
- Amar : So, your works are more focussed that side.
- Brajen : What are you saying? Let it go.
- Rajen : (smiling meaningfully) What about you Prafulla! You seem to be very quiet?
- Prafulla : What, dada?
- Rajen : Have you seen, Suniti has almost finished off her *Balyashiksha*? What about you?
- Prafulla : I will also complete soon, dada. Actually, I don't get much time, with all these running around.
- Rajen : You have to learn to study within this schedule.

Amar : Rajenda, our convention is not very far away,
have you decided on any song yet?

Rajen : Yes, the song is already composed, Brajen,
will you sing a bit?

Brajen : Okay, let's sing together then.

Brajen : Everyone, start.

(chorus)

Yon the triumphant bugle beckons,

Gear up, it's your future summons,

The youth of Tripura marches on,

In search of freedom, marches on.

Nights of darkness, long were they,

Drifting asunder as if in a bay,

Pangs of freedom, bear them out,

Shoots of victory soon will sprout.

Marching ahead, marching on,

Bound with hope that's so strong,

Firm in belief all they throng,

Come, let's sing, the victory song.

Scene-IV

Place- King's Council Chamber

(The Maharaja is pacing up and down in apparent consternation)

Maharaj : Such brazen defiance! You striplings! You dare to criticise the King? Uff! uff! No, no, this can't be tolerated. The good old days are gone! otherwise..... Enemies, enemies, everywhere around me.

(enters Ganapatibabu)

Oh! Ganapatibabu, you have come?

Ganapati : Yes, your Majesty.

Maharaj : Ganapatibabu, we can't allow those rookies to proceed any further. Need to forestall them right now.

Ganapati : Your Majesty, every step to that end is taken.

- Maharaj : Have you looked after the publicity?
- Ganapati : Everything has been done, your Majesty.
- Maharaj : Very well, Ganapatibabu, what about Manoa? Have we received any response from the King of Manoa yet?
- Ganapati : Not yet, your Majesty.
- Maharaj : Are they so indifferent about their future?
- Ganapati : May be they have resigned themselves to their fate.
- Maharaj : Is it possible?
- Ganapati : Or, may be, they are also looking for some other way out.
- Maharaj : What other way can there be, Ganapatibabu?
- Ganapati : Probably surrendering to the Government of India and save themselves from all the inconveniences.
- Maharaj : What do you mean?
- Ganapati : The meaning is clear, your Majesty. Probably they are apprehensive about contending with the mass uprising that is sweeping across India, and is sure to swamp

even our territories as well. To avoid that, they might have preferred to merge with the Union of India and rest assured.

Maharaj : Do they lack confidence?

Ganapati : The Kings of Manoa, Bhojbihar etc can't rein their subjects as well as the King of Tridib, your Majesty.

Maharaj : (with a smile of complacency) He! he! Right you are. We have succeeded in keeping our hill people ignorant and backward all the while, otherwise...

Ganapati : Otherwise, their loyalty in your Majesty would recede.

Maharaj : Yes, of course! Many believe that I am particularly fond of the hill people. Fool they are! They don't even understand political gimmicks. This show of superficial affection is to keep them within my control. They shouldn't be educated. My intention is to keep them segregated on the basis of identities. I will never allow them education.

Ganapati : The amount of mischief the few educated among them is doing, it is better that way, your Majesty.

Maharaj : No, we shouldn't remain quiet any longer. At any cost they must be resisted.

Ganapati : We can lure some of them with jobs, your Majesty. And then their Samity's, their movements will wane of their own.

Maharaj : Even I was thinking of that.

Ganapati : Your Majesty, I need to find out from the secretary if there is any message.

Maharaj : You go and find out. If there is no response, do something to ensure that we get a feedback soon.

Ganapati : As you wish, your Majesty.

(Ganapati bows out from the chamber, enters Pranballav, Murari and Jyoti)

Maharaj : Have you finished your job? How was the response among the public?

All : Your Majesty, the response was overwhelming.

Pranballav : There was a huge hue and cry among the Jamalis to greet me- "Maharaja's brother has arrived". It was almost a celebration, with splurging of wine, duck, hen, goat, what not?

Maharaj : Then you must have drunk like a fish, didn't you Pranballav?

- Pranballav : No, your Majesty, I kept within limits, not much.
- Maharaj : Why not? I know, you must have rooted yourself in one place and called for all the sardars there. Sitting at one place, you have finished your job right there.
- Pranballav : No, no, your Majesty.
- Maharaj : What else? (asks Murari and Jyoti) What about you? I believe, even you two didn't have any paucity of wine?
- Jyoti : Your Majesty, can there be any shortage of wine ever in the hills? But, they have changed these days, your Majesty; asks so many questions. Sometimes the questions are too difficult to handle.
- Maharaj : Oh! So, you were embroiled in questions. When did you propagate about the convention then?
- Jyoti : We propagated, your Majesty. At some places, we had to coerce as well.
- Maharaj : I can understand very well, but how would the convention go?
- Jyoti : We can expect a massive gathering, your Majesty.

Maharaj : Listen all of you, today the future of the royal family is in your hands. I don't trust other clans. If we can't keep the hill people in our control, we can't achieve anything. If need arises, we should.....anyway, forget it. We need an organisation, you are going to build that organisation. You are my blood relatives, only you can be trusted at this hour.

All : We will serve the King with our last drop of blood.

Jyoti : Your servants will successfully accomplish this job, your Majesty.

Maharaj : Those youngsters may damage your mission substantially; you need to be cautious about them.

Jyoti : What can they do, your Majesty?

Maharaj : No. No. You must not underestimate them. One day they may turn out to be my chief threat, my main enemy; you may not grasp it now, how dangerous they can be! They must be eliminated as seedlings, choked to death in infancy itself.

Scene-V

Place: Rammanik's Residence

[Rammanik and Gayalakshmi are sitting facing each other. Gayalakshmi dejected and worried, Rammanik blows hard at his hookah and glances at Gayalakshmi once in a while with annoyance]

Rammanik : Have you seen, have you seen yourself?
(Gayalakshmi doesn't respond, sits with a palm on her cheek, Rammanik after a few drags) Who will give daughter to your vagrant son? What kind of movement is this? Now that these talks have failed, where do we look for a girl again?

Gayalakshmi : Is that the only girl available in this world?
Every pot has its own cover made for it somewhere.

Rammanik : Hum! Find out then, let's see.

Gayalakshmi : Let him come, the rover, let's see how he goes out once more! (enters Prafulla)

He has come.

- Prafulla : What is it?
- Gayalakshmi : You are asking what? You just try to go out once more! It's so shameful I can't get my son married.
- Prafulla : Oh, this is what you are so worried about? He he he!
- Gayalakshmi : Shameless, you are laughing. Everyone will call you an old boy!
- Prafulla : Am I a girl that I should be so worried about what others will call me?
- Gayalakshmi : Is there anyone like you around who is so reluctant about marriage? Shameless old fellow.
- Prafulla : This is the system practised in any civilised society.
- Gayalakshmi : Are you like those Bengalis that you will marry late? *(enters Brajen)*
- Brajen : What is it, mother?
- Gayalakshmi : We were having a negotiation for Prafulla's marriage? Now that has been rejected.
- Rammanik : See, Brajen, I am a Thakur, even my proposal is refuted. It's so insulting.
- Brajen : What may the reason be?

Rammanik : What can I say? He has chosen this path of uncertainty.

Brajen : Oh! Is this the matter?

Gayalakshmi : Brajen, you have to do something in this matter, I tell you.

Brajen : It's okay, mother, let the right time come, we will see.

Gayalakshmi : When will your right time come? In fact you don't have any sense of time at all?

Brajen : Aha! You don't worry, mother, we will get your son married.

(Enter Prava, Rama and Suniti)

Prava : Namaskar mother; you seem to be very anxious about your son's marriage.

Gayalakshmi : I don't understand, what they are saying.

Prava : We understand mother, we will get your son married when time comes.

Gayalakshmi : You are all repeating the same thing, as and when time comes. When will this time come?

Prava : It will be done, mother.

Gayalakshmi : Hum! When?

Suniti : We have come to inform you about the meeting. Even women have to come to the meeting this time.

Gayalakshmi : Oh mother! What will we women do in a meeting?

Suniti : Yes, you have to come, we all need to go. Where aren't women required these days apart from ploughing? Though boys only inherit father's property, but even we have a right to that.

Rama : We women are born to be sold off in the dowry market. We don't have any option but to depend on the husband's income to survive. And if they throw us out, we don't have any land or property left to fall on.

Suniti : We have to resist this, we are not meant to be sold off. We women should fight for our rights.

Prava : We will take mother along with us. Okay, mother, let us leave now.

Gayalakshmi : God knows what these crazy girls are talking about.

Rama : Haven't Rajenda arrived yet?

(Exit Prava, Rama and Suniti)

Gayalakshmi : It would have been better if one of these girls could be arranged for Prafulla.

Brajen : (Looks askance at Prafulla) Let's fix Prafulla's marriage with Suniti then, what do you say Mother?

Gayalakshmi : Ah! yes, that will be good. Let both these activists work and stay together.

(Prafulla blushes and leaves hurriedly after grimacing at Brajen)

Brajen : Don't fret so much about Prafulla's marriage, mother. He is neither lame nor blind nor a trashy fellow for you to worry so much. I am leaving now, I assure you I will take care of him.

(exits Brajen)

Gayalakshmi : What can one say about today's youth? Even girls can be seen going out with bags these days and getting involved in agitations and movements. Even if it is with Suniti, I will get Prafulla married. They will rather stay happily together, I presume.

Rammanik : Any girl that you come across, you start expecting her in terms of your daughter-in-law.

Gayalakshmi : You don't have the ability to find a bride for your son. All your valour is only at home.

- Rammanik : You are always insulting me.
- Gayalakshmi : You are so wise, don't you understand that a man needs a woman to survive.
- Rammanik : Yes, yes, women are capable of doing great things. It is rightly said that a woman's intelligence is like an embankment of sand.
- Gayalakshmi : You think yourself so wise. Could you find a girl for him? You shameless old man!
- Rammanik : You are again getting mad. You should not leave the confines of this house.

(exits Rammanik in exasperation)

- Gayalakshmi : It's nothing but my fate, my fate. (pointing towards her forehead)

Act-3

Scene-I

Place-The King's Private Chamber

[Maharaj is drinking along with his attendants, Ganapati, Ramesh, Jyoti, Pranballav, Murari and Sardar seated on one side, while the Courtesan and musicians are preparing on the other]

- Maharaj : Give one glass to the Sardar. Drink, Sardar, Drink.
- Sardar : (with folded hands) Maharaj your Majesty.
- Maharaj : Give to everyone, I am giving, everyone should drink, it's my wish!
- Ramesh : Maharaj, I am not used to this.
- Maharaj : Not used to? But you have to drink, because I have given. What Ganpatibabu? Won't you drink?
- Ganapati : Your majesty!

Maharaj : I don't want to listen to refusals. I have given, it's my whim, and everyone has to drink. Gradually you will learn to like it, and as you go on drinking, you will grow the habit as well: you are failing to reckon what a wonderful thing is this? Don't pretend that you have become saints, having renounced everything in life. Drink, drink, gulp it down. Now, start a good song; you should sing a very good song.

(Courtesan sings)

Drink, my friend, drink to life's brim:

Savour your life within the glass' rim;

Sweet is my youth, laced with honey,

Squeeze it out till it's sunny;

Dear beloved, why do you worry?

Life's to revel and make merry,

Frets and fusses, soak them all,

One last sip, and break thy thrall.

(As Pranballav's revelling crosses limits, Maharaj berates him)

Maharaj : You ram! Have you lost all your senses?

Pranballav : What is my fault, your Majesty?

- Maharaj : Do I need to explain it, you wicked ram.
(hits him) I am the Maharaj, no one has the
right to utter anything without my consent.
Everything is under my feet.
- Murari : Your Majesty the Maharaj is the owner of
everything.
- Maharaj : Owner?
- Murari : Your Majesty is our lord.
- Maharaj : Lord? You fool!
- Jyoti : You are our omniscient omnipotent Destiny.
- Maharaj : Hopeless!
- Jyoti : Supremely valorous, overwhelmingly
mighty scion of Chandravansh, the absolute
ruler of the three worlds, fortuitous Srijuta
Maharajadhiraj Bikramendra Bahadur.
- Maharaj : You fool, what's next?
- Jyoti : K.C.S.I.
- Maharaj : Yes, finally.
- Jyoti : In fear of the overwhelming might of our
Majesty, tiger and cattle drink from the
same water hole.
- Maharaj : The wish of such a king is overruled, how
dare you? I have offered you drink, and you

dare not drink! I drink myself, drink a lot,
because it gives me peace.

(Ganapati and Ramesh slowly moves out)

At whose instance have you stopped your
song? I want to know at whose instance
have you stopped singing?

Courtesan : Forgive our folly, your Majesty.

Maharaj : No, no, no follies, sing, sing well.
Everybody dance and enjoy.

(Courtesan begins again)

Drink, my friend, drink to life's brim:
Savour your life within the glass' rim;
Sweet is my youth, laced with honey,
Squeeze it out till it's sunny;
Douse your fire, the senses are alight,
Quench my thirst, consummating the night.
Dear beloved, in the ocean of love
Let's sail our pleasure-laden scow.

Maharaj : I want to remain oblivious, in this way
remain oblivious of everything. I want to
remain unconscious of all my unrest. Give
me wine, more wine. I will drink, drink to
my full. Wine will make me forgetful of

everything. I am very lonely, this wine is like elixir in my despondency, my companion, my solace. Let not your dance cease, let not the drink end, let the mirth persist. I will render all expenses, offer you with choicest drinks, let not penury restrain your mirth. Drink and enjoy! Where did Ganapati and Ramesh vanish? Afraid of being forced to drink? These Bengalis, they don't drink? Only fools don't drink, but I drink, and drink a lot.

Murari : Even menials like us too drink. Without drinks can one enjoy?

Pranballav : There is nothing like wine in life. He who can't appreciate it is born futile.

Jyoti : Is born a ram!

Pranballav : What did you say Jyotithakur?

Jyoti : He who doesn't drink, is born a ram in the next birth.

Pranballav : See, you are cracking a joke on me. Your Majesty, I want justice.

Jyoti : Come on! Did I joke? I only said, one who doesn't drink is reborn a ram. You drink, so why should you be born a ram?

Pranballav : No, you called me a ram! I am not going to tolerate this!

Jyoti : This is called begging to quarrel. Your Majesty, you should judge whether this serf of yours has spoken anything wrong.

Maharaj : Pranballav is a ram, a pure breed of ram. Even a grass eating ram is better than him. But he is a ram on two legs.

(Every one laughs out loudly)

Pranballav : No one is any better. Every one is a ram.

Maharaj : What, even I am a ram?

Pranballav : No your Majesty, you are our lord.

(Starts hitting and kicking Pranballav)

Pranballav : Your Majesty, pardon me, pardon me, pardon me.

Scene-II

Place- Assembly Ground

[Hordes of people accumulate in the ground, Vardhaman, Rammanik, Hari, Punkhi and Rahman can also be seen within the crowd]

- Rahman : What is this meeting all about?
- Rammanik : No idea, but heard that the leaders will come.
- Vardhaman : Don't you know that Maharaj has summoned all the subjects to the capital; the leaders will be speaking about that.
- Rahman : Maharaj has called us, what is there to talk about that?
- Rammanik : What's the harm in going and listening to what Maharaj says?
- Punkhi : They are coming.

(The leaders and the activists enter along with the women workers)

- Brajen : Let's begin the meeting, Rajenda.
- Rajen : Amar, propose a name for the President.
- Amar : I propose the name of respected Vardhaman Debbarma, to accept the chair of President for this meeting and coordinate all the proceedings.
- Brajen : I wholly support this proposal.
- (Everyone claps)**
- Thakurcha, kindly take the chair of the President.
- Vardhaman : Should I of all persons become the President? (Takes the chair) Anyway, let's start the meeting with an inaugural song.

(The women workers sing)

Arise, arise, the folks of Tridib, arise,

Tear apart the shackles of old lies,

March out of darkness to light,

Hand in hand, let's take up the fight.

Why are you left behind?

Blind faith an' lies, never mind,

March out of darkness to light,

Hand in hand, let's take up the fight.

Vardhaman : Now, Rajen will give a speech.

Rajen : Respected President Sir, all the gentlemen present here, and my mothers and sisters, You have already heard a lot about the necessity of building up this Samity. With your encouragement, we have set up hundreds of schools in the hills. The people of this soil have cherished a desire to live like human beings and rewrite their destiny. But friends, a united populace always evoke fear in their heart and they grow wild as mad dog.

We had always been aware of the nefarious attempts of the Royal dynasty to segregate the tribal factions of the state. Today once more there is an attempt to communalise the political situation. The motive is very clear. It is beyond doubt that such communal titillations are intended for serving selfish interests. Friends! Today we need to distinguish between our friends and enemies.

Any community or a tribe can never be another's enemy. The self-serving reactionary exploitative agents in this society are our enemies, you need to understand that. Maharaj is inviting you to form a communal party, so think carefully before you proceed.

(One person speaks out from the crowd)

Punkhi : But, isn't Maharaj calling us out of affection?

Rajen : You feel that Maharaj is concerned about you, so he is calling you. But have you ever wondered why does he call you? He invited all the Sardars for the Hasham bhojan during the Puja and offered you plenty of drinks. He petted you and you thought- oh! how much the Maharaj loves us. He offered you drinks and gifts; but you never realised that these were the seeds of poverty, illiteracy and discord.

Brothers, we need to think now. We must cherish to live like human beings. No longer can we allow others to gamble with our lives. My friends, I want to conclude my speech, cautioning you once more about Maharaj's motives.

(applause)

President : Amar, you speak on something in your language.

Amar : Respected President, brothers and friends!

We were ruled by Kings for thousands of years now. What did we gain? We had remained ignorant; in spite of appropriating revenue from us, our kings left us to live and die in poverty. We should not be taken for granted anymore. We must stand on our

own feet. It's the age of democracy, and we must fight for democracy even in our state. The days of monarchy are gone.

When India gains Independence after the withdrawal of the British, where will the kings take shelter? Today the king needs our help to protect his interests. We should unite together and help in paving the way for democracy. I am not prohibiting you to go to the King's assembly, but you should think before you take any step. This is what I want to say.

Rajen : Now, our President will speak a few words.

President : (scratching his head) What should I say? We don't know much, neither understand all the things; you should decide what is good for us. You people are educated and should know what should be the right step. What more should I speak? This is all that I have to say.

(Applause)

Prafulla : Now we will raise slogan, kindly all of you stand up.

Amar : Inquillab! You should say zindabad together. (Only the workers say 'Zindabad', the rest says 'Jai')

Amar : Inquillab

Agiye Chalo
(Let's Move Ahead)

All : Zindabad. (thrice)

(The crowd disperses, except two)

Hari : What are they saying? Tin
claap.....Jingabubar!

Rammanik : I don't know what they are saying. I can't
understand.

(exit both of them)

(Curtain falls)

Scene-III

Place- The King's Counsel Chamber

(Maharaj is drunk and groaning once in a while, two servants standing beside the him with a bottle, Pranballav, Murari and Jyoti rushes in)

All : Your Majesty, everything is ruined.

Jyoti : Your Majesty's one lakh rupees is wasted.

Pranballav : We have lost the battle, Maharaj. The subjects have fallen for those young devil's claptraps.

(Maharaj becomes furious)

Maharaj : What are you saying? All of you have been defeated.

Jyoti : Yes, your Majesty, your poor servants have failed.

Maharaj : Poor servants have failed! You idiots!

Murari : Your Majesty, we made all efforts to prevent those young devils from speaking in the meeting. But, somehow, defying all our resistance, they managed to speak.

Maharaj : And you just gazed at their faces! Idiots! Didn't you boast about your influence on the subjects? What happened now?

Pranballav : Your Majesty!

Maharaj : Shut up, you fools! Go and imprison those devils. Take them to custody. Hurry up, go.

Pranballav : As you wish, your Majesty.

(Exits Pranballav hurriedly)

Maharaj : How dare they interfere in my job? Do I have to tolerate this as well? Alas! Is this my fate? Once no one dared to utter a word against my wish, and today these few young fellows are conspiring against me. And I have to sit back and watch them hopelessly! Alas! I have enemies everywhere today. Everyone is against me. Even my loyal subjects have deserted me. I have lost everything. I can't find anyone in my favour today.

(Pranballav along with Police enters with Rajen, Brajen and Amar as captives)

So, you have come? (Maharaj covers his face with his hands and pretends weeping)

You kill me, chop my body off. Bring the sword. (thrusts his neck forward) Sever off my head. We both belong to the same community. Tell me what do you want to do with me?

No, you are my enemies, my biggest enemies! I will kill you, shoot you down.

No, no, but you are like my sons, come here! The same blood runs through our vessels. How can you be my enemies? That can't be, that can't be!

Rajen : Maharaj, we are believers in humanity and a progressive society.

Maharaj : And traitors too. You have interfered in my job. You are communists!

Amar : We don't understand communist non-communist. We believe in education for all and public welfare.

Maharaj : And disobedience and treason. You are my enemies- communists. Take them away. Go, go away.

(Police departs along with Rajen, Brajen and Amar)

Enemies, enemies, my sworn enemies!

Jyoti : Your Majesty, the public is outraged hearing of their arrest.

Pranballav : Your Majesty, even ex-soldiers have been enraged.

Murari : Your Majesty, they are refusing to join our procession. Even the Hallungas are creating a racket without understanding the issue.

Maharaj : Uff! Do I have to listen to all these things?
Even my loyal subjects are betraying me!
Is this my fate? Everyone has deserted me!
Oh! ho!

(Sings a bard)

O King! your days are over and gone,
The sun is setting and you are alone,
Why curse your fate and lament the past!
What's inevitable accept you must.
Tides of people will crumble your might,
Give them now what is their right,
You can't recall the flow of time,
Bidding you adieu, listen to the chime.

Scene-IV

(Enter Rajen, Brajen, Amar and Prafulla)

Brajen : Rajenda, the political situation has become very complicated. We should provide the people with directions. Congress has forgotten all its promises as soon as it occupied power.

Amar : The government has become very vindictive towards us.

Rajen : That is true. This is the time of our real test.

Amar : But, this is not the time to remain quiet, Rajenda. Tell us what should be our next step.

Rajen : Brothers, we need to proceed very cautiously. We must remain aware of any conspiracy from the Government's side. They want to suppress this movement by creating communal divisions among the hill people. They are also propagating that the objective of our movement is eviction of

the Bengali community. In this way they are making us suspicious of each other. But we know and believe that- such misperceptions will one day fall aside. There will come a day when our ideology and ideals will be accepted by the majority of the people of the state. The truth cannot be hidden by deception for long. One day the truth will be apparent like broad day light.

Today our challenge is to build our organisation across the state. To grow a party of the have nots from the youth of the state. In this way we can organise all the exploited people of the state on one platform.

(Enters Urmilla)

Urmilla

: But my children, will you succeed to awaken this illiterate slumbering race? Our people are mired in centuries of ignorance, lying like an unconscious inanimate boulder, without any desire and hope; can they change to aspiring living beings?

Brajen

: For how long can the subjects endure ages of exploitation and persecution? Even there is a limit to suffering. When exploitation transgresses all limits, the subjects are forced to take up agitation. Mother, you are calling them ignorant, but even they are humans.

Amar : Why won't they wake up? Haven't you seen mother, when hit with hammer, even inanimate boulders emit sparks of fire. The government's exploitation has seared the subjects to their last breath, now flames will erupt.

Prafulla : Even we are human beings mother, how long can we bear?

Urmilla : I bless you my children, let your movement be successful. Yet, doubts creep in, whether you will be able to awaken this slumbering race?

(Enters a bard singing)

The subjects of Tridib will wake up now;

In spite of diversity will take up a vow,

Communal forces will be nipped anyhow,

Unity, equality and progress for all

Our goals, we will achieve for all.

Rajen : Do you hear mother? The subjects of Tridib will sleep no longer. They will wake up, surely will they wake up. How long will they mutely suffer the unbearable agony of exploitation and poverty? It's their turn to know why they had remained eternally poor, illiterate and inhumane for all these years. Why people in this state can't have enough to eat and wear? Who is responsible for this condition? Who brings poverty and

suffering to the people? We need to gather people together and expose the benefactors of this system, point out their real enemies. Then, only then, these groups of exploited subjects will turn into a party of the proletariat.

Urmilla : You go forward, my children. Dedicate your priceless lives for the noble cause of uplifting the downtrodden. I do not intend to restrict your lives within the selfish confines of mother's cuddle. Proceed with an unflinching commitment to emancipate the oppressed mothers, brothers and sisters of this state.

Rajen : Brothers, we have to prepare ourselves for a stiff struggle ahead. India has gained independence, but there is no meaning of democracy in this country, no personal freedom. The ruling government is busy protecting the interests of the Kings, zamindars, and business men. It is for safeguarding their interests that the Security Act has been promulgated. But friends we will not be afraid and stop our movement till democracy in its truest form is established in our state. We want democratic rights affirmed in free India.

All : Inquillab Zindabad.

(Everyone exits except Urmilla)

Urmilla : Oh! my heart is trembling for them. No, no, I shouldn't be weak at this moment. They are marching ahead for the welfare of the country and its citizens. They are committed to liberation of humanity. It's not the time for apprehensions. Affection, fondness, tenderness need to be sacrificed at the altar of call of duty. Go forward, my children, go. Bless you be victorious.

(Curtain falls)

Scene-V

Place- Police Office

[Nihar, Inspector and I.B. Officer sitting in the office]

Nihar : We need to trace them out. It's all rubbish that no one knows their whereabouts.

I.B. : Yes, how is it possible that the public doesn't know them. They are going around the villages organising meetings, and they say they don't know them. We know where they hold meetings.

Nihar : Yes, you get to know, but only after the meeting is over, not before that. So much for your efficiency.

I.B. : (scratching his head) What can be done, tell me? The fellows are difficult catches.

Nihar : They launched such a huge procession in the heart of the city, and no one could sniff that out even an hour in advance. Very surprising.

I.B. : Mysterious indeed. It's unimaginable how could they build up such a big organisation in so short a time.

Nihar : You fellows are incompetent, you can't get things done. I will show how to do things. (blows his whistle, enter Police constables) Listen, these detectives have failed to achieve anything, they are useless. We, the police have to actively pursue the case. Do you know who are we looking for? You are going in search of some traitorous law-breaker devils. They are involved in evicting the Bengalis from the state. You should try to save the face of the police.

(exits)

I.B. : They neither are involved in evicting the Bengalis nor communal conflicts.

Inspector : The regret is that in spite of all these propaganda, we couldn't instigate communal conflicts. But at least the police constables need to be brainwashed, and the communal card is our biggest weapon.

I.B. : It is quite understandable.

Nihar : Nothing will be achieved by you. You are just wasting government money by taking salary.

I.B. : Let's see how far police can trace them.

Nihar : Of course!
(an informer enters surreptitiously)

See, our man has already brought information. Could you gather any news?

Informer : Yes, babu, I could gather the names of the people who are involved in this agitation and the names of the Secretaries even.

I.B. : Very good, very good.

Nihar : The same old information, names of all those involved. Who is not involved, tell me, almost everyone is involved.

Informer : Who all are in charge of subscription that also I have gathered.

I.B. : Very good once more.

Nihar : You are not able to provide any information about those devils.

Informer : What can I say, sir?

Nihar : What do they do, where do they go, where do they stay, if you can't collect these information, then no point.

Informer : Huzoor, my god! You are asking that? Every moment they are changing their locations, so how do I inform you about their locations?

Nihar : Can't you follow them?

Informer : Oh no! I will be caught easily. How can I evade so many eyes? They are very cautious.

- I.B. : Can't you fit someone else to follow them?
Why will you go yourself?
- Informer : Who will I fit, tell me, Sir. Whoever will I
engage, may act as a double agent?
- Nihar : This is real bother!
- Informer : You can't gauge the level of danger
involved in this, babu.
- I.B. : We can make out from your words.
- Nihar : Battering is required, I guess. Listen you
just point out all those workers and their
officebearers.
- Informer : I have given you the names, babu.
- Nihar : You fool, how can I know their faces from
their names? You have to show the faces of
the workers and their officebearers.
- Informer : But, babu. (starts scratching his head)
- Nihar : No, but, shut. We have to beat them black
and blue.
- I.B. : You can't even get their trace.
- Nihar : What do you mean? Are we as idiots as
you?
- I.B. : Why would you be? I am only saying that
you will end up bringing some innocent
fellows, what else?

- Nihar : What do you mean by innocent? Everybody is involved.
- I.B. : This will be foolhardy, nothing else.
- Nihar : Keep your scruples to yourself.
- I.B. : You will end up infuriating all the people, I warn you.
- Nihar : No, I am not going to enrage them, I will arrange to permanently fix them. Do you understand, Mr. I.B.?
- I.B. : It's difficult to understand you, your brains are too fertile! (Enters Madan)
- Madan : Niharbabu, how far have you proceeded?
- Nihar : Yes, sir, we have mobilised police.
- Madan : Could you trace them?
- Nihar : Not yet, sir; looks like we need third degree to elicit information.
- Madan : (to the informer) Hey! Any news? How is the situation?
- Informer : My lord, the situation has heated up.
- Nihar : Yes, we have to cool it down. As is the dog, so is the clobber.
- I.B. : Hope you don't break the clobber.

Nihar : I don't know why people like you come to this profession. A feeble mind is not suitable for this job. You should better be a teacher, and initiate yourself by beating students first.

I.B. : I won't suit in that department, because I will be more of an I.B. than teacher there.

(Enters Congress leader, with Gandhi skullcap, khadi Punjabi and pyjama)

Leader : Namaskar, Madanbabu.

Madan : Namaskar, how are you doing?

Leader : Doing well, even we are not sitting idle. Even our workers are active in the villages.

Madan : But what are your people active in?

Leader : It will depend on your strategy. If you sit idle, what can we do? Taking advantage of your inaction, they are gaining ground. Eventually they may become unmanageable. I can't understand your hesitation in curbing a group of criminals and hooligans.

Madan : It's not hesitation, we are ascertaining a way. Why can't you see, sometimes we need a Bibhisan also.

Leader : Why are we there? We are ready to help you.

Madan : How much help can we expect from you?

Leader : He! he! Do we need to elaborate? We can put our volunteer cadres after them. They can show way to the police and military inside villages. (agitated) Congress will invoke all its might to punish such hooligans. Traitors, rebels and criminals must be brought to justice at any cost. We must destroy all social outlaws.

(Mahananda enters with folded hands)

Mahananda : Pronam my lord!

Leader : What Mahananda? What about you?

Mahananda : O my lord, you don't know, I am ruined.

Nihar : Why, what happened?

Mahananda : I was bringing a few hundred mons of paddy from the hills. They have snatched away everything.

Leader : How dare they retain your paddy forcibly? Criminals!

Mahananda : They want to stock their paddy with the rich farmers. But that eliminates our chance of making profits.

Leader : No, no, such things can't be tolerated. We will not allow even one morsel of paddy.

Mahananda : What's the way out, sir?

- Leader : If they come to take paddy, we will shoot them.
- Nihar : Right sir, Mahananda, don't fear, I am arranging for police, if they come to take paddy, they should be shot at.
- I.B. : You are going to unleash anarchy. It will be much easier now for those communists to gain ground.
- Nihar : Keep aside your political theory. The need of the hour is whacking them up.
- Leader : You go back, Mahananda, don't worry, we are arranging for security.
- Mahananda : As you wish, my lord, Pronam.
(Exits Mahananda)
- Leader : So, finally, we could get a way to deal them.
- Nihar : That's right, let's go. This time we will teach those devils a good lesson. **(exit all)**

(Curtain falls)

Scene-VI

Place- A rural area, with a cottage

[Enter Rajen and Prafulla, exhausted, both carrying cloth bag on their shoulders]

Prafulla : How far more do we have to travel? I have become very tired, and very hungry as well.

Rajen : Almost reached Prafulla, not far from here. You are feeling very distressed, isn't it Prafulla? You don't like wandering like this?

Prafulla : Why shouldn't I? We are doing all these for our country, our people! But sometimes when we don't get to eat, it hurts.

Rajen : It makes you sad, isn't it?

Prafulla : No, no, why should it make me sad? When I am hungry, it hurts my stomach, as simple as that.

Rajen : We have to undergo lot of trials like this, brother. We have chosen an arduous sacred duty, which will incur innumerable dangers and woes on its way. But we have to transcend all of them and march ahead.

Prafulla : There are times, when it gets scary, Rajenda. If you are not around, it makes me nervous.

Rajen : (Aside) You are still dependant on your leader, then. (Aloud) Prafulla, you need to be strong, very strong.

Prafulla : Have we arrived, Rajenda?

Rajen : Yes, almost. Life is a long journey, how can we expect it to get over so soon? Anyway, sit; let's take rest.

(enters a messenger)

What's the matter? Any news?

(The messenger takes out a letter from his baton, and hands over to Rajen, who hurriedly opens it and starts reading)

(Amar also enters in a huff and starts talking)

Amar : Inhumanity, tyranny, Rajenda; one couldn't have imagined such things to happen.

Rajen : Amar, tell me, what's the matter?

Amar : No one had ever imagined such things, Rajenda. They fired indiscriminately at completely unarmed peaceful people.

Rajen : (Rajen's eyes burn with anger) They fired at peaceful people! This is unimaginable! Uff, this slaughtering Congress government! Amar, find out the number of casualties.

Amar : It's not yet known, but it will be high.

Prafulla : Rajenda, what will happen? My heart is trembling.

(Prava, Suniti and Rama enter, very worried)

Prava : Rajenda, is it true that the government has killed so many innocent people?

Rama : Has it really happened, da Rajen?

Rajen : Yes, it's true that the government has indiscriminately and brutally fired on completely unarmed people. It was done to protect the interests of certain crook, mercenary businessmen and money lenders.

Prava : Oh! how could they be so cruel?

Suniti : How could they be so cruel?

(enters Brajen hurriedly)

Brajen : So cruel, so cruel, it's inhuman.

Rajen : Don't be impatient. First we need to help the injured. We must not be stupefied. It's very clear Congress government, which path you have chosen. You want to suppress our demands by unleashing a stream of blood. You can't, you despotic government, you can't. You can't snatch away every bit of rice from hundreds of hungry peasants; you can't leave them without anything to

wear: and when they protest you can't indiscriminately butcher them.

You Congress Government, you have opened our eyes forever, there is no doubt in our mind today, which way you are driving the poor subjects of this state. The subjects of the state will not succumb in front of your sticks and guns. We are not going to give up till our demands are met. Friends, march ahead, friends, march ahead!



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