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THE EDUCATION OF MISS ASIA

An Asian Comedy

by

Ernest MacIntyre

With an Introduction
and
Notes for Students
by Ashley Halpe

Educational Publications Department

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Preface

"The Education of Miss Asia" is an optional textbook in the current syllabus for the G. C. E Advanced Level English.

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M. K. J. A. Alwis
Commissioner of Educational
Publications & Deputy Director
General of Education

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INTRODUCTION

Sri Lanka has no professional theatre, but even professionals could be proud of some of the things the Lankan theatre has done. The enthusiasm and sustained efforts of theatre groups and dedicated individuals have, in just over a century, developed traditions and standards of creative and meaningful theatre, of considerable verve and richness, in the three languages of the country. Innovative new plays challenge audiences, while a nourishing sense of tradition keeps a few well-loved plays in the repertoire. Translations and adaptations ranging from Sophocles and Shakespeare to Brecht, Beckett and Dario Fo test and extend the abilities of performers and directors and give audiences a fair range of theatrical experience.

While the activity is naturally greatest in the Sinhala theatre, the Sri Lankan English theatre has had and has a significant place. It is, of course true that such theatre and drama came to Sri Lanka as part of the colonial process and like other "things British" struck roots in the milieu of the "urbanised Western-oriented intelligentsia" who were "quick to accept uncritically and quicker to ape" western tastes that they "deemed fashionable." (Jayatilaka, 1987). But at least after E. F. C Ludowyk began to work with the University College Dramatic Society (later the University Dramatic Society - the Dramsoc) "aping" gave place to more creative approaches to performance and daringly contemporary choices of plays. Thus Ludowyk directed Brecht's *The Good Woman of Setzuan* for the Dramsoc even before Brecht became known to British audiences; he also introduced Cocteau, Anouilh, Pirandello, O'Neill, etc., to Lankan audiences. His work benefitted the Sinhala theatre, too, for he collaborated with the Ranga Sabha, while Professor Sarachchandra has said that he learnt a great deal of what he knew about the basics of production and performance from watching Ludowyk at work.

Ernest MacIntyre

MacIntyre inherited the Ludowyk tradition. He was a member of the Dramsoc while a student at Peradeniya when Jubal directed *Major Barbara* and *Ludowyk Androcles and the Lion*, and he was active in the annual one-act play competition. Ludowyk left Sri Lanka after *Androcles*. MacIntyre and other Dramsoc alumni formed Stage and Set,

a new theatre group which, with the Aquinas College Dramatic Society, continued the work of Ludowyk when the Dramsoc was struggling to cope with the drastic reduction in the availability of performers competent in English in Peradeniya as the Swabasha policy took effect in the early sixties.

Stage and Set productions of plays by Ugo Betti, Arthur Miller, Gamini Gunawardene, Jean Genet, Brecht and Shakespeare, and by MacIntyre himself, were received enthusiastically by audiences as well as critics. The dedicated teamwork of talented performers and efficient crews gave us some memorable experiences of theatre.

MacIntyre was practically the resident director and dramaturg of the group, though on occasion another director worked with them, as when Iranganie Serasinghe directed Gamini Gunawardene's Rama and Sita. Hence his sense of theatre was nurtured by long hours of rehearsal, tested by performance of masterworks of European and American drama as well as of new works, with players who had a sense of identity as a group and a feeling for tradition bred in the Ludowyk days.

When he came to writing his own plays it was very much as a man of the theatre with a rich personal experience of the conditions of performance, the facilities for theatre in this country and the tastes and potentialities of Lankan audiences. As he has put it himself :

..... There is no doubt that a first unintentional step is to come into real contact with the work of some of the great masters of the Theatre. By real contact I mean actually directing their works, not just reading them. Not only does the sheer wonderment stir something in you, but without your knowing it, some of their techniques or even tricks start seeping into you All along while directing *Death of a Salesman*, *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *Crucible*, *Othello*, *Hamlet* and *Genet's Death Watch*, without my asking for it, or even knowing it, the tricks of the trade were being quietly slipped into my tool box (de Silva, 1984, p. 31).

MacIntyre's first play was very much a product of these experiences for it was a sequel, very moving in performance, to *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, created after he had directed Brecht's play, and when Henry Jayasena's Sinhala version had begun its long tenancy of the Lankan stage.

At the same time, MacIntyre and his associates of Stage and Set were sensitive to the changing social environment and well aware of the immense efflorescence of creativity in the country, particularly in the Sinhala theatre. As Dr. Neloufer de Mel (1993) has noted,

MacIntyre sought to move the local English theatre away from its isolation and cliquishness, by virtue of being the theatre of the English educated, westernized and therefore elite Sri Lankan minority, into partnership with actors of the Sinhala stage, convinced that there was much to be gained from the interaction of personalities and styles of both theatres... (p. 134).

When MacIntyre directed *The Crucible* he had Henry Jayasena play Proctor; Henry and Manel Jayasena were Simon and Grusha twenty years older in MacIntyre's first play *The Full Circle of Caucasian Chalk*; Chitrasena played Othello. Stage and set collaborated with Henry Jayasena and the Lanka Mahajana Kala Mandalaya in the now famous Jayasena production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and in fact Stage and Set actually linked up with the Mandalaya. As Dr. de Mel comments MacIntyre's "awareness of the insularity of the Sri Lankan English theatre is important": MacIntyre has said

The time Stage and Set was offering *Chalk Circle*, *Crucible* and *Othello* was the same decade ('60 to '70) when Maname and Sinhabahu were running a strong course in the mainstream culture of the nation. I do recollect times when everything we were doing - producing European masterpieces - seemed futile in the presence of these two original Sri Lankan masterpieces. The Colombo English sub-culture sometimes looked small and meaningless to me (de Silva, 1984, p. 31)

One can agree with Dr. de Mel that this realisation probably provoked him to start writing plays he felt were more 'relevant' to local audiences, drawing on topical situations and dramatizing on stage the ethos of middle-class Sri Lankans, commenting on its social norms and grappling with its aspirations and problems. (de Mel, 1993, p. 134)

However, I wouldn't entirely go along with the phrase "drawing on topical situations," for "relevance" does not have too narrow a meaning in MacIntyre's plays. They are not topical in the sense in which H. C. N. de Lanerolle's 'The Senator' and E. M. W. Joseph's 'The Foreign Expert' were topical, the former written when a bicameral legislature

was first mooted for Sri Lanka and the latter when the foreign expert syndrome had become very evident in this country. MacIntyre is concerned more with the ethos of middle class, urban and, particularly, English-speaking Sri Lankans, rather than with the specificities of the moment or the place.

Even in his last play but one, Rasanayagam's *Last Riot* (pubd. 1993), which comes closest to the realities of a specific situation "actual events in Sri Lanka during the last days of July and the first days of August, 1983, he reaches out from the particular situation in a deeply concerned exploration of the issue. Calling the play "A Political Fiction for the Theatre," he invents a central fiction (Introduction) and indeed the final sequence of the *Rasa* story (an Epilogue follows) bears out his belief, expressed in the "Author's Note" to his first play that playwriting is "fundamentally, a ritual." ("*The Loneliness of the Short-distance Traveller*", *New Ceylon Writing* 1971, ed. M. Y. Gooneratne, p. 35). MacIntyre mulled over the issues for seven years before he directed a performance of the first draft in 1990.

Earlier plays are based on a variety of aspects and areas of Lankan middle-class life, "recreating in the world of art a people from a sub-culture without trivialising them" (MacIntyre's communication to Dr. Lakshmi de Silva quoted earlier). At the same time, however, characteristic behaviour, values and assumptions of representative sectors of this class are defamiliarised by a technique of bringing situations or conditions which are fantastic or even grotesque into the lives of ordinary people with their commonplace activities and conversation. In *The Loneliness of the Short-distance Traveller* a group of office-workers, commuting to the city by train as they have done for "twenty years . . . six days a week" are suddenly challenged by one of their number to perceive the inanity of their normal conversation and instead to observe total silence as they travel. In "A Somewhat Mad and Grotesque Comedy" a young executive, his head full of sales conferences and club meetings, and his wife, frazzled by coping with two young boys and a grandmother, are faced with fratricide: one of the boys has pushed the other's head into the oven. In "The Education of Miss Asia" we have the novel conditions incorporated into the beauty contest and the unpredictable behaviour of Chaudaribhoy.

In each case MacIntyre exposes the falsity and absurdity of many of the values and assumptions, and even the activities and conversation of middle-class Lankans. But in each case he also moves beyond this by a technique he describes in the letter to Lakshmi de Silva :

I don't know how I stumbled on the technique, but roughly it is this - present them in the first part of the play as trivial but comic and enjoyable characters, and then, either gradually or with a sudden jolt expose them in their universal traits. (p. 31)

We perceive the loneliness that must come with the erasure of communication; a jolting realisation of mortality intrudes into the suburban chatter and trivia; even Miss Asia must face the impermanence of romance, the fragility of fairy tale.

MacIntyre has several other plays to his credit, including the almost farcical *The President of the O. B. A.*, a fantasy, *The Fountains of Paradise*, and a very moving work, 'Once in a Blue Moon', conceived as a memorial to his friend, fellow-actor and fellow-director Karan Breckenridge, killed in his prime in a motor accident. 'Let's Give Them Curry' (first performed in 1981, published in 1985) has a family of Sri Lankan immigrants encountering the perils of acculturation in Australia. MacIntyre's latest work, performed in Sydney and Colombo but still unpublished, named 'The Government of Beddegama' in one of MacIntyre's lists but also known as 'A Village in the Jungle', is derived from Leonard Woolf's novel 'The Village in the Jungle' set in the country's southern jungle at the turn of the century.

The range of subject and locale is matched by an experimental, eclectic choice of method. 'The Loneliness of the Short-distance Traveller' and 'A Somewhat Mad and Grotesque Comedy' marry methods derived from Ionesco and the Absurdist Theatre to comic dialogue reminiscent of the Ralahamy Plays and of Eddie Jayamanne, while in both a surrealist poetry of the theatre gives the closing sequences a sombre resonance. In 'Loneliness' the deepening has the intriguing effect of giving an anti-Ionesco shift to the thematic content, that if "one of the things Ionesco was saying "seemed to be that" all the chatter between human beings did not amount to communication," it was" equally true that it would be tragic and suicidal to assume that you can do without

the warmth and companionship of people, however meaningless and nonsensical they might appear to be" (Note by MacIntyre preceding the published text - Gooneratne, 1971).

Commenting on *The President of the O. B. A.* Lakshmi de Silva notes the influence of the Rough Theatre of Peter Brook, quoting from his *The Empty Space* :

The rough theatre is close to the people. It is distinguished by the absence of what is called style The rough theatre does not pick and choose ... a bucket can be banged for a battle, flour used to show faces white with fear. The arsenal is limitless; the aside, the placard, the topical reference ... the songs, the dances, the tempo, the noise, the relying on contrasts, the shorthand of exaggeration ... (de Silva, 1984, p. 30)

We can agree that "the extension of these principles permeates the working of all the later plays. In *Loneliness* and *Somewhat Mad* MacIntyre makes effective use of newspapers and well-known Christian hymns are sung in both the latter play and *Rasanayagam's Last Riot*, where the simple optimism of the hymn in the back-ground accentuates the bleak hopelessness of the story of Rasanayagam's end. Actors mime the movements of commuters on a train, or perform the theatrical technique of walking in the same spot or act as if there actually is a wall between them and the audience (a mirror is imagined to hang on this wall in *Let's Give Them Curry*). *The Education of Miss Asia*, in which Chaudaribhoy is actually an actor, is particularly rich in episodes where there is a conscious use of theatricality as in Miss Asia's first lesson, or the "Walk" on Galle Face Green.

A particular characteristic of MacIntyre's drama is his very flexible use of the language, with a wide range of "registers" and a fine ear for the nuances of English as spoken in our part of the world (and by the children of Lankan migrants to Australia - *Let's Give them Curry*). The authentic cadences of Sri Lankans at home, in the workplace, in the train, are beautifully caught in the dialogue, which has the raciness and spiciness, the distinctive rhythms, the sometimes startling mixtures of creativity and cliché, characteristic of Lankan English. We have to assume that actors will employ the tones, tunes and rhythms of our day-to-day speech which cannot be indicated in the text. We note, too, the shifting of registers in relation to context and the person/s addressed which is typical of our speech.

However, emphasis on authenticity does not do justice to MacIntyre's ways with language, and may even mislead. It is not consistent with a recognition of the originality and eclecticism of MacIntyre's dramatic style.

Thus fragments from newspapers, snatches of hymns and songs, quotations are woven into the dialogue, while speech is itself in a variety of modes, from realistic conversation to the free verse in which the last moments of Rasanayagam are narrated. Even apparently realistic dialogue can 'shift gear,' as it were, as in the second part of his first play, *The Loneliness of the short - distance Traveller* :

- SILVA : All got held up, funny, even I couldn't make the 5.55, just one of those odd days, I suppose, (Silence - the train). But Perera, My friend Perera, could not have got held up, he must have made the 5.55 alone. (Silence - the train)
- 4TH MAN : Here it says that the World Cup will be difficult this year, because they don't think the Portuguese very sporting, playing the devil in Angoda, it's going to be very difficult... but ...
- 3RD MAN : Smoking, is going to be even more difficult, as far as I can see, I mean ...
- WOMAN : What is not difficult these days, they don't even offer a preliminary remark, unlike in those days.

Obviously, though linked by the notion of "difficulty," this is not quite dialogue but a set of parallel speeches, each following her/his trend of thought, producing something of the effect of polyphony as each line is distinct but contributes to the overall effect of speaking without communicating. A moment later, Silva's sentence

I have known Perera for 20 years, my friend Perera, and really I have known him, he doesn't know really, we all don't know (Train) that we know (Train) one another.

has a special rhythmic quality, accentuated by the punctuation and the interpolated noise of the train, which goes along with Silva's effort to convey his perception, which is also partly a confession.

In between the passages of speech occur short sections where fragments repeating passages from earlier in the play are interspersed with the sounds of travel

(lights fade completely, and we hear a babel of confused noises - sections from the 'back page centre page' passage of that morning, the story of "The Three Roses" of the morning, and from the "pure animals" also of the morning ..)

The dramatic texture becomes increasingly complex as we approach the end of the play, making a fine challenge and opportunity for a director, performers and crew. MacIntyre has forged a medium which lays claim to whatever suits his purposes with a resulting richness which is as evident in the language as in other aspects of his theatre.

Reading MacIntyre can never be complete without some effort at imagined theatre: a point to be remembered when approaching the text of **The Education of Miss Asia**.

The Education of Miss Asia

A guide for Students

Marlene Perera has won the Miss Asia title; she is now being groomed for the Miss World contest in London.

But, stop a minute. "Miss Asia" and "Miss World," and before them, "Miss Ceylon" or "Miss Sri Lanka" - isn't it strange that we associate these titles only with beauty contests? This was even more the case when the play was first performed, in 1971. Today some lipservice is paid to what contestants say about themselves and their country and how they deal with unexpected questions. But this is merely lipservice, for it is assumed that candidates will not even reach that stage unless they first qualify on physical appearance - on "vital" statistics, on form and features, on how they move and hold themselves, on their attractiveness. Imagine how it would be if intellectual ability, sensitivity and values were equally important!

Ernest MacIntyre picked on precisely this possibility. He imagined a contest in which

For the first time in this kind of competition they were giving equal marks for latent sensitivity (p.5)

As Oliver Mendis, family friend and newspaper reporter puts it

Marlene is beautiful, she has the attributes of physical beauty, but to put it clearly to you, she would have been swept out in the earlier style of competitions where the emphasis was 95% on physical beauty. In this new style competition, they gave 50% for what they called sensitivity (Ibid).

Marlene herself agrees quite readily that "purely from the point of physical beauty" she was "not really that remarkable" when Oliver Mendis ventured the comment a moment earlier in the play.

MacIntyre doesn't stop there, for he brings in a further criterion for the final round of the contest. Miss World is going to be chosen

Not only for her physical beauty, grace, charm, and vitality of personality, but equally for her INTELLECTUAL AND EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO THE CONTINENT SHE REPRESENTS. (p. 7)

And the organisers of the finals in London expect the contestants "to go through some coaching from an eminent man of learning."

Marlene's father has engaged Raasagoola Chaudaribhoy for the task, having met him in Calcutta immediately after the Miss Asia contest. As the conversation in Act One progresses we learn that the education of Miss Asia is about to begin . . .

We should ask ourselves at this point, what exactly do we think she's going to learn? We have a clue in the word "responses": she will be judged not primarily on information that she has accumulated but on intellectual and emotional responses to the continent. But we still have to ask - responses to what?

What are the aspects of Asia and Asian experience that would bring out Marlene's "latent sensitivity," what are the intellectual and emotional responses that will show her to be a worthy representative of the whole continent?

This is what Act Two is about: the education of Miss Asia to be sensitively aware of, as it were, herself - of Asia, (we have already been given a strong hint of what might happen in Act One. With deceptive simplicity and a disarmingly liberal use of comedy MacIntyre makes both Marlene and his audience increasingly aware of and increasingly disturbed by some of the stark realities of Asia. As Chaudaribhoy puts it at the end of Act One as he initiates the process, the "sharp instrument of political education "is to be used" to scratch this bud of natural ignorance."

Act two starts with some seemingly trivial preliminaries and a joke or two which, however, establish two important points. One, that Marlene Perera who grew up in Bolavalana, attended the "Our Lady of Miracles" convent school and became a typist must now think herself into a new dimension as Miss Asia. She has, as Raasagoola puts it, to "inflate herself." Two, that Raasagoola Chaudaribhoy wants the teacher - pupil relationship taken quite seriously, in line with the South Asian guru - shishya concept. Thus his seriocomic response to Marlene's hesitant invitation "Please sit . . . Raasagoola" makes the point that "instruction" has begun: hence Marlene must not "presume to ask (him) to sit" and she must address him as "professor," not "Raasagoola."

Did you think the expression "inflate yourself" funny? Why? Is it a malapropism? We do speak of feeling deflated, etc. "Inflate yourself" expresses quite precisely what is expected of Marlene in metaphorical terms, though the phrase will seem unusual or odd to Sri Lankans accustomed to the flat international medium based on what used to be called Standard English.

Chaudaribhoy uses many such expressions. We may need to look carefully at our own response to them.

Well, having asked Marlene to inflate herself, Chaudaribhoy promptly deflates her. Chaudaribhoy sets up the situation with a seemingly innocent question: "How many people do you represent, Miss Asia?" When Marlene proudly replies

One billion, six hundred and ninety one million, three hundred and twenty seven thousand, people, professor. I have been doing some reading on my own

he points out that mainland China refused to take part in the contest and that she therefore did not represent nearly half the population of Asia!

This is the kind of education that Miss Asia begins to get from Chaudaribhoy: an awakening to the realities of Asia, as against the sham glamour of beauty contests and the tourist attractions of the exotic. Marlene hadn't even thought about the Republic of China, repeating "the most tragicomic mistake of modern times."

Of course the real point of the education of Miss Asia is the education of the audience. Marlene's education is a challenge to us: are we better informed than she? Do our sensibilities and critical awareness need to be awakened or our ignorance scratched by "the sharp instrument of political education"?

Marlene's first lesson (Act Two) is structured as two parts. In the first, after the introductory exchange, Marlene has to repeat the speech for the London contest written for her by Chaudaribhoy, and he comments on various issues and implications to the enlightenment of both Marlene and the audience.

MacIntyre uses the device of the speech written by Chaudaribhoy for Marlene to make his audience sensitive to some of the realities of Asia while suggesting at the same time that Marlene's audience in London would probably see the issues only in terms of its own selfish interests. Thus, in regard to population the speech makes the well-known point that food production was only increasing in arithmetic proportions while the population was increasing in geometric proportions - a "frightening proposition . . . which should bring a sad hush among the judges." But, as Chaudaribhoy says that the reference to the Hindu Kush mountains would draw "tremendous applause" with its suggestion of a double meaning, and that the probable location of the Garden of Eden would be found exciting because of the tourist potential. "Tremendous investment potential, therefore, tremendous applause!".

Whether we think of the selfishness of those only concerned with "tremendous investment potential" or the selfish excitement of "lecherous old men" and "ageing voluptuaries with flagging senses" at a beauty pageant, it seems unlikely that Marlene's "intellectual and emotional responses to the continent she represents" will make much difference to the final verdict.

When Marlene is depressed by the realisation that important points in her speech would be wasted on "those horrible judges in London," the second part of her first lesson begins. "To really impress them you must horrify them, not please them," Chaudaribhoy tells her, adding that to horrify them she would have to become horrified herself by "the great tragedy of Asia." Using a very dynamic - and theatrical - technique which includes visual aids, shock tactics and sudden shifts of mood he teaches Marlene to "horrify" herself. As his methods vividly bring home to her the horrible realities of starvation, illiteracy and infant mortality she seems frequently near breaking point and is finally almost hysterical. There is no doubt of her capacity to respond.

And as her responses develop the process itself changes from being a coaching session for a beauty contest. It becomes the real education of a real person though, of course, the comic touches and comic phrases do remind us that we are in the theatre.

This is the main strand and, one could say, the focus of Act Three, though it is placed in the setting of several plot elements which move the story to its finale: Hector's plot to have Chaudaribhoy kindapped and dumped in India, Ranjit's plot to have him arrested by the police, the unmasking of Chaudaribhoy and the latter's own revelation that though he was an impostor he was not a villain.

We find that Marlene has lost all interest in the contest - "I don't want to discuss beauty contests any more" (p. 73) she tells the newspaperman - and she bursts out 'I don't want London!' (p. 82) when her parents pressure her. She has taken to "loafing around bookstalls" (p. 71) and "gets only three hours sleep a day, reading so late into the night..." She wears plain white sarees all the time, with no jewellery or make-up and her hair hanging down, prompting her father to say "you wouldn't believe she was preparing for a beauty contest in this world, more like a canonization contest in the next world." She has begun to read seriously, from the ancient classic on theatre, Bharata Muni's *Natyasastra* to Nehru's *The Discovery of India* and Kawabata's *The Snow Country*, and is about to launch into Economics with Gunnar Myrdal's celebrated *Asian Drama*. She has made her father write cheques giving her Miss Asia prize-money to various relief funds in Asia prize-money to various relief funds in Asia and, at home, shows deep compassion for the servant girl, condemning herself and her family for exploiting her illiteracy and reducing her to a domestic slave. The beauty queen - essentially a symbol, after all - is becoming a truly human person.

However, MacIntyre is too astute and too realistic to allow it to appear that he is now developing a portrait of a Perfect Woman to replace our stereotypical notion of a Beauty Queen. Marlene Perera is not perfect, some of her responses are over-excited and immature. When Chaudaribhoy makes her aware of the malnutrition, illiteracy and high mortality of vast numbers of Asian children she rushes into action hysterically:

Daddy, daddy, come here quickly... write out a cheque... Please
Daddy, don't delay, the children are dying like flies... (p. 56)

Also, an audience would surely feel that her response to Chaudaribhoy himself is immature. By the end of Act Two it is clear that she hero-worships him, ignoring the fiance, Ranjit, to whom she was committed so firmly in Act One. Forty-five days later (Act Three) she is totally infatuated.

Such impulsiveness and impressionability nicely counterpoise her generosity and sensitivity, making her credibly human and an attractive theatrical presence.

Fortunately, the object of her infatuation is not a mean adventurer. Chaudaribhoy is mature enough for two and, after allowing himself the luxury and Marlene the sweetness of a brief togetherness in acknowledged love, he invents a theatrical metaphor which enables him to melt away.

His exit is also the end of the play and the conclusion of his imposture. He is not Professor Raasagoola Chaudharibhoy at all but Raichaudari Chaudaribhoy, an out-of-work actor from Bengal who had worked a confidence trick on Hector Perera when the latter was in Calcutta with Marlene for the Miss Asia contest.

The fascinating thing is that it is this impostor who gives Marlene a real education, rescues her from absorption into the ephemeral glitz of the glamour market and who finally loves her enough to remove himself from the scene after revealing the deception, giving a romantic justification for his departure :

... love is like the theatre, Marlene. For it to be a sweet memory, the curtain must fall while it is still surging. Otherwise it will degenerate into deadly habit. (p. 111)

Meantime, Hector has arranged to have him kidnapped and Ranjit to have him arrested. Hector has never done a stroke of honest work in his life and has been in Welikada for fraud. He has been living it up on Marlene's winnings and expects further pickings after London; indeed "you might even see me play a small part" (in a film) he says to Oliver. He is alarmed that Marlene is losing interest in going to the London finals under Chaudaribhoy's influence - "Unless we get rid of Chaudaribhoy today we'll all go back to "Convent View" in Bolavalana."

Ranjit, too has good cause to be alarmed. Towards the end of the first lesson Marlene rejects him for Raasagoola.

Marlene : . . . I'm beginning to feel strange again, please hold my hand. (Ranjit does so.)

No, not you, Raasagoola. (Act two, p. 62)

A moment or two later she moves close to Chaudaribhoy and looks directly into his face, singing "Pluck this little flower . . ." Besides, by Act Three Ranjit has discovered that Chaudaribhoy is an impostor, and believes that the latter is defrauding the Pereras.

Hector's plan creates some degree of dramatic tension, and also provides a comic closure to the romantic scene between Marlene and Chaudaribhoy in Act Three. The working of Ranjit's plan adds to the tension and also leads to a confrontation scene, in which Ranjit feels he has trapped Chaudaribhoy committing a fraud. But there has been no fraud, and the scene actually turns out to Chaudaribhoy's advantage, since the audience sees that he has not educated Miss Asia from selfish motives but selflessly - whatever his motives might have been when he began the imposture in Calcutta.

In the end, Chaudaribhoy is neither kidnapped nor taken away by the police. He makes his own exit, voluntarily, because, he says, he is an actor, and "no actor, comic or tragic, can wait on the stage till all the possibilities are exhausted." (p. 111)

In that last quotation, Chaudaribhoy speaks as an actor. Theatrical imagery and references occur with increasing frequency in Act Three and the concluding scene of the play is worked out in a consciously theatrical way. Chaudaribhoy says

... so gently, let me say goodbye to Marlene, with that walk on the Galle Face Gardens, that I never had.

As he says this, although they —and five other characters— are in a room in the Perera house with the door closed and police on guard outside it, Marlene and he, already lit in a special way so that they

are in an "unreal glow," move to centre stage, "just inside the curtain line," and begin a "single spot mimed walk;" while "the music of the sitar comes up softly." That is to say, they mime the walk on Galle Face, physically representing a crossing-over from reality into fiction. Ranjit, too, crossed this line, doing a mimed single spot walk slightly behind them, while "all the others are blacked out by the lighting." Using two quotations from the Gitanjali of Tagore as his farewell, Chaudaribhoy is then shown as moving out of Marlene's life: as they continue the mimed walk the sitar music rises and their two bodies "still side by side" are seen "tilted in divergent directions." It is typical of MacIntyre that the humorously optimistic touch in the second quotation keeps the final moment from sentimental pathos.

In terms of plot and content we already knew that the Miss Asia part of Marlene's story was over and that Chaudaribhoy was leaving, but in the theatre, the effects of the mimed walk, the sitar music, the lighting, the quotations and, of course, the gestures and expressions of the actors would coalesce into a beautifully poetic close to the play.

This fine sense of theatre is in evidence right through the play. We have already had occasion to notice the theatricality of the range of means used by Chaudaribhoy to educate Miss Asia in Act Two. In performance, or to the imaginative reader, the theatrical effectiveness of many other scenes will be evident. Study of the play with a view to performance, and the rehearsal and classroom performance of at least some scenes can be very rewarding, especially for those who don't have the luck to experience a good performance. It must be noted here that the effectiveness is not only a matter of how special situations and effects are handled. MacIntyre's skill is as evident in the management of situations and conversations of ordinary life, as in the opening scene.

However, MacIntyre does not try for a completely "realistic" effect even in such scenes. He used jokes and wordplay for comic effect - "when you have enough wealth you can buy the best of health," etc., while with the entrance of Chaudaribhoy a lot of comic business and a highly individual use of the English language comes into the play. Chaudaribhoy skips in and skips out, speaks of "keyholing" and of "the kind of rivalry between the oompha and the doompha of innocent girls which, they call beauty contests;" he insists on calling Marlene's family

the "Pararas," and he used theatrical images and phraseology in quite unexpected ways. We realise that we are in the world of comedy - but this is comedy with a difference.

Comedy with a difference. For one thing, the play moves into distinctly serious thematic concerns, as we have already noted, in the two stages of the education of Miss Asia; Marlene's education as Miss Asia - for Miss World, and her education as herself, into a better understanding of herself and of reality.

Secondly, the comic elements themselves help to make many of the play's serious points. Thus, the "inflation" and sudden deflation of Marlene compels the audience to consider a common misconception about Asian geopolitics. Her response to revelations about suffering and deprivation in Asia and her hero-worship of her mentor, Chaudaribhoy, are both comically exaggerated and hence spiced with a saving touch of irony, enabling MacIntyre melodrama. In the first instance the audience gets the point of the education, but is also made to feel the inadequacy of a purely emotional response. In the second, an audience will view Marlene's fervour with a degree of amusement and this would be a preparation for the way the matter ends with Chaudaribhoy removing himself from the scene as "the last lesson in the education of Miss Asia."

Chaudaribhoy is the real focus and dramatic centre of the play. Although Marlene's is the title role, she is acted upon, rather than an actor and her responses and changes direct audience attention to the education she undergoes - and to the educator. A proper appreciation of Chaudaribhoy is essential to a proper appreciation of the play.

It is easy to miss the richness of Chaudaribhoy as a dramatic creation because both Chaudaribhoy and his creator use a mainly comic mode. MacIntyre has him "skip in suddenly" to make his first entrance and gives him, for his first line,

Cha, cha, cha, cha, cha damn Chaudaribhoy ? Damn Chaudaribhoy,
you damn your chances in London . . .

He speaks of "keyholing," as we have noted earlier, but he doesn't merely speak of it - he does some "keyholing" himself to observe these Pararas and this Fernando" and has, in fact, been "keyholing" before making an effective entrance " in the thick of things." MacIntyre gives him some outrageously corny lines, like

Let me take the bull by the horns (like a sacred cow in a half-bake Asian shop) and

I can't carry on smoothly, as long as you continue to be a thorn in the vegetable, so to speak.

However, we need to notice that such lines and actions are more in evidence in Act One and at the beginning of Act Two, and that Chaudaribhoy is in deadly earnest at crucial points in the process of educating Miss Asia, e. g:

They are the terrors you have now inherited, Miss Asia. Malnutrition, starvation and illiteracy on such a scale! This is the frightful monster which now becomes your baby. And what do you intend to do about it?

Further, as we have already noted, besides giving Marlene a real education, Chaudaribhoy rescues her from the glamour market and loves her enough to remove himself from the scene after revealing the deception he has practised on the Pereras. We might note, too, that he has the greatest range of speech and mood of the characters in the play.

Perhaps the clue to Chaudaribhoy's more comic behaviour is his revelation that he actually is an actor from the Bengali Comic Theatre. Perhaps he uses extravagant speech and behaviour deliberately, as an "act," to loosen up the Pereras, to defuse the tension between them and Ranjit and to emphasise his own "difference" as, apparently, an eminent Asian scholar, from the typically westernised Pereras. And perhaps this is part of MacIntyre's strategy of presenting characters "in the first part of the play as trivial but comic and enjoyable" and then giving the audience a sudden jolt by exposing other dimensions.

We might note here that the reason for Chaudaribhoy's deception is never revealed. He remains to the end a rather enigmatic figure - in fact he once describes himself as "a dramatic device from the *Natyashastra*." A complex and intriguing creation, the part requires the skills and intuitions of a mature and talented performer.

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THE EDUCATION OF MISS ASIA

Act One

The sitting room of an expensive flat in the best residential area of Colombo. The decor should show that the occupants have found the luxury recently. There is no vulgar display of wealth or colours, but the beauty of usage is lacking. Display seems to be the primary function. There is one exception: the drinks cabinet, where foreign whiskies, brandies and wines appear to be in constant usage. This one point in the decor shows the real beauty of usage. As the curtain rises we see the occupants in the sitting room. Marlene Perera, recently victorious as Miss Asia, is seated in a plush chair, grandly dressed. Violet Perera, her mother, stands fussing over her. Mr. Perera (Hector), her father, walks up and down the room, a glass of whisky in his hand. We hear the doorbell ring. Hector opens the door and ushers in a gentleman from the press. He carries a camera with him.

HECTOR Ah, come, come Oliver.

OLIVER I hope I've not kept Miss Asia waiting too long.

HECTOR No, no. Oliver, meet my wife, Violet. Violet, Oliver Mendis is a very old and long lost friend of mine. He is now a staff reporter and writer of the "Ceylon Mirror." I have known him from his proof reader days.

OLIVER Glad to meet you Mrs. Perera.

VIOLET How do you do, Mr. Mendis.

HECTOR And, Oliver, this is

OLIVER Oh, . . . please don't rise. There is no doubt that you are Miss Asia, herself. Congratulations.

MARLENE Thank you.

HECTOR Sit Oliver.
(Oliver and Violet settle down, while Hector moves over to the drinks cabinet)

Oliver, what will you have ? There's whisky, brandy, there's this new Australian wine, and this really class gin. It's called befeater. Really smooth.

OLIVER Well, it's a bit early, but...

HECTOR Come on, we never said, "it's too early, "at the 'Lord Nelson' in those days.

OLIVER O. K., I'll have a long whisky.

(Hector pours him one, and is about to refill his own glass.)

VIOLET Hector, there is no need for you to have another one, so soon after the last.

HECTOR Oh, come on, don't fuss Violet. This kind of thing doesn't happen to people every day.

VIOLET But it happened ten days before, and there's three whole months to go for the finals in London. You must watch your health.

HECTOR When you have enough wealth, you can always buy the best of health. cheers, Oliver.

OLIVER Cheers, and here's wishing Miss Asia all the best at the finals for Miss World in London.

MARLENE Thank you.

OLIVER When I knew your father in the early days, you were a little slip of a girl. He used to bring you to the shops outside the 'Lord Nelson' for Christmas shopping. You would be given a long lemonade, while we had a quick shot.

VIOLET Hector, what places you've taken this girl to !

HECTOR She has gone places, regardless.

OLIVER And at that time I would never have suspected you would have grown up to be the beauty you are.

HECTOR Anyone could have seen it, looking at me in the old days, and Violet, of course.

OLIVER well..... well, shall we get down to business?

HECTOR Fire away.

OLIVER Now, this is supposed to be, the Asian household - Miss Asia, pa Asia and Ma Asia, being interviewed by the staff reporter of the "Ceylon Mirror."

HECTOR Yes

(FORMAL INTERVIEW)

OLIVER So, now, for the purpose of the press we will pretend we do not know each other, and have a sort of formal interview, as if I am gathering the facts for the first time for the readers of the "Ceylon Mirror."

HECTOR Fire away.

OLIVER Now, Miss Perera, your first name is Marlene ?

MARLENE Yes.

OLIVER May I call you Marlene ?

MARLENE Please do.

OLIVER Now Marlene, how do you feel about it all, being Miss Asia ?

- MARLENE Terribly excited, but also terribly nervous.
- OLIVER Why nervous, Marlene ?
- MARLENE Because this is only the first step.
- OLIVER Ah ! You're thinking of the finals for Miss world, in London, in three months time.
- MARLENE Yes, that's it.
- HECTOR We have got to keep the target steadily in sight (pouring himself a drink).
- VIOLET You'll lose focus at the rate you're going.
- OLIVER Yes, Marlene, it will be tough going, but I can assure you that the hearts of the entire press, of free Asia, go out to you.
- MARLENE Thank you
- OLIVER And our typewriters too will be unreservedly at your service. Now, Marlene, what do you think were the prime reasons for your victory ?
- MARLENE Well I, I don't
- OLIVER I know it doesn't sound very graceful for you to reply, "my beauty." Though this is true, we have to be tactful. Shall we frame your answer in this way you could say in reply to me, "I think it was not a question of beauty alone, it was my sensitivity to life, that counted for much."
- HECTOR That's well put, very well put !
- OLIVER And this is perfectly true. Your sensitivity must have counted for much. For the first time in this kind of competition they were giving equal marks for latent sensitivity. You see what I mean ?

- MARLENE Yes.
- OLIVER Now, being a family friend I can afford to be frank with you, and you will not misunderstand, or be hurt, by what I'm about to say ?
- HECTOR Not at all, not at all.
- OLIVER You see Marlene, purely from the point of physical beauty, now please don't misunderstand, you are not really that remarkable.
- HECTOR I'm not so sure about that.
- MARLENE No Daddy, your friend Mr. Mendis is right
- OLIVER I'm safe ! I'm with a sensitive and intelligent girl. You see Hector, it's like this. Marlene is beautiful, she has the attributes of physical beauty, but to put it clearly to you, she would have been swept out in the earlier style competitions, where the emphasis was 95% on physical beauty. In this new style competition, they gave 50% for what they called sensitivity.
- HECTOR Again, a matter of inheritance, from me, and Violet of course.
- VIOLET I brought her up decently, that's all I know.
- OLIVER Now, Marlene, why do you think that, for the Miss Asia contest, they strictly prohibited the coaching of the candidates, in book learning, like History, Geography, Economics, and all that kind of thing.
- MARLENE Because they wanted all to have an equal chance, they wanted to judge us on our "latent sensitivity."

OLIVER Correct ! And they also felt that latent sensitivity can be dulled and killed, sometimes, by formal education, given by the wrong type of teachers.

VIOLET Marlene has always been a sensitive child, it's just the we never had the money to give her a decent education. Anyway, by God's grace, touch wood, we have got here.

HECTOR It's not for nothing that her school was called "The Convent of our Lady of Miracles."

OLIVER But of course Marlene, you know that for the finals in London, the judgement will not be simply on latent sensitivity.

MARLENE Yes, I know, it's 50% for sensitivity and 50% for beauty.

OLIVER No, something more than that. They will expect more than latent sensitivity, they will expect an infusion of intellectual approaches into your latent sensitivity. That is why, unlike in the Miss Asia contest, there in London for the finals, they want you to go through some coaching, from an eminent man of learning !

HECTOR Yes, we are getting her ready for London. There is a copy of the rules on the drinks cabinet, Marlene, can you get it ?

(Marlene moves to the cabinet and picks it up, and while she is moving, Hector continues -)

You see, the most important part of the rules says Marlene, can you read the bottom part in thick lettering

- MARLENE (reading) "Not only for her physical beauty, grace, charm, and vitality of personality, but equally for her INTELLECTUAL AND EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO THE CONTINENT SHE REPRESENTS."
- OLIVER That's right, for your intellectual and emotional responses to the continent you represent, that is Asia. So you see, there is quite a difference between the Miss Asia and Miss World finals.
- HECTOR Yes, yes, we have already taken some steps in that direction.
- OLIVER I see. Now, Marlene, what are your reactions to this whole new approach to the contest?
- MARLENE Well, before the Miss Asia contest, I preferred the old system.
- OLIVER Because, as Miss Ceylon, you would automatically be in the London finals.
- MARLENE Yes.
- OLIVER And now ?
- MARLENE I prefer the new system.
- OLIVER Because now you have only four other rivals ?
- MARLENE Yes.
- OLIVER And the whole contest becomes more manageable this way. It would have been impossible to test hundreds of beauties in London, for their intellectual responses, having already exhausted themselves, after testing the physical responses. Now with only five contestants it becomes very manageable.

- HECTOR And imagine the confusion with Malta, Gibraltar .
- OLIVER Now, a few questions Marlene, something about
your schooling.
- MARLENE I left school, the convent of "Our Lady of
Miracles", and then went straight into Pitmans
Commercial Tutoring.
- OLIVER and then ?
- MARLENE There I did shorthand and typing
- HECTOR A practical decision of mine
- VIOLET The truth is we hadn't the money for anything
better, but Marlene is a very clever girl and she
has kept up with her reading.
- MARLENE Mummie !
- OLIVER And now to the proud parents of Miss Asia.
You must be very proud.
- HECTOR Oh yes, we are.
- OLIVER Now Hector, again for the purposes of the press,
I'll pretend I don't know you and ask a few
questions from Ma and Pa Asia.
- HECTOR Fire away.
- OLIVER Now, Mr. Perera, where do you work ?
- HECTOR Well, to be very frank, I never tied myself down
like a slave to any kind of office routine, where
you spend a lifetime, like a dog, in a white collar.
In short, I never gave way to the colonial
mentality. I have been a free lance businessman.

- OLIVER I see, Mr. Perera, what kind of business ?
- HECTOR I kept an open mind, anything that came my way Recently my business affairs have suffered a bit, because of all the work in looking after Marlene's affairs.
- OLIVER You mean the Miss Asia prize money ?
- HECTOR Yes, the prize money and the other organizational matters.
- OLIVER How much was the Miss Asia prize money ?
- HECTOR 100,000 rupees. In fact, it has become a full time business with the 100,000 to be looked after.
- OLIVER I see, and Mrs. Perera ?
- VIOLET Well, I have been taking dress making orders all my life, and between Hector's free lance businessing, and my regular dressmaking, we brought up our only daughter.
- OLIVER Very creditable, and now one more little thing before I finish off. What do you intend doing about preparing Marlene for the finals in London.? I mean in exploiting her latent SENSITIVITY, in preparing her "intellectual and emotional responses to the continent she represents"?
- HECTOR Well, you see Oliver, that subject is strictly not for the press.
- OLIVER Some secret ?
- HECTOR Secrecy is the keynote, because that was the important condition on which I have obtained the services of a most eminent man of learning.

OLIVER Who ?

HECTOR Strictly confidential, Oliver. He is professor R. Chaudaribhoy from the University of Calcutta.

OLIVER Chaudaribhoy ? Never heard of him, but of course, India is so full of universities, you can imagine the number of professors.

HECTOR But this man is a very eminent person, and it costs a lot to engage him.

OLIVER How much

HECTOR This is all confidential, a block fee of 10,000 rupees for the three months, passage up and down, and accommodation at the Galle Face Hotel.

OLIVER Quite a bit.

HECTOR Yes, but you see we have the prize money from the Miss Asia contest, the 100,000/=, and we're investing nearly the whole thing, in preparing Marlene for the finals, so the 10,000/= is fully worth it.

OLIVER And you have 90% left ?

VIOLET Oh no, this fully furnished flat costs 2,000/- a month, so that by the time we're ready to leave for London, it would have cost 6,000/-.

OLIVER Pretty high.

VIOLET Yes. In the old days it was all right living in our small home at Bolavalana, opposite the Convent of "Our Lady of Miracles" there we paid only 97/50 a month, but after this we have to keep up some standard.

OLIVER Of course

VIOLET In addition we bought a Mazda car, for 50,000/-.

OLIVER The one I saw downstairs ?

VIOLET Yes, and there's the chauffeur at 200/- a month, then there's the cook, and then Hector has bought a huge stock of whisky and brandy and all those other drinks.

HECTOR Entertaining is a hell of a thing in this new situation (while pouring himself a drink).

VIOLET So there'll be hardly anything left at the end of three months. I sometimes feel frightened, in case we stop at Asia.

HECTOR Don't be silly, have confidence in your daughter. In any case we have no alternative but to invest, if we hope to whack Miss World.

OLIVER What's the first prize at London ?

VIOLET 500,000 American dollars.

HECTOR And all kinds of film contracts are sure to come in, Oliver. you might even see me play a small part !

OLIVER I'll look forward to that.

HECTOR So you see, we don't mind investing everything to get at the target, and the most important investment of all is the 10,000 on Professor Chaudaribhoy, and he will succeed in getting her intellectual and emotional responses ready.

OLIVER For 10,000 he is sure to succeed.

HECTOR I have great faith in him.

- OLIVER How did you get to know about him ?
- HECTOR Met him at Calcutta, soon after the finals, and clinched the deal. A really brilliant man, and somewhat eccentric, like all brilliant professors.
- OLIVER You sure I can't interview him ?
- HECTOR Oh no, definitely no, any publicity and he said he would wash his hands off the whole thing.
- VIOLET Why is he so particular about that Hector ?
- HECTOR He said that it is generally considered undignified for an eminent university professor to get involved in coaching a beauty queen.
- VIOLET Then why did he get involved ?
- OLIVER For the 10,000, I suppose.
- HECTOR Oh no, he said that he was particularly interested to see that Miss Asia becomes Miss World. Something to do with his pride as an Asian.
- OLIVER Is he already in Ceylon ?
- HECTOR At the very moment he is installed at the Galle Face Hotel, the first lesson is to be this morning.
- MARLENE Yes, that reminds me, I have to do some back ground reading before his arrival.
- OLIVER Please
- MARLENE I'll just step in, and give me a shout before you go.
- OLIVER I'll do that.

(Marlene goes in.)

OLIVER Well, that's about it, I suppose.

HECTOR Have another drink before you go.

OLIVER Yes, thanks.

(While Hector moves to the drinks cabinet, there is a ring at the door.)

VIOLET I hope that's not Professor Chaudaribhoy, Marlene is hardly ready.

HECTOR Oliver, quick, in here. It's obvious you're a press man, and with that camera, quick here *(he is put into a side room.)*

(Hector opens the door and a young man comes in.)

HECTOR Oh it's you.

VIOLET *(at the side door)* It's all right, Mr. Mendis, you can come out.

(Oliver emerges)

RANJIT *(the young man)* Can I speak to Marlene ?

HECTOR She is not in, gone to a function at the Galle Face Hotel.

RANJIT Oh ! She never told me about that.

HECTOR She has so many appointments these days, that it's hardly likely she'll be able to keep you informed.

RANJIT I see.

VIOLET Ranjit, she'll be free in the afternoon, you can see her then.

HECTOR I don't think she'll be free, there's

RANJIT Please don't bother, I'm going. (He stops at the door.) You might mention that I called. (He goes out.)

VIOLET Hector, why were you rude to him ?

HECTOR I was not rude, I gave him the facts - that Marlene is very busy.

VIOLET (To Oliver) That's Marlene's fiance, Ranjit de Silva.

HECTOR Please violet, don't go on saying "fiance", "fiance," the whole time. That's such a loose French term. There are only two kinds of people, married people and unmarried people. That's all. No "fiances" in between.

OLIVER Is he or is he not Marlene's fiance ? Because that's an angle I missed out.

HECTOR There's no need to mention anything about him, he's just a boy that Marlene happens to know.

OLIVER O. K. Hector, as you wish. I'll run off now, and just give me a call, in case you need any help.

HECTOR O. K. Oliver, and thank you for everything.

VIOLET Thank you.

OLIVER My pleasure, tell Marlene I hurried off, won't disturb her, if she's getting ready for this Professor Chaudaribhoy. Cheerio !

HECTOR Cheerio !

VIOLET Cheerio !

(Oliver goes out.)

Why were you so rude to Ranjit ? I feel very sorry.

HECTOR That boy must realise
(The door bell rings)
That must be Chaudaribhoy
(He opens the door and in steps Ranjit again)
What's the matter now ?

RANJIT I rang the Galle Face Hotel, there is no such function, and I noticed that Marlene's car is here.

HECTOR Still, it is the truth that Marlene is very busy.

RANJIT I know she is busy, but she has never told me that she wouldn't have time for me.

HECTOR She might not even have time to tell you that.

RANJIT Can you please tell her that I'm here and let her decide.

VIOLET Wait, Ranjit, I'll tell her

HECTOR Please don't hurry her up, Violet. She is getting ready for Prof. Chaudaribhoy. You can wait in the next room till she comes.

VIOLET Please don't misunderstand, Ranjit, it's because Prof. Chaudaribhoy is expected at any moment and he'll be using this room for the lesson.

RANJIT Yes, I heard about this Chaudaribhoy. I'll wait in there.

(He goes in.)

HECTOR This boy Ranjit is going to be a bit of a bother now.

VIOLET Maybe, but not for Marlene. He has been her regular boy friend for over three years now.

HECTOR There's no such thing as regular boy friend. Marlene was very immature when she first met him

VIOLET She couldn't have suddenly become mature after winning Miss Asia, and anyway, she still says she loves him and will marry him.

HECTOR What nonsense, he'll never be a suitable match for her now.

VIOLET How can we say that? . . . and there's nothing we can do, it's Marlene's decision.

HECTOR It's our duty to advise her, and it's for his own good too. Facts are hard, and things in life do change unexpectedly. He will always feel miserably inferior married to Marlene. What use will she have for an unemployed proctor?

VIOLET Don't say that, Hector, he passed out only recently. He's not going to be unemployed all his life. Didn't Marlene's life suddenly change?

HECTOR I can assure you that boy is not going to become Mr. Asia.

VIOLET Things will work themselves out - the way they are meant to.

HECTOR Let's hope so.

- VIOLET After all, didn't things suddenly work themselves out for us ?
- HECTOR Yes, I suppose so ... I have almost forgotten Bolavalana, our little house "Convent View," and I don't know where I've put that battered old suitcase with all the little samples ...
- VIOLET I'm still fond of the old sewing machine for sentimental reasons and I sometimes miss the sound of its wheel.....
- HECTOR And we don't hear the tick, tick, tick of Marlene's old typewriter ...
- VIOLET Poor girl, I used to feel sorry for her typing late into the night for a few extra rupees.
- HECTOR All that is over now.
- VIOLET But you must admit, we were happy even then.
- HECTOR But you must also admit that we're happier now.
- VIOLET Looks like it anyway, most of the time.
- HECTOR (Hums a line or two from "Swance River".)
- MARLENE (entering) Deep in thought, you two ?
- HECTOR Must have been, because I didn't notice you had come in. That's a very nice outfit for meeting Prof. Chaudaribhoy. Are you ready for him ?
- MARLENE Not really, I have got to read six more pages in the Encyclopaedia Asiana, I'll rush back.
- VIOLET In that case you'd better talk to Ranjit quickly.

- MARLENE Ranjit is here ?
- VIOLET Yes.
- MARLENE Where ?
- VIOLET In there.
- MARLENE Why in there, and why did you keep him waiting
- HECTOR In there, because Professor Chaudaribhoy may be here any moment, and he was kept waiting because you were dressing.
- MARLENE At "Convent View" in Bolavalana you never bothered that I was dressing when you sent Ranjit in.
(She goes to the side door and calls softly)
Ranjit !
(Hector and Violet go out)
Ranjit !
(Ranjit comes in)
Sorry Ranjit, no one told me that you had come, till just now.
- RANJIT Those days they used to tell you immediately, in Bolavalana.
(Silence)
- MARLENE If you had given me a ring, I would have known you were coming.
- RANJIT I had got so used to "Convent View", where you had no telecommunications, that I forgot that you are in the net work now.

- MARLENE Ranjit !
(She tries to touch him, he moves away and sits down. She does the same.)
 Ranjit, don't be cruel to me.
- RANJIT I'm in no way different from what I always was.
- MARLENE I'm not different either am I different ?
- RANJIT I don't know but something is different
- MARLENE What ?
- RANJIT They don't seem to want me, in this new house, anymore.
- MARLENE That's not true, Ranjit.
- RANJIT It is true. You were not here to see the way I was treated when I came in.
- MARLENE I don't think they meant it, it's simply that they're so excited about the whole thing.
- RANJIT And you are not ?
- MARLENE Naturally, I am, but that does not . . . Ranjit please believe me, if you tell me to give up the whole thing and stop it at this point, I'll do it.
- RANJIT Nonsense, why should I ruin your happiness.
- MARLENE And I don't want to ruin your happiness.
- RANJIT I'm, perfectly happy It's just that I want to make sure I'm still wanted, after all I have my pride too.
(Hector pops his head in)
- HECTOR Prof. Chaudaribhoy should be here very soon, and you have six more pages of the Encyclopaedia Asiana.

- MARLENE Daddy please, I'm talking to Ranjit. Damn the Encyclopaedia Asiana and damn Chaudaribhoy.
- (At this point Chaudaribhoy skips in suddenly. He wears a Nehru cap and carries a briefcase and a stick)
- CHAU Cha, cha, cha, cha, cha, damn Chaudaribhoy ? Damn nonsense ! If you damn Chaudaribhoy, you damn your chances in London and you send 10,000/- good Colombo rupees, down the river. (I do not like saying "down the drain" - it is so European and unhygienic.)
- HECTOR I'm sorry Professor, that was some sort of crude joke Marlene was having with this fellow.
- CHAU Please carry on with some more crude jokes about me, because, as we say in Clacutta, a man must know where he sits. (I hate standing because it is a virtual or vertical admission that a man is not wanted).
- MARLENE Please sit, Professor.
- CHAU Thank you (*he sits*) and when I'm told "please sleep", I know I'm completely accepted.
- RANJIT And who is talking about crude jokes !
- CHAU Young man, please do not teach your grand mother to suck apples (I am a vegetarian) When I was referring to sleep, I was not talking of forbidden fruits, I was thinking of the ultimate recumbent posture of man, which is the final fate of all humanity, Asian, African, European, American and Australian.
- HECTOR Sorry Professor, we will now get the place ready and leave you to your lesson.

- CHAU That will be a mistake, because the background to the lesson has already begun. You see, Mr. Parara, I believe that it is best to enter into the thick of things, and things are very thick, now I can see. We Calcutta educationists have discovered that a guru cannot really educate a pupil until he obtains an insight into the pupil's motherly, fatherly, and brotherly background, and what better insight than to see father, mother and brother in turmoil.
- MARLENE He is not my brother, Professor, he is my fiance.
- CHAU Fiance ! Ah, now I can sympathize with your sensitivity on the subject of sleeping, but I trust the misunderstanding has been understood. What is your name, young man ?
- RANJIT Ranjit Fernando.
- CHAU Ah ! That will be a popular match, Parara and Fernando ! Because I have not failed to observe, that like the Smiths and Joneses of England, in Colombo, there are innumerable Pararas and Fernandos. Walking down a lane and looking at the houses, I noted with great glee that the even numbers were Pararas and the odd numbers were Fernandos. It will be a popular match !
- HECTOR There is plenty of time for that.
- CHAU But I have not much time left, so please carry on with the turmoil, so that I can study the family background of my pupil. Hmmm (*looks around*).
- (*pause*)
- HECTOR We have now lost the mood, Professor, so please you may begin your lesson.

CHAU Yes, yes, yes. I understand now that psychologically my presence is not conducive to a good fight. Like a mother-in-law keyholing through a keyhole. So, I am willing to forego the knowledge of the family background.

HECTOR Yes, we'll get the place ready for the lesson.

CHAU Cha, cha, but the fight must go on in my absence. You must finish the fight. Otherwise it is very bad for the health of the Parara family and its Fernando appendage.

CHAU (contd) Because as baharata muni said (long before Aristotle), you must get at the Catharsis, you must clean yourself out for the sake of your health. So I will walk down the lane observing the other Pararas and Fernandos, giving you enough time to reach the Catharsis.

RANJIT I'm not interested in reaching anything, and I'm getting out of this mad house.

CHAU You get out, and I will get out for ever. The lesson has already begun, and at least Marlene must reach her Catharsis, in this little drama of the Pararas and the Fernandos.

MARLENE Ranjit, please wait, for my sake.

(He agrees by gesture)

CHAU Thank you. Please carry on the turmoil, while I walk up and down the lane, observing other Pararas and other Fernandos. (skipping out)

(There is a silence in which they wonder how they could pick up the threads of their quarrel, or "Little Drama" as the Indian Professor put it.)

- HECTOR *(beginning quietly)* Look Ranjit, I have no objection at all to your coming and going as you will. It's only that I'm asking you to be considerate about Marlene's future. Sorry, but if I didn't say it, no one would have.
- RANJIT And how am I being inconsiderate to Marlene's future ?
- HECTOR By not realizing that we have exactly three months to make it, which is only ninety days. As Marlene's father, I have a right to say it - within these ninety days nothing must distract her from the main target. She has to keep up with her exercises, pay regular visits to the doctor and the diet people, the poise and carriage people, the speech people, the beauty people, and most important of all, for an hour every morning Professor Chaudaribhoy has to awaken her emotional and intellectual responses to the continent she represents. You can see how badly the first lesson has begun so it's best you stick to a strict appointment schedule.
- MARLENE Certainly not, Daddy, I won't have Ranjit asking for appointments to visit me.
- RANJIT In that case I'd rather not visit.
- MARLENE No ! Ranjit can come and go as and when he wishes as he has always done. I don't want to be a nervous wreck at the end of ninety days. I must be healthy and happy, and unless I can have the same freedom I always had with Ranjit, I'll never be happy.
- HECTOR You won't be happy if you mess up your chances on Miss World.
- MARLENE Unless I am happy, I will mess up my chances on Miss World. You forget that I won Miss Ceylon and Miss Asia without any restrictions on Ranjit's freedom.

- HECTOR Miss World is a different matter, and I warn you, don't risk your future happiness. If you insist, I don't want to be responsible, let Ranjit take over as your manager.
- RANJIT I don't want to manage any of this sordid business, and I don't believe all the reasons you give. Some time ago you told me that Marlene was not at home, when she was in her bedroom. You lied, that's all.
- HECTOR You cheeky pup !
- RANJIT I'm getting out !
- (He moves off)*
- MARLENE *(Intervening)* please Ranjit, I am asking you to stay. Daddy, don't forget that all this is my money. If we are to lose the whole thing, it's my money that's lost. The whole thing was won on my sensitivity and my beauty.
- (Father and mother start moving out. Father stops at door)*
- HECTOR Never forget, your beauty and your sensitivity were both inherited.
- (They go in)*
- MARLENE Oh ! I didn't mean to hurt him ... God, what a mess.
- RANJIT Please let me go in peace and there won't be a mess
- MARLENE Oh Ranjit, don't mess it still further, by being so difficult. Please sit down.

(She sobs gently and silently. The parents tiptoe in, and a moment later Chaudaribhoy. Marlene looks up. She is the first to notice that Chaudaribhoy is in their presence - the others catch on through Marlene's glance)

CHAU Catharsis for you, and I must also confess catharsis for me.

HECTOR You were walking down the lane, observing the other Pereras and Fernandos ?

CHAU I was keyholing at this keyhole, observing these Pararas and this Fernando. So first I have enriched my tutorial capacity, and second, I have achieved catharsis for Marlene. As we say in the land of Baharatha, I have released two birds by opening one cage (or keyhole ... as in our case)

CHAU You Mr. Parara and you Mrs. Parara, will achieve your catharsis, much later in the drama. But now, this very moment, we must achieve the catharsis for Mr. Fernando. So if you all will leave me alone with Fernando for a while, I will summon the Pararas later.

HECTOR Professor, if I may say so, you are engaged for the benefit of Marlene.

RANJIT I don't

CHAU There is no Marlene like that. Marlene is the synthesis of various influences, and Fernando is one. I have undertaken the Education of Miss Asia, and one must not make the elementary mistake of say, mistaking New Delhi, Peking, Rawalpindi, Jubulpoor, Rangoon, etc., for Asia there is the vast hinterland in between. Similarly Fernando is in the hinterland of Miss Asia. Thank you (meaning get out !)

(The others withdraw)

RANJIT I have no desire for any contact with you.

CHAU Contact with me ? That is not the point. Have you no desire for contact with Marlene ?

(Silence)

RANJIT I have known Marlene now for over three years, and with no need for your intervention, thank you.

CHAU That is the past, it is all different now. Now you may consider me a household fixture, and we must work out some adjustment.

RANJIT What adjustment ?

CHAU Let me take the bull by the horns (like a sacred cow in a half baked Asian shop). You see Ranjit, may I call you Ranjit ?

(Silence)

Call me Chaudari if you like. We must meet, Asian to Asian. You see Ranjit, what is your whole relationship with Marlene now ? Treat me as a friend and an equal and everything will be all right.

(Silence)

RANJIT You tell me what you want.

CHAU I want the education of Miss Asia to progress smoothly.

RANJIT Carry on.

CHAU I can't carry on smoothly, as long as you continue to be a thorn in the vegetable, so to speak.

RANJIT

I'm not in the way.

CHAU

Even before I first entered this room I was keyholing out there, and I heard Marlene say that if you insist, she will even give up this whole thing. That is a very unstable situation for the education of Miss Asia.

RANJIT

That was her idea. I never said so.

CHAU

You don't have to say it, Ranjit. All you have to do is transmit that feeling to Marlene. And you are transmitting that feeling to Marlene now.

RANJIT

Definitely not.

CHAU

Positively yes ! Ranjit, I was also once a boy, and I was also once a lover boy (in my own vegetarian way - of course). So I know what it feels; to feel that you are just an appendage to a beauty queen. The dependence of the female on the male, especially in Asia, is a prerequisite for harmony. Now the harmony is disturbed and you must get on top again to restore it. Have I hit the middle of the sunflower ?

(Silence)

Yet you cannot get on to the top again because Marlene is climbing a kind of ladder, which it is not practical for you to ascend; the ladder of fame through beauty. You can almost see her up there, as Shakespeare wallah said, "scorning the base diplomas from which she did ascend." I am not wrong ?

(Silence)

Now, if you cannot climb up, then you must pull her down, to establish the harmony again, and if it is in the interest of harmony, why not pull her down? Yes, I mean, let's get together and pull her down.

- RANJIT What do you mean ?
- CHAU Pull, pull, like this (*he demonstrates*) pull her down. We do it together.
- (*Silence, in which Ranjit stands*)
- RANJIT What have you been employed for ?
- CHAU For the education of Miss Asia.
- RANJIT Then what are you talking about pulling her down ?
- CHAU Ranjit, my particular task is "the awakening of Marlene's emotional and intellectual responses, to the continent she represents." I am not in any way responsible for the consequences of the awakening.
- RANJIT The consequences of the awakening ? If you do it well, there can be only one consequence, she will win Miss World.
- CHAU And go completely out of your reach ? No Ranjit, that need not be the consequence. If in a sensitive woman like Marlene, her emotional and intellectual responses to bleeding, starving, over - populated, illiterate and exploited Asia, are correctly awakened and tuned, there can be only one consequence ! Her own heart will bleed for her own Asia ! And she will reject as fraud and hypocrisy this kind of rivalry between the ommpha and the doompha of innocent girls, which they call beauty contests.
- RANJIT This time equal weight is given to intellectual and emotional responses, not only to ommpha and doompha.

CHAU Equal weight for the Alpha and the Beta ? No, it will always be the oompha and the doompha. This is a new racket of the organizers. From when do you think International Hoteliers, Wine Merchants, Greengrocers and Butchers, became interested in intellectual and emotional responses of human beings ? Don't you believe such grasshopper shit ! It is a new racket. But if I awaken Marlene's emotional and intellectual responses to Asia, she will reject this racket and stay right here, bleeding for Asia.

RANJIT Why are you so sure that you will succeed in making Marlene reject the idea of going to the Miss World contest ?

CHAU Because I am confident of awakening her emotional and intellectual responses for Asia to such a pitch that her heart will bleed for Asia. And anyone whose heart bleeds for Asia will reject this racket of international hoteliers, wine merchants, butchers and greengrocers. (As a vegetarian I feel that it is a great tragedy that the greengrocers have also got involved)

RANJIT I feel that it will be a great tragedy if Marlene goes to the Miss World Contest. It might be her ruination, she might even end up sleeping with

CHAU All the hoteliers, wine merchants and butchers. Perhaps even with the innocent greengrocers.

RANJIT Professor, remember you are talking about my fiance. I meant end up sleeping with ... sleeping tablets.

CHAU Cha, the haunting memory of the recent Marilyn Monroe.

RANJIT Yes, and that is why I pray that you succeed and she stays right here.

CHAU Place your bets on Chaudaribhoy !

RANJIT My intended father - in - law has also placed his bets on Chaudaribhoy. I mean the 10,000 rupees.

CHAU Ah yes, the small matter of the 10,000 rupees.

RANJIT Don't you think that's cheating ? He's paying you 10,000 rupees to prepare Marlene to win the finals, and you will be receiving 10,000 and preparing her to reject the finals. As a proctor, I can tell you you'll be hauled up in the Magistrates Court.

CHAU Cheating, perhaps, in the sense of the criminal code of the country, but not in the philosophical sense. There is always a great divergence between the lower courts and the higher philosophy.

RANJIT Anyway, it does not matter because it will be Greek meets Greek.

CHAU What is that, Greek meets Greek ? Like Aristotle and Plato, is Parara also a philosopher ?

RANJIT I meant he is also a cheat, at a much lower level and with no philosophy to clothe it.

CHAU What are you saying things about your anticipated father - in - law !

RANJIT I must confess that there is no love lost between him and me, he is just an opportunist

CHAU We are all opportunists in one way or another. It simply means using an opportunity. And opportunities, I suppose, are meant to be used.

RANJIT He has been damned mean to me.

CHAU What is the reason for the dramatic conflict ?

RANJIT He was perfectly normal to me before Marlene achieved

CHAU Fame ?

RANJIT Fame and MONEY. An unemployed proctor was good before, but not good any more.

CHAU That is only a human weakness of reacting differently to changed circumstances.

RANJIT Marlene has not reacted that way to the changed circumstances.

CHAU Because Marlene is in love with you, but old Parara is not.

RANJIT I don't expect him to be in love with me, but I know he hates me.

CHAU Why ?

RANJIT Because he thinks I will become the only impediment to his shameless living off Marlene's money.

CHAU Not particularly shameless, father and daughter ?

RANJIT It is shameless because the man has never worked in all his life.

CHAU I thought he was some kind of businessman.

RANJIT The last time he meddled with business, he served a sentence of two years.

- CHAU Hallo, hallo, that is something in the family background I did not know.
- RANJIT Even Marlene does not know. It happened when she was a little child and her mother kept telling her that daddy had gone to London on business. I have never told Marlene because it doesn't affect us in any way.
- CHAU What was it for ?
- RANJIT He forged someone's signature on a cheque, and he could never find employment after that. It was the old lady's dressmaking that kept bodies and souls together, till Marlene won.
- CHAU Bodies, souls, beauties and cheques. Hm m m m that reminds me, I have a cheque for 10,000 due from Mr. Parara. (He summons the family by calling loud). Hallo, hallo, there, the Pararas are wanted immediately (to himself) before it is too late. (He hums to himself) Sa - Ri - Gaa - Maa - Paa - The - Ni - Sa (which is the Indian Do - Ray - Me - Fa - So - La - Tee - Do)
- (The Pereras enter)*
- We have achieved a highly successful catharsis between Mr. fernando and myself and, as I said, the catharsis for Mr. Parara and Mrs. Parara will come much later in the drama. And now for our first lesson Marlene.
- HECTOR Yes, Professor.
- CHAU But before that, the little formality of my cheque for 10,000 rupees.
- HECTOR 10,000 rupees !

- CHAU Yes.
- HECTOR I thought we agreed Professor that you will be paid in three equal instalments, monthly.
- CHAU Yes but I have some information which forces me to insist on the whole 10,000 rupees at once.
- HECTOR What information ?
- (Pause, in which Ranjit is in terrible discomfort, almost trying to stop Chaudaribhoy)*
- CHAU That the flood refugees of East Pakistan need immediate relief, and I have decided to donate the whole of my fee of 10,000 rupees to relieve my soaking brethren, such relief cannot await three delayed instalments.
- HECTOR Well, if you insist, but "Friendship is friendship and business is business" is an old truth, Professor, and so we must avoid mixing too much, your friendship for the people of East Pakistan and the agreed contract for the education of Miss Asia. So, you will not misunderstand Professor, if I could have possession of your passport, as security, considering that you will be two instalments ahead.
- CHAU *(a little worried)* hmmm - identity card . .
- HECTOR I mean passport.
- (Chau extracts his passport with reluctance and Hector reaches out for it.)*
 Thank you, Professor.
(But Chau witholds it)
- CHAU The cheque, please.

- HECTOR *(flashes out his cheque book and begins to write)*
pay to Professor R. Chaudaribhoy ?
- CHAU No, pay direct to the "Flood Relief Fund of East Pakistan."
- HECTOR You really
- CHAU Am I to understand that you have not heard of the miserable thousands suffering from flood ravages in East Pakistan, which is in Asia ?
- HECTOR Yes, I..... I have read.....
- CHAU Yes, you have read ! If you are even semi literate, it is not difficult to understand the newspapers. But - what - have you done about it, what - have you felt ? This is the real education of an Asian, to feel for Asia. Please don't hold up the relief.
- (The cheque is written and handed over)*
- CHAU Thank you. *(But he still has the passport)*
- HECTOR *(noting his reluctance to hand over the passport)*
Well, Professor, considering that you have really donated your entire fee for the relief of flood victims in East Pakistan
- CHAU You will donate something also ?
- HECTOR I feel rather mean about being so business headed. You may keep the passport.
- CHAU That is also a great relief. You will not realize the value of a passport - unless you are a broadly travelled man like me. I suppose, the first time you Pararas saw a passport was when you went to Calcutta for the contest.

- MARLENE No Professor, Daddy has been to London on business, long ago, when I was a tiny girl.
- CHAU Oh, I was not aware of your highly successful commercial background Mr. Parara. But as we go along we get more into the background. And Mrs. Parara, while Mr. Parara was doing business in London, I suppose you were enjoying the knick - knacks of the Woolworths !
- VIOLET No, I had to stay back in Ceylon to look after little Marlene.
- CHAU That is a great pity, because the ransacking of the Woolworths is a widespread English spiritual experience. But in three months time, you will make the pilgrimage to London ... if all goes well
.....
- HECTOR What do you mean ? We are already in the finals, and at least we will get to London. What - do - you - mean - "If all goes well " ?
- CHAU Because *(swiftly taking Marlene by the hand to centre stage with a single deft movement, he faces her still holding one hand. His other hand is free to mime the holding up of a delicate instrument)* I am about to begin the delicate operation of scratching this bud of natural ignorance with the sharp instrument of political education. The results are unpredictable. The education of Miss Asia ! Shall we begin !

ACT TWO

When the curtain goes up, Chaudaribhoy and Marlene are seen standing, exactly as they were, at the end of Act One. All others are off stage. The black curtain at the back has been drawn apart revealing the cyclorama. All furniture has disappeared, so that the stage is bare except for a carpet in the centre. Even the large photograph of Miss Asia has been taken away. The only item prominent on stage is one of the fly bars of the theatre, which has been lowered so that it is within easy reach of a standing person. A slide projector is noticeable on one side of the stage.

CHAU Let us now presume that we are meeting for the first time. I am Professor Raasagoola Chaudaribhoy of the University of Calcutta.

MARLENE How do you do, Professor I am Miss Marlene Perera of . . .

CHAU Of Asia ! Please say it boldly. I am only Calcutta, you are Asia itself ! You have a right to feel inflated, so please inflate yourself.

MARLENE I am Marlene Perera of Asia.

CHAU Very well inflated ! *(Now relaxes to a more friendly attitude)* Now, you may call me Raasagoola when I'm not instructing you . . . and may I call you Marlene when I'm not instructing you ?

MARLENE Yes, you may . . . *(hesitantly)* Raasagoola.

CHAU Good, Marlene. *(He claps sharply)* Let us begin instruction.

MARLENE Please sit . . . Raasagoola.

- CHAU *(sternly)* Nahi, Nahi ! that is not correct ! No doubt you are the occupant of this house, but once I begin instruction, which is now, this becomes my studio and therefore you will not presume to ask me to sit. I will tell you whether, when and where to stand, sit, or lie down. Furthermore, when it is my studio, you will call me Professor and I will call you Miss Asia *(while walking around and ogling her from the rear)*. No Raasagoola and Marlene. That is for lighter moments, understand ?
- MARLENE Yes, Professor.
- CHAU Good, Miss Asia *(giving the 'Miss Asia' a sarcastic twist)*. You will now posture on this carpet in oriental fashion, and feel inflated.
- (She does so)*
Good. Let us commence, at the commencement.
- MARLENE Yes, Professor.
- CHAU What continent do you represent ... Miss Asia?
- MARLENE Asia, Professor.
- CHAU Bohuth Achcha ! ... Now, Miss Asia, how many people do you represent ?
- MARLENE One billion, six hundred and ninety one million, three hundred and twenty seven thousand people, Professor. I have been doing some reading on my own.
- CHAU Yes, obviously, and unfortunately, on your own.
- MARLENE Have I made a msitake, Professor ?

CHAU Not an original mistake, but you have just repeated the most tragi - comic mistake of modern times. You only represent one billion, six hundred and ninety one million, three hundred and twenty seven thousand, minus eight hundred and fifty million, which is what they call Cheena ! Cheena did not think it proper to parade herself before that assorted collection of hoteliers, wine merchants, butchers, and greengrocers who came down at Dum Dum airport in the great and teeming city of Calcutta.

MARLENE But Professor, I knocked out Miss China, in the first round !

CHAU That was a little bitch from an offshore island. I am talking of the Peoples Republic of Cheena.

MARLENE I am sorry, Professor.

CHAU Don't feel sorry for yourself, feel sorry for Asia, Miss (making the sign of the inverted commas) inverted commas "Asia," and now proceed to deflate yourself by eight hundred and fifty million. (pause) You may now reflect awhile on your considerably diminished stature.

(She drops her head in contemplation)

You can already see we are involved in a farce (rapidly crosses feet and back again) if not a comedy, as they say, in the Bengali Comic Theatre.

(He lifts her head up by the chin)

But do not get too upset too early Miss Asia. For the moment you may console yourself in the fact that for a long time other bodies also, not so nicely unified as yours, failed to incorporate the Peoples Republic of Cheena but we will come to the United Nations later.

CHAU

(Brief pause)

Now, I have programmed my attack on your emotional and intellectual responses and my attention will be primarily on your sensitivity. That is to say, I will not waste time disgorging to you thousands of facts and figures on Asia, as would be the custom of a common or garden type lecturer. The facts and figures I leave you to gather for yourself in the various gardens of hum drum literature. However, it may be necessary as a preliminary to provide you with a guide line for your fact gathering in these gardens, lest you should miss the garden for the individual vegetables.

MARLENE

Yes, Professor.

CHAU

My guide line for your fact gathering shall be identical to the speech I have prepared for you to deliver to the judges in London. I hope you have committed that speech to memory now.

MARLENE

I have, Professor.

CHAU

Please deliver it now, and imagine that you are facing the judges in London.

(He indicates that she should get up and move on to the apron stage, facing the real audience in the theatre. She gets up and does so, standing on the apron stage left. He stands a distance behind her, behind the proscenium arch, and towards her right. In his hand he holds his copy of the speech so as to prompt her and help her along)

MARLENE

Ladies and Gentlemen, the extent, population, political divisions, languages, religions, natural resources and culture of the Asia I represent !
Extent - As you look at me now, ladies and gentlemen ... *(pause)*

- CHAU *(prompting)* ... please divert your attention ...
- MARLENE ... please divert your attention away from the vital statistics that you are commonly used to thinking of, and think of my vital statistics as spreading immensely over 17,035 million square miles from the village of Hambantota in the South of Ceylon, to Jibhalantha in Mongolia in the North ... *(pause)*
- CHAU *(prompting)* ... with the Hindu Kush mountains in between ...
- MARLENE *(Very slightly embarrassed at the double meaning which suddenly dawns on her)* ... With the Hindu Kush mountains in between. Think of Asia as an enormous carpet, ladies and gentlemen.
- CHAU *(Now addressing Marlene directly, who turns her body slightly inwards to listen to him).*
- Tremendous applause from hoteliers, wine merchants, butchers and greengrocers, at the suggestion of the Hindu Kush, but sadly ignorant of Hambantota, not to mention Jibhalantha ! Population !
- MARLENE *(quickly resuming her address to the audience)*
Population - Standing, sitting, sleeping, crying, and very rarely laughing, on this panoramic carpet, 1,691,327,000 tremendously fertile females and restless males ... *(pause)*
- CHAU *(prompting)* ... grow the rice
- MARLENE ... grow the rice, in arithmetic proportions, and in the evening they litter on the carpet in geometric proportions ... *(pause)*

- CHAU *(This time, 'prompting' by a physical gesture which is a little "trampling" dance on the spot where he stands)*
- MARLENE Ladies and Gentlemen, the multitude on the carpet, trampling the rice !
- CHAU *(again addressing her directly)* A frightening proposition, Miss Asia, which should bring a sad hush amongst the judges. But the heartless and ignorant brutes will applaud loud and long, thinking it is in their interest to maintain the great divergence between population and food cultivation in Asia.
- MARLENE *(resuming her address to the audience)*
Political Divisions - Whilst I was multiplying ..
(pause)
- CHAU *(prompting)* ... Demographically ...
- MARLENE ... demographically, I was dividing politically, with the net result that at the time of my arrival at London airport there were ... *(pause)*
- CHAU *(prompting)* 45
- MARLENE 45 political divisions. Ladies and Gentlemen, I can see Miss Australia waiting in the wings, and it strikes me that whilst she may be more amply provided on her person, my political representation is numerous and hers is only singular.
- CHAU *(addressing her directly)* Great applause, and already a fat butcher with a big cigar will be getting excited. Between you and me, these 'ladies and gentlemen' you are addressing will be lecherous old men with drooling spittle, and ageing voluptuaries with flagging senses.

- MARLENE *(resuming address, to the audience)*
Languages - The tongues of all my people wag in so many multifarious directions, from Singhalese to Cantonese, that the only common binder might be the predominance of the vowels to the detriment of the consonants. But it is precisely this, ladies and gentlemen, which gives our speech that great musical quality ...
- CHAU *(with a quick interruption, sings)* Sa - ri - ga - ma - pa - the - nee - sa ...
- MARLENE and has made all your ... *(pause)*
- CHAU *(prompting)* ... cockroaches ...
- MARLENE Cockroaches and beetles flock away from the harsh notes of the piano keyboard to the ecstatic and melodic vibrations of the strings of the sitar.
- CHAU The butchers, will surely understand that !
- MARLENE Religions - All the great religions began, and still continue, only in Asia. Ladies and gentlemen, you might ponder on the fact that many people believe that ... *(pause)*
- CHAU *(prompting)* ... the Garden of Eden ...
- MARLENE ... the Garden of Eden is located somewhere in Asia. You may now boggle at the tourist potential of the country ... *(pause)*
- CHAU *(prompting)* ... that can put its finger on this delightful spot ...
- MARLENE ... that can put its finger on this delightful spot.

- CHAU *(directly to Marlene)* Tremendous investment potential, therefore, tremendous applause !
- MARLENE *(quickly resuming address to audience)*
and finally, Ladies and Gentlemen, the culture I represent. Simply, suffice it to say that Asia is the cradle of the human race !
- CHAU The cradle of the human race ! Hushed silence, you can even hear a pin fall, but it is the cradle that will fall !
- "Raack a bye baby
on the tree taap ..."
- MARLENE I beg your pardon ...
- CHAU "When the wind blows
the cradle will raack
When the bough breaks
the cradle will faal
and down will come baby
cradle and aall."
- MARLENE I don't understand, Professor.
- CHAU Hmmm, hm ... you do not understand ...
Reposition yourself on that carpet, and I will make you understand. *(She sits on the carpet again)*
Let us pause a little while from our instructions. *(He settles down by her side. He touches her hands)*
Your fingers are feeling a little cold, Marlene, are you feeling depressed ?
- MARLENE Yes, Professor
- CHAU As I said, we will pause a little while from our instruction ... you may call me Raasagoola.

MARLENE Yes, Raasagoola.

CHAU Why are you feeling depressed, Marlene ? ...

MARLENE I don't ... know Raasagoola ... Maybe ... the way you described all those horrible judges in London.

CHAU Yes, terrible people, all that (*makes a gesture implying intellectual effort*) would have been wasted. To really impress them you must horrify them, not please them.

MARLENE How do I horrify them, Raasagoola ?

CHAU By becoming horrified yourself, Marlene.

MARLENE Horrified by what, Raasagoola ?

CHAU By the great tragedy of Asia, Marlene.

MARLENE And then ?

CHAU And then you will believe in this comedy Your intellectual responses will be really awakened.

MARLENE Then help me Raasagoola.

CHAU (*getting up*) Yes, let us begin instruction again, Miss Asia.

MARLENE Yes, Professor.

CHAU Now repeat what I said about the culture of Asia.

MARLENE And finally, ladies and gentlemen, the culture I represent. Simply suffice it to say that Asia is the cradle of the human race.

CHAU And now I will repeat my reply.
"When the bough breaks, the cradle will faal
And down will come baby, cradle and aal."
and surely down will come Asia, cradle and all,
unless we do something about it, and now that you
represent Asia, our salvation is your baby.

MARLENE I don't know what you mean.

CHAU Relax, and I will show you what I mean.

(He moves quickly to the lowered fly bar and begins work muttering "Jaldi" to himself. On the stage, below the lowered fly bar of the theatre, are three or four body length sheets of white cloth fixed on to curtain poles at the top. These are Chaudaribhoy's visual teaching aids. Saying "Jaldi" and "Ah Tick Hai" when he has got it correct, he picks up and holds the first sheet just below his chin, so that his own head and face become the top part of the drawing. The actual drawing ends at the neck of the figure drawn)

(Indicating the baby on the sheet that he is carrying in front of him)

Who is that, Miss Asia ?

MARLENE A baby, Professor.

CHAU Sabash ! Very clever I What kind of a baby ?

MARLENE I don't ... I can't

CHAU I will help you Miss Asia, elementary, it is an Asian baby.

MARLENE Yes, Professor.

CHAU Now, to be more specific in locating the responsibility, tell me, whose baby is that Miss Asia ?

MARELE How would I ...

CHAU Think again, Miss Asia.

MARLENE I don't know what you mean, Professor.

CHAU I know what I mean. It is an Asian baby, Miss Asia.

MARLENE You mean

CHAU Yes, Miss Asia (*walking up to her with sheet as he speaks*) it is your baby now !

(She rises slowly from her sitting position to stare at the baby, now so close to her)

MARLENE Professor, please may I have a glass of water.

CHAU Water ! When the bough breaks, the cradle will faal, down will come baby, cradle and aal ! Between the years nineteen hundred and nineteen hundred and seventy one, millions and millions of your babies went up, cradle and aal. Starvation and malnutrition, your baby Miss Asia.

(He now relaxes, off from his fierce, yet comical attitude)

Now relax, take it easy. (He gently makes her sit on the carpet again). Take it easy ... This baby you see, survived through some miracle of life (*while saying this he hooks up the first sheet on to the lowered bar on the extreme stage right section and continues immediately to lift up against*

his body the second sheet, which shows a full bellied child, but with a rather vacant laugh on its face)

- CHAU Another of your children, Miss Asia !
- MARLENE Yes, Professor.
- CHAU You are recognizing your children more readily now
- MARLENE Yes, Professor.
- CHAU An older child, and not so badly off as the previous one.
- MARLENE Yes, Professor.
- CHAU And you think he is also happy about his own stomach being fuller ?
- MARLENE Yes, Professor.
- CHAU And that is why you think he is laughing so loud ?
- MARLENE Yes, Professor.
- CHAU No ! My pupil, not because his stomach is full, but because his mind is empty - loud laughs the empty mind. Vacant vessels make most sound ! Now do you understand, Miss Asia ?
- MARLENE Yes, Professor.
- CHAU Good. This Asian son of yours by some stray luck had something downstairs, but nothing upstairs, he was completely illiterate. I knew him well, he was born in my area.
(From behind the horizontal pole holding up the sheet, he now flaps over the boy's head only, a smaller piece of sheet which is in the shape of the

outline of a human thumb, and within this shape is the idea of the full thumb impression. When it is flapped over, it covers the boy's head, so that the audience sees a full bellied boy with a big thumb impression where his head ought to be)

CHAU That is his thumb impression and his total mental capacity. Every year in Asia there are printed three billion forms with the words at the bottom - "Room for signature or thumb impression." and every time his thumb is dipped in ink and pressed for him on a piece of paper, he blankly wonders why. Illiteracy, Miss Asia, is a curse both in this life and in the life hereafter as well.

MARLENE What matters after you die ?

CHAU In his case it mattered. He had a little plot of land on the outskirts of Calcutta which was to become the property of his equally illiterate and only daughter. But alas, unscrupulous fourth cousins made him bequeath it to them by dipping his finger in ink and pressing it on a document, five minutes after he had left this sad world. His daughter starved to death. *(He walks upstage fast)*

MARLENE *(Marlene rises up again)* Professor, it's terrible.

CHAU They are the terrors you have now inherited, Miss Asia. Malnutrition, starvation and illiteracy on such a scale ! This is the frightful monster which now becomes your baby. And what do you intend doing about it ?

MARLENE I'm frightened and I really don't ...

CHAU Then relax. You will know in a short while.

(He hangs the second sheet, also on the lowered bar, in the centre of it, and now places on the bar in the next vacant position the third and final sheet. This sheet shows a father, a pregnant mother and about sixteen children in confused positions all over the sheet. The whole thing is in simple black line drawing).

CHAU

(pointing to the sheet) That is a family I met in the village of Kandalipoody on the west coast of India. You will observe that it cannot be described as a small and compact family. There's father, mother, and sixteen other ! And that morning when my camera went click, the mother was for the seventeenth time, big and sick ! This family will grow up in great confusion, will take up arms, knives and crude bombs and blow up you and me and themselves also, to oblivion and obituary. Miss Asia, because of your very fertility, through malnutrition and illiteracy, you will explode in numerical militancy and your cradle of civilization will smoulder and die in its own flames. These flames might even spread beyond your saree and start scorching the thighs of Miss Europe, America and Australia, and that is why some people are talking of "Cordon Sanitaire." Have you heard of "Cordon Sanitaire " ?

MARLENE

No, Professor.

CHAU

They want to cordon you off, Miss Asia, for sanitary reasons.

MARLENE

What is "cordon sanitaire" Professor ?

CHAU

(He fixes a red sash around the family on the sheet). It is a political proposition of the extreme opposition.

MARLENE

I do not understand, Professor.

CHAU You don't understand . . . hmmm, Marlene, have you ever been to the theatre ?

MARLENE No Professor, only to the pictures.

CHAU That is a great tragedy, but you must go quickly because theatres are closing down all over the world.

MARLENE Yes Professor.

(Makes her sit on the carpet again. He switches on the slide projector which projects a slide of a Hindustani film actress preferably in some terribly melodramatic scene. The projection could be made on the earlier used sheets, which now hang on the lowered bar)

CHAU Now Marlene, you are at the cinema, the film you are seeing is hopeless. What do you do ?

MARLENE I go away Professor.

CHAU Cha, that is you Marlene, but in Calcutta they won't go away. They will attack the silver screen with various decomposed vegetable products, and sometimes, even worse, they attack it with various animal products.

MARLENE Chee.

CHAU Cha, cha, that is, they hurl their own bodies on the silver screen.

MARLENE Yes, Professor.

CHAU Now Marlene, what does the manager of the cinema do ?

- MARLENE He calls the police, Professor.
- CHAU Nahi, Nahi, Something simpler. (*He switches off the projector*) He switches off the cinema projector !
- CHAU Then there is no one to attack on the silver screen and no one for the police to protect on the silver screen, even the screen is not silver any more. That is the whole meaning of the cinema, quick-silver !
- MARLENE I understand Professor, but what about "Cordon Sanitaire"?
- CHAU I am coming to that. But in the theatre, Marlene, you can't switch off the actors with a projector. So what do you do ?
- MARLENE Call the police.
- CHAU Cha, cha, you are always calling the police, Marlene. That is a drastic step as we once realized in the Bengali comic theatre.
- MARLENE You have also been a comic actor, Professor ?
- CHAU I have played many parts, Marlene. So, we don't call the police. We do something else when the crowd gets boisterous in the theatre. Now, this is real, but Marlene imagine you and I were on stage and the crowd got boisterous. What do we do ?
- MARLENE I won't turn up the next day.
- CHAU The audience also might not turn up the next day. But Marlene what do we do on that day ? We have three walls to protect us on three sides and we drop the safety curtain on the fourth side . . . and we are ? . . . we are ?

MARLENE We are cordoned off !

CHAU Yes, Marlene, we are cordoned off and the spectators are cordoned out !

MARLENE I understand, Professor.

CHAU Good, good, Miss Asia. Now you have the idea of the cordon and of the theatre. And we now convert it to the great theatre of life. Life in Asia through malnutrition, illiteracy and over-population becomes dangerously uncontrollable and might spill into the European world. What do they do to you, Miss Asia ?

MARLENE Cordon me off ?

CHAU Yes, Marlene, cordon you off, so that you stew in your own brew, and die an agonizing death all by yourself.

MARLENE Oh ! And why "Cordon Sanitaire" Professor ?

CHAU Sanitaire ? That is sanitary, for reasons for health. Because they think you are diseased, they don't want to be contaminated.

MARLENE How cruel and inhuman Professor !

CHAU Terrible and despicable !

MARLENE Are they really thinking like that, Professor ?

CHAU I know that some people are, I have my intellectual contacts throughout the world.

MARLENE Only some few people, I hope, think like that.

CHAU Yes, but today's minorities are tomorrow's majorities.

- MARLENE What do I do, Professor ?
- CHAU What do you do ? Hmmm, I'll have to think about that. Of course I do know what you could have done about a century or two ago but it's too late now.
- MARLENE Tell me, Professor, what could I have done ?
- CHAU Miss Asia, many, many, many, many, years ago you could have thrown around yourself a cordon chastity or cordon virginity, but it's too late now, they have already deflowered you, long ago.
- MARLENE Deflowered me, Professor ?
- CHAU Yes, "deflowered," that is the sympathetic description from the vegetable world. I am revolted by the more rapacious terminology of the exploiters of the beefeating world.
- MARLENE (A tremor in her voice) I am deflowered, Professor ?
- CHAU I'm sorry, Miss Asia, yes.
- MARLENE Who are they, Professor ?
- CHAU Mainly some English fellows and some French fellows, and some Dutch and some Portuguese. (Now goose-stepping on the same spot with Hitler salute and mimicking the guttural Geman). You must be thankful you were spared the Germans who reserved their energy to deflower within their own territory some time later.
- MARLENE How long ago, Professor ?
- CHAU Long ago, Miss Asia, and the younger fellows are feeling guilty. so the parents were deflowering and now the younger fellows are flower - powering.

- MARLENE (sobbing) Why did they do it to me ...
Professor ?
- CHAU (*comforting her*) Now, now, don't cry, we might
still be able to throw some oil on the troubled areas.
- MARLENE Thank you, Professor, but how, tell me please,
how.
- CHAU (*craftily*) you begin by a process of identifying
yourself with your children ... your suffering
children.
- MARLENE Anything you say, Professor.
- CHAU (*craftily*) Good ! Have you ever heard of the famine
in the province of Bihar, Miss Asia ?
- MARLENE Where is Bihar, Professor ?
- CHAU In the land of Baharatha.
- MARLENE Where is Baharatha, Professor ?
- CHAU That is the classical name for India.
- MARLENE Thank you, Professor.
- CHAU And there in Bihar, thousands of your children are
dying like flies, through famine.
- MARLENE Oh my God, Professor, what can I do ?
- CHAU You must identify yourself with your dying
children.
- MARLENE Please tell me how, Professor.

- CHAU First you must identify through sacrifice.
- MARLENE Sacrifice what, Professor ?
- CHAU (*craftily*) Something that hurts to give.
- MARLENE What Professor ?
- CHAU It is easy for a Nuffield, Ford or a Rockerfella to write a cheque for the dying children of Bihar. It does not hurt when they give and therefore they do not communicate. Nuffields, Fords and Rockerfella ! But for a local fella like a Parara it will hurt to give, and when it hurts to give, then communication and identification is established with your suffering children.
- MARLENE How much shall I give, Professor ?
- CHAU (*craftily*) As much as your heart will bear the strain.
- MARLENE How much did you give the flood victims of East Pakistan, Professor ?
- CHAU 10,000 rupees.
- MARLENE Make mine 20,000 for the starving children of Bihar, Professor. Daddy, daddy, come here quickly.
- (*The family turns up in full strength, with servant girl*)
- HECTOR (*who sees Marlene on the carpet, in a bad state*)
What is the problem, Professor ?
- CHAU I'm solving the Problem, Mr. Parara.
- MARLENE Daddy, write out a cheque for 20,000 to the Bihar Famine Fund.

HECTOR What ?

MARLENE You heard me, Daddy. 20,000 for the Bihar Famine Fund.

HECTOR Professor, what does this mean ?

MARLENE Please daddy, don't delay, the children are dying like flies.

HECTOR What is all this nonsense ? The girl is hysterical.

CHAU That is part of the therapy.

HECTOR What therapy ?

CHAU The therapy in the education of Miss Asia.

MARLENE Daddy, please.

VIOLET *(rushing up to Marlene, on the carpet)* The child may be ill ! The child may be dangerously ill !

CHAU Which is as it should be if she is to accurately represent Asia.

MARLENE Have you written out the 20,000 rupees ?

HECTOR Marlene, you are not serious !

CHAU She is very serious.

HECTOR 50,000 went on the Mazda car, three months rent 6,000, we paid Chaudaribhoy 10,000 ...

CHAU Correction please, not to me, to the flood victims of East Pakistan.

HECTOR That is nothing to do with us.

- MARLENE That has everything to do with us.
- HECTOR Our money has also everything to do with us. The total gone is 76,000 rupees. We are left with only 24,000 till London, and now you want to give 20,000 to the Bihar Famine Fund. Make it a small token gesture.
- MARLENE Giving a token does not hurt, Daddy. We must give till it hurts.
- HECTOR I'm afraid we will be injured.
- MARLENE Professor, show daddy those sheets !
- CHAU I have not been engaged to awaken your father's emotional and intellectual responses, and he may be beyond that.
- HECTOR Professor, if your lesson for today is over, kindly leave us and I will discuss matters with my daughter.
- CHAU Mr. Parara, I must make it clear as sunlight, that I instruct pupils on my own terms. The payment of this cheque is part of the therapy in the treatment of Miss Asia.
- HECTOR We'll see about it tomorrow.
- CHAU If a therapy is not given at the correct moment, it is not a therapy at all.
- HECTOR If money is not looked after carefully, it is not money at all.
- CHAU Do as you will. You may yourself continue the education of Miss Asia. I wash my feet off the whole thing.

- MARLENE Please, Professor, don't abandon me now.
- VIOLET Please Hector, please, I think it will be all right.
- HECTOR Professor, I will write out the cheque, but on one condition. Before you leave now, you must restore my daughter to a normal condition.
- CHAU That will be simple. I will return all the Pararas and all the Fernandos to normal with some curative carnatic classics.
- (He puts on a record, and the tape recorder plays carnatic music softly, in the background)*
- Come, Marlene, some fresh air after the poisonous fumes of the truth. *(He moves out, holding her by the hand. She stops at the door)*
- MARLENE Daddy, please have the cheque ready when we return.
- (They exit)*
- RANJIT I'd better keep an eye. *(He vanishes)*
- VIOLET Hector, please write out the cheque. It's her money.
- HECTOR Violet, stop saying "Her money," "her money". She is our daughter, and if it is our duty to look after her, we have to look after her money as well.
- VIOLET But you'll be causing an emotional crisis on the very first day of her education.
- HECTOR If I go on giving cheques like this, I'll be causing a financial crisis on the second and third days of her education.
- VIOLET Then what do we do ?

- HECTOR Avoid the emotional crisis and the financial crisis.
- VIOLET How ?
- HECTOR By doing exactly as Marlene wanted. Write out a cheque for 20,000 to the Bihar Children's Famine Fund. (He writes). But when it comes to signing the cheque, I'll
- VIOLET Darling, don't forge again remember . . . 'London.'
- HECTOR Don't be absurd, Violet, you can't forge your own cheques.
- VIOLET Then ?
- HECTOR But you can fudge your own cheques. Between forging and fudging there is a great difference. You forge when you want to make a payment, but don't have the money. You fudge when you have the money, but don't want to make a payment.
- VIOLET But the cheques will bounce and he'll find out.
- HECTOR No. But the cheques will bounce and I'll find out. Because cheques don't bounce in various directions. Finally they bounce back to the point from which they bounced off. In the days to come Marlene can have as many cheques as there are outposts of suffering in Asia. Marlene will be emotionally stable and we will be financially stable.
- VIOLET Hector, it must be very bad luck that never gave you an eminent position in society, because you have all the qualities of clever thinking.
- HECTOR Finally luck has come our way, and it will be tragic if it vanished into other unlucky parts of Asia.

(Ranjit enters. He looks upset)

- VIOLET I thought you were walking with Marlene and the Professor.
- RANJIT I walked ahead because Marlene did not want me to disturb their singing.
- VIOLET Singing ?
- RANJIT Yes, they are singing together from Rabindranath Tagore's "Gitanjali."
- HECTOR That's what I have been trying to tell you all day. That Marlene won't have time for you now. You had to wait till you heard it from her.
- RANJIT No, it's just that temporarily she is in a strange state of mind. Marlene will be all right.
- (We hear the last strains of Saa - ri - ga - ma - pa - the - nee - saa outside, and Chau and Marlene enter)
- CHAU Marlene is perfectly all right now, after the soothing effects of "Gitanjali."
- MARLENE (strangely) But I must be left alone to think out so many things I never knew before. But before that, Daddy, have you got the cheque ready, for 20,000 rupees ?
- HECTOR It is ready, my dear, and whatever is needed for the education of Miss Asia must be ready and at hand.
- CHAU That is good because the giving is part of the therapy.
- HECTOR As you say, Professor.
- MARLENE I'm so happy, Daddy, that we're all thinking in

harmony now, because there are so many things we must think differently now, and in harmony, and for that we must be grateful to Raasagoola.

HECTOR

Ever grateful to Professor Chaudaribhoy. It is not easy to balance self interest against the misery of our suffering brothers. The scales are always loaded on the side of the self. But if the answer to my daughter's emotional and intellectual responses needs the loading of the other side, then we're all happy to load with you.

CHAU

Very creditable. (*attempting to take the cheque off Perera*)

HECTOR

And my wife and I, for the first time, through our daughter's recent experience, are getting an insight into our great civilization.

MARLENE

It is a great civilization, Daddy, and we must all submerge ourselves in its suffering . . . I'm beginning to feel strange again, please hold my hand.

(*Ranjit does so*)

No, not you, Raasagoola.

(*Chau holds her hand. Ranjit steps back, tense and uncomfortable*)

CHAU

(*stretching out his other hand*) The cheque in the other hand, please, because, incidentally, Bihar is in this direction, so the formation will be symbolic.

HECTOR

But the Post Office is in that direction, so if you'll give me the address, I'll post it myself.

CHAU

No, no, I will send it myself, with a covering letter in the nature of a poem, explaining the origin of this sacrifice. It is only then that the rapport will be built between Miss Asia and her children. They will then reply to my covering poem, and through me the gentle to and fro will be created.

MARLENE And Ranjit leave me alone, because I want to be left very much alone.

CHAU That may be correct (*strong rebuff to Ranjit*)

RANJIT (*strongly*) I'm beginning to wonder whether it is all correct, because ...
(*but before he can continue, Marlene breaks into song from Tagore's "Gitanjali."*)

MARLENE (singing and moving close to Chau, looking directly into his face)
Pluck this little flower,
take it, delay not,
I fear
Lest it droop, and fall
into the dust.
(sung to the tune of Sa - ri - ga - ma - pa - the - ni - sa)

CHAU (Joining in immediately on the word "dust")
From "Gitanjali" by Rabindranath Tagore ! (and continues singing) Sa - ri - ga - ma - pa - the - ni - sa!

(Rapid curtain begins falling while he sings "Sa - ri - ga - ma - pa - the - ni - sa." Hector, Violet and Ranjit can be seen standing bunched together, tense and confused. Marlene, Chaudaribhoy and cheque relaxed and in smiling harmony centre stage, and just behind curtain line. Chau. actually repeats "Sa - ri - ga - ma - pa - the - ni - sa" till the curtain has fully closed)

ACT THREE

Forty - five days later. It is the same place, but the effect is different. It is strikingly. oriental, but not of the arty Kalaniketan kind. There is the austere beauty of a Shanthiniketan. As the curtain is rising, Oliver is opening the door for two gentlemen. Hector and Violet watch.

OLIVER You are a little early. *(They nod)*. Hector, meet Alfred and George.

HECTOR How do you do, gentlemen. *(They nod)*. Please sit. *(They sit)* This is my wife, Violet. *(They nod)*

VIOLET Suppose Marlene came in, shouldn't Alfred and George wait in the other room ?

OLIVER Eventually they can, but I have planned to introduce them, in case the need arises, as reporter friends of mine, from the press. *(They smile)*

HECTOR Your friends can be depended on, to keep the whole thing confidential . . .

OLIVER Of course. They are professionals. They'll do the job and never be seen again.

HECTOR And of course, gentlemen, You'll do it smoothly and silently. Marlene must never know. *(They nod)*. *(To Oliver)* Marlene must never know what happened to Chaudaribhoy.

OLIVER Alfred and George are professionals, so don't worry.

VIOLET You think she'll believe, that he just disappeared ?

HECTOR The fact is, that he'll just disappear, and she'll have to believe a fact. The eccentric man just went away. She'll have to believe it because there won't be any evidence.

- OLIVER Alfred and George will take Chaudaribhoy across the border. They will leave him at Dhanaskody and return. (*They nod*)
- VIOLET You're sure Chaudaribhoy won't return ?
- HECTOR Oliver has fixed it with the Visa people. Shall we go into the other room, to finish my story about the other matter ?
- OLIVER No need to go into any other room because Alfred and George are complete professionals, keep their minds on one track at a time.
- HECTOR Sure ? (*They nod*)
- OLIVER Oh yes, you can carry on. You were saying that not a single one has bounced ?
- HECTOR Not a single
- OLIVER Do you really mean that ? Not a single ?
- HECTOR Not a single one. Forty - five days have passed and not a single cheque has bounced.
- VIOLET Did you fudge them all properly ?
- HECTOR Every one of them was well and truly fudged, no mistake about that.
- OLIVER How many in all ?
- HECTOR Here I have the list. Cheque for 20,000/- for the Bihar Famine Fund. Cheque for 20,000/- to the Istanbul Earthquake Fund. Cheque for 10,000/- to the Reconstruction of Hiroshima.
- OLIVER That's funny, the reconstruction of Hiroshima was over a long time ago.

- HECTOR I know that. I said, "Professor, the reconstruction of Hiroshima is over." He said, "But not in the hearts of the people, Mr. Parara." I'm just a bit tired of being called "Mr. Parara." Then there's a cheque for 10,000/- to the Rangoon Cholera fund. Cheque for 10,000/- to the Vietnam War Relief Fund. Cheque for 10,000/- to the Egyptian Antiquities Preservation Fund. And finally, 30,000/- to the Bangkok Rice Field Rehabilitation Fund.
- OLIVER Your cheques have hopped out far and wide into Asia.
- HECTOR Yes, but they haven't bounced back.
- OLIVER How do you know they haven't bounced back ? They may have bounced back to him.
- HECTOR That's a possibility, but then he would have complained.
- OLIVER What does your bank statement say ?
- HECTOR I'm waiting for it.
- OLIVER Why haven't you inquired at the bank ?
- HECTOR I don't want to make any such inquiries, because if you total off all the cheques, you'll find they are far in excess of what I had in the bank.
- VIOLET It totals off to 110,000/- rupees, but after the Mazda car, the fee to Chaudaribhoy, the rent of the flat, and all the other expenses, there was only 24,000/- in the bank. Why did you do it. Hector ?
- HECTOR Oh Violet, don't you understand ? I could safely afford to do that because I was fudging the cheques so they wouldn't be realised.

- VIOLET But if the cheques were not fudged properly, they would become realisable and you'll be in for cheating.
- HECTOR But I fudged every one properly !
- OLIVER Haven't you been cashing cheques in the meantime for other expenses ?
- VIOLET Yes, Hector paid a liquor bill to Cargills.
- OLIVER And there was no trouble with the cheque ?
- HECTOR No, so quite certainly there must be money in the bank, and it follows that these cheques have not been realised.
- VIOLET Nor have they bounced back to me.
- HECTOR Then where are they ?
- VIOLET We will know when Chaudaribhoy is removed. Alfred and George could force him to talk.
- OLIVER No, in that case I'll have to be present because Alfred and George won't speak a word.
- HECTOR I was about to ask, why is that ?
- OLIVER They are fine men of action, but if they speak, they incriminate themselves. They learnt that long ago.
- HECTOR Anyway, we are not having him kidnapped to find out about cheques, just to get him out of the way and save Marlene. (*Knock at the door*)
- VIOLET Could that be Chaudari ?
- OLIVER Don't worry, I'll introduce Alfred and George as reporters.

HECTOR Come in ... (*Enter Ranjit*). Come, come.

RANJIT Why have you sent for me ?

HECTOR I'll tell you ... You have met Oliver ... two friends
of Oliver ...

OLIVER From the reporting staff

HECTOR We can take Ranjit into our confidence. Oliver has
arranged that his two friends, Alfred and
George, will remove Chaudaribhoy forever, today.

RANJIT What kidnap ?

HECTOR Yes, across the border, to India, today.

RANJIT That may not be necessary.

HECTOR What do you mean ?

RANJIT First tell me why I am being suddenly recalled to
this house ?

VIOLET Marlene may need you.

RANJIT If she needed me she would have sent for me.

HECTOR She is not in a condition to decide ... after
Chaudaribhoy.

RANJIT Even before Chaudaribhoy you thought she was
not in a condition to decide about me.

HECTOR The situation has been nearly totally reversed now,
and I'm big enough to admit that we prefer you
to be around, now.

RANJIT Either I'm in or out, I don't want to be ... around.

- HECTOR You know what I mean (*Hector takes a shot off a hip flask*) Sorry I can't offer you anything strong, unless you are willing to sneak into the storeroom and have a shot.
- OLIVER Why is that ?
- VIOLET Chaudaribhoy's influence. Marlene won't hear of liquor in the house. Hector has put everything into the storeroom and he sneaks in and out or carries this hip flask.
- RANJIT Chaudaribhoy runs the show ...
- HECTOR Through Marlene. If any of you are for this stuff, you are welcome. (He walks over to the drinks cabinet and displays bottle after bottle). Essence of Rosa, Mysore Cream, Bombay Sherbert, Madrassi Mango Juice - and rubbish like that.
- OLIVER Actually Alfred and George would love it. They neither smoke nor take anything strong, but they love sweet things. (Without much invitation Alfred and George move over and begin helping themselves to large quantities of sweet drinks and this provides a backdrop to the scene, for some time. Just after their first drink, a very young servant Girl crosses the stage with a pile of books. Hector stops her halfway)
- HECTOR That's the nourishment, and this is the literature ! (From the pile he flings book after book on to the stage) "Twilight in Djakarta," by Mokhtar Lubis ! "Discovery of India" by Jawaharlal Nehru ! "Autobiography of Mohammed Ali Jinnah" ! "The Snow Country" by Kawabata ! "The Natyasashthra" by Baharatha Muni, and a "Concise History of the Bengali Comic Theatre," Volumes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 ! Junk !

VIOLET There is no harm if she reads all that. Something we missed, but not junk !

HECTOR Maybe, but for Marlene it is junk ! Too much for her !

VIOLET How do you know that it's too much for her !

HECTOR Because the jump from "Shorthand" by Pitman, to "India" by Nehru is too big and sudden a jump.

VIOLET Marlene has the talent to make the jump.

HECTOR You and your talented daughter ! Even if she has the talent, "India" by Nehru, okay, but tell me why on earth she has to jump into the Natyasashthra by Baharatha Muni and six volumes on the Bengali Comic Theatre ? The man is a raving lunatic !

RANJIT You're lucky if he's only that.

OLIVER What do you mean ?

RANJIT I have not been idle, since I was kicked out forty - five days ago. I have done some probing myself.

OLIVER About what ?

RANJIT First tell me more about Marlene. I have known nothing of this side since Chaudaribhoy took charge forty - five days ago, replacing me.

OLIVER What ? Are they in love ?

VIOLET No, I don't think so.

HECTOR I'm sure she's infatuated with the fellow.

VIOLET I think it's just that she's hero worshipping his learning.

HECTOR You don't have to hold the hero's hand and sing
"Githanjali"

RANJIT Is she looking well ?

HECTOR How can she look well with all this ? (indicating
the books) She gets only three hours sleep a day,
reading so late into the night; day after day. Her
head may be bulging, but that's not the only thing
they are going to measure in London. She has even
dropped enough hints that she may not be
interested in going to London. Unless we get rid
of Chaudaribhoy today, we'll all go back to
"Convent View" in Bolavalana. There is no
alternative to the kidnapping.

RANJIT That may not be necessary.

HECTOR I don't know what you mean, but I'm in charge
and I'll see it's done.

RANJIT Has she told you that she's not going to
London ?

HECTOR She has dropped enough hints and the way she
behaves it's obvious that she's not interested any
more.

OLIVER What does she do ?

HECTOR The whole day she spends loafing around
bookstalls. Even now she's out looking for some
book called "The Asian Drama," damn drama the
whole time. Later in the day she has her lesson
with Chaudaribhoy, and then she reads and reads
and reads till nearly dawn.

OLIVER Not much harm

- HECTOR You won't say that if you see her now. Plain white saree, the whole time, hair hanging down all the way, and jewellery nowhere to be seen, all sold, and (indicating the servant) this little wretch has taken all the make-up. If you see Marlene now, you wouldn't believe she was preparing for a beauty contest in this world, more like a canonization contest in the next world. Ranjit, you'd better stay around and help to bring her back to earth after Chaudaribhoy is out of the way.
- RANJIT Chaudaribhoy may be out of the way without the need for these two gentlemen.
- OLIVER How ?
- RANJIT Because it is quite clear ... (Suddenly we hear Marlene singing from "Githanjali" off stage)
- VIOLET That's Marlene.
- HECTOR Quick ! She'll throw a fit if she sees her books all over the ground. *(All help to hurriedly pile the books on the servant)*. Vigahata ! *(But with the push, the girl falls, books and all, and at the same moment Marlene enters)* *(Hector pretending annoyance at the girl's clumsiness and lack of feeling for books)* This idiot of a girl, always dropping these valuable books. What does she understand, like throwing pearls before swine !
- MARLENE Daddy ! You must never say such things about this unfortunate creature, this poor girl whose fault it is not if she cannot see the treasures that lie hidden in books. These are the pearls, but she is not the swine. The swine are those that exploited her illiteracy to reduce her to a domestic slave. You and I, and you, and you, and you, and you, we are all the swine, and Manike is truly an unopened oyster. *(She helps the girl to gather the books and sends her off lovingly)*. Hello, Mr. Mendis.

OLIVER Hello, Marlene.

MARLENE Ranjit, what are you doing here ?

RANJIT Dropped in while passing by.

MARLENE And these gentlemen ?

OLIVER Press friends of mine, Alfred and George.

MARLENE Hello. (*They nod*) They do not want to greet me ?

HECTOR Also, kind of, unopened oysters (*softly, but to be heard by audience*)

OLIVER Marlene, we thought that after such a long lapse, we should bring you back into the public image. I'm tied up, but these two gentlemen will

MARLENE I don't want to discuss beauty contests any more . . .

OLIVER At least something about your reactions to beauty contests.

MARLENE Well if you insist, I will talk about the real dilemma of Asia, but not now, because I have to get ready for the lesson with Raasagoola.

OLIVER I don't have transport to send them back and here again, could they wait ?

MARLENE If they don't disturb the lesson, they could wait in there, but what will they do while the lesson is on ?

OLIVER Well . . . they could . . . glance at the newspapers.

- MARLENE Here, they could study these new books I bought. (*She gives one to each.*) "The Sigiriya Graffiti" by Paranavitharna for Alfred and "The Asian Drama" by Gunnar Myrdal for George.
- OLIVER Very interested in the drama now ?
- MARLENE Oh yes, but this is Economics, and you are in the press ! You gentlemen can use that room. (*She opens the door and lets them in.*) I must get ready.
- OLIVER Marlene, you're looking very plain, if I may say so.
- MARLENE The Child who is decked with prince's robes, and who has jewelled chains round his neck loses all pleasure in his play; his dress hampers him at every step.
- It is no gain, thy bondage of finery,
if it keep one shut off from the healthful dust
of the earth, if it robs one of the right of entrance
to the great fair of common human life.
- From "Githaanjali" by Tagore. I must prepare for Raasagoola. (*She goes in.*)
- OLIVER She calls him "Raasagoola" ?
- HECTOR They were on first name intimacy long ago.
- OLIVER That's a very funny name, "Raasagoola."
- RANJIT If you won't be too surprised, it's the name of a sweet meat in India.
- HECTOR Really ? VIOLET - no ?
- RANJIT Small, brown, ball shaped things ...

- OLIVER That's strange.
- RANJIT There are many more strange things about this man.
- VIOLET What ?
- RANJIT Very carefully tell me the details of how you first came into contact with Chaudaribhoy. Think carefully.
- HECTOR Well ... Violet, you watch the door in case Marlene comes in ... It was soon after the result was announced, at the Great Oriental Hotel in Calcutta, and Violet was crying with joy. Marlene rushed down, flashlights going all over, and hugged Violet. The tears mingled for two long minutes and then Marlene hugged me. The flashlights were blinding me, so I was in a daze - those horrible flashlights, they dazed me so much that I can't clearly remember every ... I mean how I first met Chaudaribhoy, those flashlights, but .. how I first met Chaudaribhoy, those horrible flashlights put me in a real daze
- VIOLET It was not those horrible flashlights, it was those horrible double whiskies that put you in a daze. They must be having the same effect. We had enough money because Hector was looking after the expense budget given by the organizers. He was drinking from early evening till the results were announced, and by that time he was fully dazed. Hector's memory is very hazy, but not because of the flashlights.
- HECTOR I don't know, but something was flashing around me.
- VIOLET But I remember clearly, how we first met Prof. Chaudaribhoy.

- RANJIT Can you tell me ?
- VIOLET Hector, you watch the door ... It was after most of the excitement had died down and we were taking Marlene back to her room for a change, that this Prof. met us in the corridor of the hotel. He introduced himself as Prof. Chaudaribhoy of the University of Calcutta, and said, "I hope your lovely daughter's emotional and intellecutal responses develop in the correct direction, for I hope dearly that she becomes Miss World."
- RANJIT And then ?
- VIOLET And then Hector said, "Let's have a drink, Professor." Chaudaribhoy refused, but said, "If there is any assistance you need, my great University is at your disposal." And Hector said, "When can I contact you, Professor?"
- HECTOR Did I say that ?
- RANJIT How do you remember all these details ?
- VIOLET Because I never had the feeling of flashlights.
- HECTOR The next morning I remember clearly. I had a telephone call from Chaudaribhoy. I met him at some hotel and we had some drinks.
- RANJIT I thought Chaudaribhoy was a teetotaller ...
- HECTOR He stuck to fruit juices ... and then I clinched the deal.
- RANJIT And then he clinched the deal !
- HECTOR Is he not a real Professor ?
- OLIVER Even if he's not, he must be a very good actor.

RANJIT He insisted on secrecy ...

HECTOR Yes, he said that the Dean of the Faculty would drop dead if he knew that he was consorting with a beauty queen.

RANJIT Any other details of the previous evening

HECTOR Ask Violet.

VIOLET Six or seven men passed by in the corridor, and each one did this (she bows deeply) and said, "Goodnight Professor."

RANJIT Will you be able to identify any of these people ?

VIOLET No, but they all wore those caps.

HECTOR That I remember !

RANJIT Thanks !

HECTOR Don't mention, but what's all this about ? (Loud and irritated)

RANJIT It's about ... (Marlene comes in)

MARLENE Ranjit, were you making all that noise ? And what is it that you are discussing so long ?

RANJIT Just recalling. Some interesting moments of the past.

MARLENE Not for me, Ranjit, that was my silly childhood. Daddy, please, if you must talk to your visitors, please talk softly because I have just started reading "The Snow Country" by Kawabata. So if you must indulge in the use of words, let them be like snow flakes falling off a bamboo leaf ! *(She withdraws just like that, i.e a snow flake)*

- OLIVER I must be going. Whatever Ranjit's idea is, I think you'd better leave everything to Alfred and George. I'll be standing by for the success signal from them.
- HECTOR Thanks, Oliver.
- VIOLET Thank you, and you think everything will be okay ?
- OLIVER Nothing to worry, cheerio.
- HECTOR & VIOLET Cheerio 1 (exit Oliver)
- RANJIT I think you can safely send away Alfred and George because I'm now going to have Chaudaribhoy removed the legal way. I'll come back with the police.
- VIOLET What has he done ?
- RANJIT You're asking ! Like he told you when he first arrived that there are innumerable Pereras and Fernandos in Colombo, there are Chaudaribhoys and Chaudaribhoys in Calcutta.
- MARLENE (entering) What are you shouting Raasagoola's name for ? Ranjit, please leave us in peace.
- RANJIT You will be at peace in a very short while. (Exit)
- MARLENE I'm glad they have all gone. Where are those two reporters ?
- VIOLET In the room.
- MARLENE They must be engrossed in "The Sigiriya Graffiti" by Paranavitharana, and I can continue "The Snow Country" by Kawabata in peace. (She floats out)

- VIOLET What did Ranjit mean ?
- HECTOR I'm not quite certain ... but we can't switch plans in mid stream. Alfred and George are already here, so we must go through with it. But don't arouse Marlene's suspicions under any condition. We must pretend that everything is fine till Chaudaribhoy is out of the way.
- VIOLET What will she do when she finds that he's missing ?
- HECTOR Nothing. We can tell her that he just disappeared, which is reasonable. Being an eccentric man, it looks plausible. Even men in love suddenly disappear, leaving their girlfriends in the lurch. But don't arouse her suspicions. *(Marlene floats in silently)*
- MARLENE I can't continue "The Snow Country" because there are some things that trouble me.
- VIOLET What, Marlene ?
- MARLENE Have you got the 20,000/- rupees from the sale of the jewellery ?
- HECTOR Yes, why ?
- MARLENE Civil war has broken out between India and China and we must send some relief for the wounded soldiers of both sides.
- HECTOR Marlene, I'm not a Professor, but I know that a civil war is when two parties within the same country start fighting. China and India are two different countries.

MARLENE No, Daddy, as Raasagoola says, it may be two different countries, but all Asians are brothers. So it is a civil war. That is the real meaning of "Cheena Hindi Bahi Bahi."

HECTOR What is that ?

MARLENE "Chinese and Indians are brothers." They are fighting within the framework of the Pancha Sila.

HECTOR Of course ! I never thought of it that way.

MARLENE So we'll send off some money for the relief of the wounded soldiers of both sides.

HECTOR Anything you say, Marlene. We'll attend to it soon after Chaudaribhoy has come and gone ... after today's lecture. You said some things were troubling you. Anything else ?

MARLENE This one does not really trouble me. It gives me great joy but I have to come out with it and tell you.

HECTOR What is it, Marlene ?

MARLENE *(blushing)* I love Chaudaribhoy.

HECTOR Of course, we all love Chaudaribhoy. He has been such an asset in our progress.

MARLENE I love him for more than that, Daddy.

HECTOR For what ?

MARLENE For himself, Daddy.

(pause)

HECTOR As much as Chaudaribhoy could give you an education on Asia, I can give you an education on love, Marlene.

MARLENE I don't want an education on love, Daddy, I want love itself.

VIOLET Marlene, please listen to your father.

HECTOR You have known Chaudaribhoy for forty - five days, and in that short time you say you're in love.

MARLENE It just happens like that, Daddy.

HECTOR It happened like that for Ranjit too, then what happened to "what happened" to Ranjit ?

MARLENE I don't know.

HECTOR And how do you know it won't happen again, and again, and again.

MARLENE It won't happen again.

VIOLET Don't say that, Marlene. Your father was the seventh happening to me.

HECTOR Lucky seven, all the others just disappeared.

MARLENE Disappeared ?

HECTOR Yes, people sometimes disappear like that when a passing fancy is over. Chaudaribhoy is not an exception. He can also disappear.

MARLENE Raasagoola will never disappear.

HCTOR Who knows, Marlene ? People do unexpectedly disappear. In any case, is he in love with you ? Has he told you ?

- MARLENE He has told me in everything but words. I can feel it at every moment.
- VIOLET Does he know ? Have you told him ?
- MARLENE In all but words.
- HECTOR What do you mean by that ?
- MARLENE No, Daddy, he has never touched anything more than my fingertips. He says in Asia, they don't unless people are married.
- HECTOR Has he also told you how people get married in Asia ?
- MARLENE We haven't discussed that.
- HECTOR He should have told you, that in Asia they arrange a pot of pure clear cold water on the slow burning fireplace. It warms up gently, the heat comes on, and then it boils over somewhere in the midday of life. By evening it begins cooling off, again gently, for no other reason than that life itself is cooling off. And then it's over together, both love and life. How beautiful ! In Europe it's the other way around. The water is already polluted when brought to a raging fire, which consumes so quickly that the pot is dry, long before midday. Love goes out, and life goes on.
- MARLENE Did the two of you, then, go on a slow fire and boil in midday ?
- HECTOR We were born in colonial times, so we couldn't practice our own ways. But to you, Marlene, as Miss Asia, I strongly recommend the Asian system. After London, we will arrange you on a slow fire, of ample means.
- MARLENE But I don't want ample means, and I don't want London !

VIOLET You're talking like a child, Marlene. What do you mean, you don't want London, and you don't want ample means ? Only children don't want ample means.

HECTOR When you grow out of childhood, you'll realise that everyone needs ample means, or some means. Even to keep the Asian pot going on the slow fire, you need some means to keep the home fires burning. We don't want your money, and though your mother cannot sew anymore, your father will do business with all his life and keep our home fires. You keep your money, but don't talk to me about not caring for means, and not caring for London. You'll regret later if you don't care for means.

MARLENE That's how I feel, Daddy. Be thankful that at least you have been to London, which Mummy and I will never see.

HECTOR Yes, I have been to London, but you won't say I'm thankful if I describe it.

MARLENE Is it an ugly city ?

HECTOR Whether it's ugly or beautiful, I can't tell you, because I've never seen it.

MARLENE What ? *(pause)*

HECTOR You're a grown up girl now, so I can tell you . . . I've never seen it.

MARLENE Then where did you go, those few years, when I was a baby ?

HECTOR Quite close by, Welikade.

MARLENE Jail . . . what for ?

- HECTOR You'll never understand the intricacies of accounting and banking law, where on a delicate balance, they can send you to "London" for two years or more. Especially if you don't have the means to fight it out in Courts. I know a lot of other fellows who didn't make the trip to "London" because they had the means. So don't talk to me about not wanting means. It means everything.
- MARLENE Then after you came out of jail ?
- HECTOR Nobody would give me a job.
- VIOLET We struggled to bring you up.
- MARLENE Why didn't you tell me all this before ?
- VIOLET You were too small to make you understand.
- MARLENE And so you told me that Daddy went to London.
- HECTOR We don't want your money, but don't be a damn fool and spread it all over Asia. Keep it for yourself.
- (pause)*
- MARLENE I wouldn't do that. Anyway, it's too late now, but I'm not sorry I sent it out all over Asia. I don't want it for myself ... but ... *(she walks about the stage for a while)* but ... I'll go to London.
- HECTOR Do it for yourself, but not for us.
- MARLENE Yes, I'm doing it for myself. But I love Raasagoola also for myself.
- VIOLET You can think about that after London.

MARLENE No, Mummy, that I have decided already.

HECTOR He hasn't told you, you have not told him.

MARLENE I know that any moment now we'll be telling each other I must ring Raasagoola now, and tell him that I'm going to London. I must ask him to come home immediately. *(She moves off)*

VIOLET Things look a little better now.

HECTOR I think it was my London that sent her to her London. Anyway, I would have told her some day.

VIOLET Do we need to go through the kidnapping now ?

HECTOR Of course we have to. Chaudaribhoy can easily make her reverse her decision, and this love thing can be solved once and for all by removing the beggar. That's how they do it in Asia, if the parents disapprove, you remove the beggar.

(Marlene returns)

VIOLET What did he say when you told him ?

MARLENE I couldn't tell him, because before I could speak, he said he's coming early today to tell me something very important. He had a lump in his throat and then I got a lump in my throat. I think I know what he's going to tell me, and I know what I will tell him.

HECTOR Apart from other things, you'll tell him you're going to London !

MARLENE Yes, that I have decided . . . I must get ready for him.

(She runs off)

HECTOR Before they exchange those lumps in their throats, Chaudaribhoy must be got rid of.

(Knock, knock, at the door)

VIOLET That must be Chaudaribhoy !

HECTOR Let's get out of the way.

They vanish inside and Chaudaribhoy enters with briefcase, stick and long - playing record. He looks around the room, sits down, and while humming an Indian love melody, examines his briefcase. Alfred and George emerge from the room behind him, and begin converging, but suddenly he hums with greater joy and moves forward, thus thwarting their first move (though he does not realise it) He turns slightly and notices them.

CHAU Hullo ! *(No response)* I said hullo ! *(Still no response)* I am professor R. Chaudaribhoy, and you are ? *(No response)* If you are not talking people, at least you are eating people. *(He extracts two brown spherical sweets from his briefcase and offers them)* These are my namesakes, Raasagoolas ! Inanimate balls of great delicacy in my country, sweet meats !

(They take them and gobble them down with one gulp. At this point we hear Marlene coming, singing from Githanjali. Alfred and George quickly withdraw into the room behind. (Marlene enters) Marlene !

MARLENE Raasagoola !

CHAU Marlene, there were two men here in the studio. They went into that room.

MARLENE They are reporters from the "Ceylon Mirror." They want to interview me. I told them not to disturb the class and to wait till it's over. That's why they went into the room.

(Alfred and George will be used by the director of the performance to appear and withdraw at crucial moments in the Marlene - Raasagoola love scene which now follows)

- CHAU I see. And how is my beautiful pupil today ?
- MARLENE Feeling all mixed up, Raasagoola.
- CHAU That is good, because I am also feeling all mixed up today.
- MARLENE And are we to continue our lesson on "the social content of the Bengali Comic Theatre" ?
- CHAU No. I will come to the Bengali Comic Theatre in good time, Marlene. I thought we might change our approach today. We will begin by listening to this beautiful music by Ravi Shankar. Do you mind playing the record, Marlene ? *(He sits)*
- MARLENE I love listening to Ravi Shankar, Raasagoola.
- (While Raasagoola hums a love melody, Marlene sets the record in motion)*
- CHAU Isn't it lovely ? The music of the sitar !
- MARLENE It is ecstatic, Raasagoola !
- CHAU Yes, and I need an ecstatic mood today.
- (She sits)*
- MARLENE Why, Raasagoola ?
- CHAU Something erupted in me today, Marlene.
- MARLENE Erupted, Raasagoola ?

CHAU Yes, yes, like a, like a, like a ... volcano !

MARLENE Like a ... Vesuvius ?

CHAU No, no, let us say like a Fujiama !

MARLENE What erupted like a Fujiama, Raasagoola ?

CHAU II.... I can't

MARLENE You can tell me, Raasagoola. You have told me before that you are my dearest friend.

CHAU You are my dearest friend, Marlene.

MARLENE Then tell me Raasagoola, about your Fujiama !

CHAU I don't know, how to .. . how to ... say

MARLENE To say what, Raasagoola !

CHAU To say that ... I feel, that I ... have known you for such a long time ...

MARLENE Yes, Raasagoola, please tell me ...

CHAU Forty - five days, forty - five days ... seems like ... like

MARLENE Yes ! My dear Raasagoola, please tell me Raasagoola, Raasagoola, Raasagoola ...

CHAU Yes, I will tell you, but first please, Marlene, please don't call me Raasagoola again ... I feel ... I feel.

MARLENE Yes, Raasagolla, you feel ?

CHAU Don't Raasagoola me ! I feel such a cheat when you call me Raasagoola.

- MARLENE But you are my Raasagoola !
- CHAU Yes, Marlene but Raasagoola... is not... Marlene ... can there be a person called Sugar Candy Smith, however sweet a person he may be ...
- MARLENE Raasagoola what are you saying....
- CHAU I am saying that there is no such name as "Raasagoola" because like the English Sugar candy" the Indian "Raasagoola" is only a ... a .. kind of .. kind of inanimate balls of great delicacy in my country ... a sweet meat !
- MARLENE What ?
- CHAU There is no such name as Raasagoola Chaudaribhoy! I mean there is a Chaudaribhoy, but there is no Raasagoola. That's a sweet meat ... I feel such a cheat having made you call me Raasagoola all these lovely days.
- MARLENE Then what is your real first name Raasa ... Sorry ...
- CHAU Raichaudari. I am Raichaudari Chaudaribhoy.
- MARLENE Then why did you call yourself Raasagoola ?
- CHAU (gestures to convey "I don't know") Maybe it's the way the mind of a comic actor works, I mean .
- MARLENE Raasa ... oh, I don't know what to call you now ... I mean, why are you always talking about comic actors ?
- CHAU I mean, Raasagoola was a nickname given to me in my student days, when I acted in the University Dramatic Society in Calcutta.
- MARLENE Then why did you use it now ?

- CHAU A mischievous fancy of an ex-comic actor of the student Dramatic Society of Calcutta University. But Marlene, there is no Raasagoola any more. I can't cheat you, Marlene.
- MARLENE Then what shall I call you, Ra . . . ?
- CHAU Call me Chaudari.
- (pause)*
- MARLENE Anything you say, Chaudari . . . but is that all that you came to tell me ?
- CHAU No, no, very much more, but first . . . *(extracting a small packet from his briefcase)* . . . here I have brought a pair of real Raasagoolas, inanimate balls of great delicacy in my country, so that we may symbolically devour them, to eradicate the name Raasagoola forever !
- MARLENE *(taking one)* You do funny things, Chaudari. *(She laughs, perhaps for the first time during the play)*
- CHAU Some things I got used to as a comic actor.
- MARLENE Chaudari, as a professor at Calcutta University, where did you find so much time for such a lot of comic acting ?
- CHAU Oh! . . . In my student days, in the University Dramatic society.
- MARLENE Was it great fun ?
- CHAU It was very exciting and my first love has always been for the theatre, but circumstances have forced me into the Chair of Philosophy - now let's eat up the Raasagoola forever.

(Each one takes a small bite of their respective Raasagoolas)

MARLENE It is very sweet, Chaudari, these inanimate spheres.

CHAU *(Moving in, to get to the point)* Raasagoola is very sweet, but Marlene, there are things far sweeter.

MARLENE *(missing the point)* India is full of sweet things, Chaudari, inanimate cubes, inanimate ovals, inanimate ...

CHAU Marlene, I am talking about animate things. ...

MARLENE What, Chaudari ?

CHAU *(with great excitement and nervousness)* Excuse me for saying it, Marlene, please forgive me, Marlene, but I have been fighting an epic battle to hold it back. An Epic Battle !

MARLENE Epic ?

MARLENE Yes, Epic, you know Epic, like, like ...

MARLENE Epic like the Iliad and the Odyssey !

CHAU *(rebuking her)* No, no, like the Mahabaratha and the Ramayana - *(now softly)* and today I have lost and had to tell you ... I love you ... please forgive me, Marlene ...

MARLENE Chaudari, I'll never forgive you ...

(He turns to look at her. His face showing tension)

for not telling me so long and making me suffer nights and days. *(He smiles, relaxed).*

- MARLENE Chaudari !
- CHAU Marlene ! . . . I almost feel I am back in the Bengali Comic Theatre, but this is real !
- MARLENE Chaudari, on the first day of our honeymoon, will you take me to a performance of the Bengali Comic Theatre, of which you talk so much ?
- CHAU Marlene, I would love to, but the Bengali Comic Theatre is no more. It was disbanded. *(Then grabbing her, excited)*. Still, I remember well, there was a scene like this, much more exaggerated, when a comic actor declared his love for a sweet girl . . . *(swishes her down on to a stool)* . . . and then he offered her a wedding present . . . *(he swiftly kneels before her)* . . . like this . . .
- MARLENE You do such funny things, Chaud . . . *(she laughs)*
- CHAU and he says in the exaggerated and flowery language of the vegetable world, "My beloved, with thighs like the trunks of the tender plantain tree ! I offer thee these delicate bananas as a token of my love !"
- (He thrusts a small bag into her hands)*
- MARLENE *(laughing)* What is it ?
- (She examines the contents, still laughing, while Chaudari nervously slips behind her. Her laughter stops suddenly as she takes a cheque leaf out of the bag. The scene switches back to 'realism'.)*
- MARLENE Cheque for 20,000 rupees to the Bihar Famine Fund . . .
- CHAU *(Taking the rest from her)*

For 20,000 to the Istanbul Earthquake Fund,
for 10,000 to the Reconstruction of Hiroshima,
for 10,000 to the Rangoon Cholera
for 10,000 to the Vietnam War Relief,
for 10,000 to the Egyptian Antiquities,
and 30,000 to the Bangkok rice field,
nearly 100,000 rupees, Marlene !

MARLENE What does it mean, Chaudari ?

CHAU It means I love you, Marlene !

MARLENE But what about the famine, what about the
earthquake, what about the cholera, what about
the babies, what about everything we did ?

CHAU For all these things we did everything we could!

MARLENE I love you, Chaudari, but I am confused.

CHAU You are confused between the OBJECTIVE and
the SUBJECTIVE, my dearest girl.

MARLENE Explain to me, Chaudari, if you love me, don't
all these things exist ?

CHAU The misery of Asia exists, Marlene, concretely,
that is objectively, but has a meaning only if felt
subjectively, and you have felt it subject
ively, and that is enough. The act of giving away
your precious money was the agent that made you
feel. The agent, having performed its task, returns
to where it began. The cheques have gone and
come, but your feelings will stay on.

MARLENE But what about all the babies who are dying?

CHAU. Those Nuffields and Rockerfellas are seeing to it,
objectively without feeling subjectively. This
Parara here (*stroking her hair*) felt it subjectively,
and your contribution is too small to work
objectively.

- MARLENE Chaudari, are you sure everything is all right . . . the babies . . .
- CHAU. (*Making her sit*) Trust me, Marlene.
- MARLENE I will always trust you, Chaudari . . . and I'm so happy I don't have to go to London.
- CHAU. (*Sitting beside her*) You were going to London
- MARLENE Yes, but now there is enough money here. I had decided to go to London because of money; Daddy has been on a trip to another kind of "London".
- CHAU. I know.
- MARLENE Who told you ?
- CHAU. Mr. Fernando. And who told you ?
- MARLENE Daddy.
- CHAU. And has the love for your father diminished because he went to "London" ?
- MARLENE No, maybe it has increased.
- CHAU. That is admirable. And would your love for me diminish if it were true that I had made some similar trip ?
- MARLENE Nonsense, Chaudari ! I love you wherever you may have been, and whoever you are. But Chaudari, have you also made a trip to jail ?
- CHAU. No, Marlene, but I have made a trip to the land of the imagination, and thank God there are no travel restrictions or package tours to that great place. It will be our final liberty.

- MARLENE What, Chaudari ?
- CHAU. The land of the imagination. I am not a Professor, Marlene.
- MARLENE You are not a Raasagoola (*smiling*), you're not a Professor
- CHAU. and I'am not even a "Bhoy", there is no such name as "Chaudaribhoy". I am just Chaudari from Calcutta - you love me less ?
- MARLENE Chaudari, I love you more, but I understand you less because in a little while you may tell me that you are not even from Calcutta, then I'll be left with just "Chaudari" (*smiling*).
- CHAU. And if there were no "Chaudari" also ?
- MARLENE (*Smiling*) Then I'll be left with nothing !
- CHAU. You'll be left with only a dramatic device from the Natyashashtra. But I swear to you I'm Chaudari from Calcutta. Now do you understand me more ?
- MARLENE I don't know . . . I am feeling strange, Chaudari . . . but I love you.
- CHAU. That is enough, because it is the most important thing, not only in Asia, but in the whole world, Marlene.
- (*pause*)
- MARLENE I love you, Chaudari, but
- CHAU. you love me, Marlene, because you love all people.

MARLENE What ?

CHAU. There is no true love, Marlene, if you do not care for all the people, but claim that you love one person. You can't love a baby, Marlene, unless you love all the babies.

MARLENE Chaudari, if there is no Professor Chaudari

CHAU. There is a Professor, but that is another person.

MARLENE What are you, Chaudari, apart from being a very convincing actor ?

CHAU. What am I ?

Tha-na-ne	<i>(He makes a little circular</i>
Tha-na-ne	<i>dance, to the rhythm of</i>
Tha-na-ne	<i>Tha-na-ne; while dancing,</i>
Tha-na-ne	<i>he sings this Bengali tune,</i>
dha-ni	<i>as given alongside.)</i>
dha-ni	
dha-ni	
dha-ni	
dha-ni	
dha-ni	
dha-ni	
dheie !	

.... Marlene, it's very stuffy here. If you will come with me for a walk down Galle Face Gardens, I will tell you from my heart !

MARLENE Chaudari, when did you decide not to send the cheques to these funds ?

CHAU. Today, Marlene.

MARLENE You had them with you all the time ?

- CHAU. Yes, Marlene, in this bag.
- MARLENE Why till today, Chaudari ?
- CHAU. I will tell you, down the Galle Face Gardens.
- MARLENE *(Pulling him by the hand)* Let's go.
- CHAU. *(Tensioning himself to stop being pulled.)* But Marlene, please bring an umbrella along.
- MARLENE Why ?
- CHAU. Because I can see some rain in the horizon *(pointing to the distance above the heads of the audience).*
- MARLENE *(Also looking in the same direction)* But Chaudari, it's a bright burning sun !
- CHAU. For that also an umbrella, but really I was thinking of the Bengali Comic Theatre, where they open a black umbrella to show that something sad is coming.
- MARLENE But you said it was the Comic Theatre.
- CHAU. There is always the comic in the tragic, and the tragic in the conic.
- MARLENE You are a funny man, Chaudari, but if it makes you happy, I'll bring a sad, black umbrella *(as the two thugs appear in the doorway behind, though Chau does not notice.)*
- CHAU. Come soon, I feel frightened to be without you.
- MARLENE I'll come soon. Close your bag in the meantime.

CHAU. No, I'll practise some long unused tragic and comic postures from the Classical Theatre.

(As she goes in, he begins and goes through a succession of tragic and comic postures, skipping from one side of the stage to the other for each opposite posture. He says the word "Dhukka" (sorrow) as he makes tragic posture, and the word "Sappa" (joy) as he makes a comic posture. Simultaneously, the thugs are moving in cautiously and confusedly from behind him, because they are unable to make a straight advance to him, as he keeps changing position. But in one of the tragic postures, where he is in a near sitting stance, they lift him up. In fact, on this final occasion, the word "Dhukka" (sorrow) escapes from his lips only after he has been lifted up, still in sitting stance, in their arms - a fine bit of timing. They are moving out, with Chau still in mid air sitting posture in their arms, when Marlene enters with umbrella, and the trio, in formation, stops dead in its tracks.)

MARLENE Help, Please, police, police, police !

(The family rushes in.)

CHAU. Marlene, please don't shout for the police. Two are enough. This is the police.

(He is still in mid air.)

MARLENE They said they were reporters. Daddy, what is this ?

HECTOR They didn't say anything ! But they are neither police nor reporters. They are kidnappers (the word 'Removalists' may be used). I wanted Chaudaribhoy kidnapped (or 'removed').

MARLENE

Daddy, I love him.

HECTOR

Because you love him ! But now there is something else I want to know. Chaudaribhoy, you thought these were policemen. Why did you think you were wanted by the police, and did you imagine that the police arrest people in this manner? (*pointing to his hoisted position*).

CHAU.

In Bengal the Westminster style is losing ground everywhere and it is not uncommon for the police to resort to this kind of native genius. But may I be permitted a position of better standing, to explain myself ?

(*On Hector's instruction he is placed down.*)

Why did I think that these men were the Police?
Yes . . .

(*A knock at the door.*)

There, I think your answer has arrived.

(*Ranjith comes in immediately.*)

RANJITH

There's a police officer who wants to come in.

HECTOR

Ask him in.

(*As Ranjith moves, Chaudari leaps forward, stopping Ranjith and addressing Marlene.*)

CHAU.

Marlene, please, you must stop the police from coming in at that door !

MARLENE

Chaudari, why are the police trying to come in here ?

CHAU. I will tell you, but first Marlene, please bolt the door !

(Marlene, breaking away from the others who try to prevent her, bolts the door. The police start knocking at the door, at first gently and in widely spaced intervals of time but as this last segment of 'drama' progresses, the knocking sessions become louder, and the intervals of time become narrower. In short, the knocking becomes a dramatic device to measure the tempo.)

Thank you, Marlene. I am grateful that for the last lesson in the education of Miss Asia, the police have not been permitted to enter the classroom.

(He takes position behind a chair, as if in a court dock.)

RANJITH They have not come for a lesson, they have come to take you away.

HECTOR What !

VIOLET Why ?

MARLENE Why have they come to take Chaudari away?

CHAU. They have come to take me away because Mr. Fernando, I think, has so arranged it.

MARLENE Ranjith, what have you done ?

RANJITH I have protected you from any further education of the kind he is giving.

CHAU. Cha. There you are too late, because the EDUCATION of Miss Asia has progressed beyond the reach of the Police Department.

- RANJITH But the EDUCATOR has not got beyond the reach of the Police Department. You will not be allowed to get out through any other door.
- CHAU. I have not got the door closed for me to be going out, but to prevent the police from coming in.
- RANJITH And what is the reason why you do not want the police to come in ?
- CHAU. For aesthetic and dramatic reasons ! As Baharatha Muni says in the Natyasashtra, it would be crude and unaesthetic to push a policeman in to resolve our dramatic dilemma at this stage of its development. Let us resolve it internally between the main antagonists. Fernando, what do you want ?
- RANJITH You received 120,000 rupees of Marlene's money by way of cheques addressed to various relief funds in Asia.
- CHAU. So far, so good !
- RANJITH Were not all these cheques addressed to the Secretary of each of these Funds ?
- CHAU. So far, even better !
- RANJITH Are you not the Secretary of each of these Funds? *(triumphantly placing his foot on the chair near him)*
- CHAU. *(Moving up and swiping Ranjit's leg off the chair)* Very bad, hopeless ! Baharatha Muni would weep ! Absolutely crude and unaesthetic !
- RANJITH Am I right or am I wrong ? I am not interested in aesthetics !

- CHAU. That was clear from the commencement. But you are wrong because no such Funds exist.
- RANJITH As if I didn't suspect that ! There are no such genuine Funds, but there must be fraudulent Funds secretly administered by you.
- CHAU. Without a single appearance in the Lower Courts, you are not doing too badly. But you have misunderstood the higher philosophy of Baharatha Muni. If there were such Funds, fraudulent or genuine, it would have been a matter for the Lower Courts. Not in the higher philosophy. But I have to disappoint you. All those Funds were only in my imagination. Where did you get the information that these Funds exist as bogus ones, with me as their Secretary ?
- RANJITH Information is not the only method. People have commonsense, and there is circumstanital evidence and deduction. There is no other explanation. At my instigation, the Police have made investigations, and there are no such genuine Funds to public or government knowledge. It follows that there can only be secret bogus Funds handled by you, so that all the money ended up with you.
- CHAU. It ended up where it began, with Marlene.
- HECTOR What ?
- RANJIT Marlene has all the cheques ?
- MARLENE Yes, Daddy, Chaudari gave them all to me today.
- HECTOR Oh yes, and I can tell you why.
- CHAU. You must be closer to the Natyasashthra ! Why, Mr. Parara ?

- HECTOR I am closer to Banking Sashtara. All those cheques bounced. They were rejected by the Bank.
- RANJIT Why ?
- HECTOR Because I deliberately fudged all those cheques.
- CHAU. Fudge ? What is that fudge ?
- HECTOR I wrote my signature, unacceptably.
- MARLENE Daddy, why did you do that ?
- HECTOR Because I had sixth sense to protect our money. They were all rejected by the Bank and bounced back via Chaudaribhoy.
- CHAU. Marlene, we will show your father the cheques *(she goes into the room and he attempts to follow her, but Ranjit stops him)*.
- RANJIT You'd better wait here. I'll see about the cheques.
(Ranjith goes in. Pause)
- HECTOR Whatever happens to the story of the cheques need not worry you, if you agree to break away from the story of my daughter at this point. Please go away from our lives.
- CHAU. Are you making a bargain with me, Mr. Parara?
- HECTOR Call it what you like, but
- CHAU. There is no need for that, Mr. Parara. Because I will depart from the story of the Pararas and Fernandos in a short while, voluntarily.
- VIOLET What has happened ?

CHAU. Yes, voluntarily

VIOLET What is happening now, I

CHAU. You want me to stay with her, Mrs. Parara?

VIOLET (*insistently*) No, no ! But I wondered why....

CHAU. Those are the secrets of the Natyashastra, Mrs. Parara.

HECTOR Does Marlene know ?

CHAU. Marlene does not know. That is why it will hurt her very much, but it will not injure her permanently. Openings we make in young bodies close very quickly.

(Marlene enters with Ranjit following.)

Marlene, show the cheques to your father.

(She does so, and Hector examines them.)

If the Bank had rejected those cheques, Mr. Parara, and they bounced back to me, there will be a stamp of notation by the Bank. I suppose you know that as you are a businessman, with experience even in London. All those cheques are clean, Mr. Parara. They never left my briefcase till this morning)

(Hector is confused for a moment. The knocking gets louder at this point)

Tell the policemen not to knock so hard, because the cheques are clean !

(The knocking subsides.)

HECTOR Wait ! The cheques are valid for six months.
How can you prove that you did not intend
holding them till later and then cashing them?

(The knocking is fast and loud again.)

CHAU. There you have a legal and dramatic point, Mr.
Parara, and I'm sure that policeman is
keyholing and listening because his knocking gets
more excited according to the dramatic situation,
like a Hindustani cinematic soundtrack ! Yes,
there you have a legal and dramatic point.

RANJIT Damn the dramatic ! But legally, how can you
prove you did not intend cashing the cheques later?

CHAU You want me to prove that I did not intend?
Fernando, you got your law certificates in
Colombo or in Paris? Because in that country
you got to prove that you did not intend. In
our Westminster countries they got to prove that
you intended. And even in this house, why should
I prove that I did not intend and bring the whole
thing down to your Lower Court level? We will
keep it at the higher plane of the Natyashastra and
let each one decide according to their generosity
and love.

(He looks at Marlene. Soft knocking.)

There you see, the knocking is softer again.
That fellow is definitely keyholing.)

RANJIT But still there is a matter for the Lower Courts,
as you like to call it. You are passing off as
Professor Raasagoola Chaudaribhoy of the
University of Calcutta - impersonation.

(The knocking is louder.)

- CHAU. There is such a Professor R. Chaudaribhoy, but he is not a 'Rassagoola', and not even a 'bhoy', as Marlene already knows.
- HECTOR He told you that ?
- MARLENE Yes, Daddy, in Calcutta, the Chaudaris are like the Pereras and Fernandos of Colombo. He told me that he was not a Professor of any university.
- HECTOR What else did he tell you ?
- MARLENE We were going to walk down Galle Face Green and Chaudari was to tell me more, but at that moment (*pointing to the two thugs*) these men lifted him up.
- HECTOR What more were you going to tell her ?
- CHAU. On the Galle Face Gardens (*he takes Marlene by the arm and walks her up a few steps towards the apron*), while walking (*then transfers to mimed walking with her, on a single spot*), I was to tell her that I do not live very far from the University of Calcutta, and after I lost my job many years ago, I had plenty of time to stand and stare at the great buildings of Calcutta University.
- MARLENE (*still in mimed walk*) Chaudari, what is the job you lost ?
- CHAU. I was born into the tragic theatre of East Bengal and later worked as an actor in the Comic Theatre of West Bengal. The Bengali Comic Theatre is in the suburbs of Calcutta.
- MARLENE (*Bringing the walk to a halt*) Why did you lose your job, Chaudari ?

CHAU.

Because in Asia, Marlene, there is great pressure on employment, and in the great and teeming city of Calcutta there are more people than on the Galle Face Gardens (*he initiates and they begin the mimed walk again*), and suddenly in Calcutta the world of entertainment moved into the streets in the tragic comic reality. There was severe retrenchment and there were much better comic actors than this Chaudaribhoy (*swings Marlene around and they face Mr. Perera*), and some of them are hard-hearted men, Mr. Perera, not capable ever of falling in love. You must be thankful you got mixed up with me and not one of them, that night in Calcutta. They would have impressed you even more as men of learning. They would have created bogus funds, but would not have fallen in love. In this house you would have had neither money nor love. Now you have ample cheques and plenty of love !

VIOLET

Who were all those other fellows, with caps like that, who bowed to you in the hotel corridor and addressed you as Professor Chaudaribhoy ?

CHAU.

All retrenched actors from the Bengali Comic Theatre. We are very loyal to one another in any enterprise, all comic actors !

MARLENE

But you are a learned man, Chaudari.

(Chaudari extricates himself again.)

CHAU.

But in the theatre, Marlene, we play tricks with time, we collapse (*movement with hands like the contracting of a concertina*) time, and the wisdom must come before the curtain falls. On the stage, there is no time to grow old.

(At this point there is a slight but distinct movement of the curtain inwards, and a sectional fade of the lights, which creates an unreal glow over Chaudari and Marlene and a pale effect on the others. Chaudari makes it clear that he notices the curtain and lights movements.)

CHAU. The curtain is already beginning to fall, and the lights begin to fade.

RANJIT *(Uncomfortable and embarrassed by the obvious devotion of Marlene to Chaudari) May I be excused . . . (He starts to move off.)*

CHAU. *(Stopping him with a commanding tone) In the Bengali Comic Theatre, after the curtain falls we excuse everybody, but never make theatrical assumptions before the curtain falls (quickly he picks up the umbrella which Marlene had brought in earlier), so please stay a little more.*

MARLENE But you will stay with me, Chaudari ?

(Chaudari turning away, opens the umbrella slowly.)

VIOLET Why are you opening umbrellas inside the house ?

CHAU. Marlene understands the conventions of the theatre.

MARLENE *(Slightly hysterical) Chaudari, you will stay with me ?*

CHAU. But I have only one certificate, Marlene, the Certificate of the Natyashashtra of Baharatha Muni.

MARLENE Is that where you learnt all the things you taught me about Asia.?

CHAU.

No, those I learnt from life itself, and from the posthagoolas, that is, the libraries of Calcutta, and Calcutta is blessed with an abundance of Poosthagoolas. I never failed to use them in my spare time, which also I had in abundance. So the so-called Raasagoola was always found in the Poosthagoolas.

(The knocking is loud again.)

He is getting excited again because I am talking about Poosthagoolas? Do the police think that the reading habit is a criminal offence?

(The knocking becomes violent.)

The police might break open the door and the comic drama will be taken away!

MARLENE

(Moving close up to Chaudari) But the love will stay on.

(But Chaudari edges off delicately while imploring with Mrs. Perera, by look, that she break the news.)

VIOLET

(Moving up to Marlene) In the end I suppose we will accept it, but consider carefully and with wisdom.

HECTOR

Yes, Marlene, in Asia we believe in the slow wisdom of the ancients.

MARLENE

(Again pulling Chaudari to her) Even for the ancients, Daddy, the wisdom came when they were old. For me there is plenty of time.

(Turning around with his umbrella, to face her.)

- CHAU. Marlene, I wish that were possible, but I will nevertheless have to defend in the Lower Courts.
- MARLENE For what ?
- CHAU. The charge of impersonation. A minor one, but for a comic actor, a major irony.
- MARLENE But I will wait for you, Chaudari.
- CHAU. If I could, I would wait for you forever, Marlene, but I cannot !
- MARLENE Why Chaudari ?
- CHAU. (*Closing the umbrella and disposing of it in one swift movement.*) Because I am a comic actor and no actor, comic or tragic, can wait on the stage till all the possibilities are completely exhausted. Then the audience hangs on by habit, for the final curtain. I must be gone.
- MARLENE Don't play the fool, Chaudari. I'm not talking about the theatre. I'm talking about love.
- CHAU. But love is like the theatre, Marlene. For it to be a sweet memory, the curtain must fall while it is still surging. Otherwise it will degenerate into deadly habit.
- MARLENE (*The quality of crying in her voice, breaking away and holding on to her mother.*) That is not true, Chaudari!
- CHAU. It will be true, Marlene, but the wisdom must come before the curtain falls. I must be gone.
- MARLENE It is not true !

CHAU. It is true, Marlene. It is the last fact in the education of Miss Asia.

MARLENE *(In anguish, and still close to her mother)*
Then what about all the other facts in the education of Miss Asia! All those Funds don't exist! Then all you have told me is not true. Has there been no earthquake in Istanbul? And what about the great tidal waves in East Pakistan? The ashes of Hiroshima, the bloody red rivers of Indonesia, the great famine of Bihar? . . . (mellowing a little). . . and most of all the babies, Chaudari, the little babies who have died without milk and the little children who have lived without reading and writing . . . I know that all these things are true, but just now, they don't feel true.

CHAU. Because Marlene, you are again confusing the subjective with the objective (*moving close to her*). The teacher with the teaching (*now taking her gently across to a humpty on the side of the apron*), the teacher appears untrue, so you cannot believe the teachings with your soul. (*Gradually sitting her on the humpty, he sits beside her.*) The teacher may be untrue, Marlene, but the teachings are true They are true, Marlene. Say it to me the way I taught you . . . (*no response*) . . . just once more . . . (*still no response*) . . . please, Marlene . . . (*she looks at him*) . . . for the last time . . . (*she gives in*).

MARLENE *(Begins hesitantly and falteringly)* It is true....

CHAU. *(Speaking simultaneously to give her the encouragement)* . . . It is true . . .

(He continues to speak for another sentence or so, and then fades off when he realizes that she has gathered momentum.)

MARLENE that hundreds of thousands of black eyed babies make their first and last little cries even before they slither out into the sunlight. Those who reach the sunlight linger awhile, but only for a while. And those who linger longer, maybe even very much longer, can only write their own footprints on the burning sands; and will only read the colours of the rainbow, and the strange shapes of great dark clouds.

CHAU. All these things are true, Marlene. You must believe me.

MARLENE Otherwise, there will be nothing to believe..... they must be true.

CHAU. What is not true is Professor Raasagoola Chaudaribhoy of the University of Calcutta. As it is said in the Natyashastra, Professor Chaudaribhoy may be only a dramatic device, but the hundreds of thousands of babies is a dramatic truth. So you may forget Chaudaribhoy, but keep the babies, Marlene.

MARLENE I will always remember both, Chaudari (*after saying this, she continues to sit, her thoughts far away, but Chaudari moves briskly back to centre stage, and animatedly says his farewells to the others.*)

CHAU. Goodbye, Mr. Parara. For you the survival of Mr. Parara is a dramatic truth, and all your cheques are a dramatic device. But in your case, keep the cheques and forget the truth.

(He showers Perera with the cheques.)

Goodbye, Mrs. Parara. In your case there is no divergence between the truth and the dramatic device. You have been simply realistic. Mr. Fernando, I will not say goodbye to you because for so long I seem to be offending you, so now I will be suggesting you be defending me. As a dramatic consolation, I am offering you your first case in the Lower Courts. *(To Alfred and George)* And you two gods that come down into the theatre, to lift things up *(using his hands to show how he was lifted)* as a dramatic precaution, your silence has been golden.

(The knocking, strongly again.)

Marlene, please open the door.

(Marlene stands up, but does not move.)

(Chau moves forward and opens the door himself, then mimes as if he is being dragged away, just outside the door, by a policeman whom the audience cannot see. Chau stumbles backwards into sight again, and starts shouting at the unseen policeman.)

Gently ! Gently ! You, Mr. Policeman, are from Colombo, I am from Calcutta, but we are all Asians so gently, let me say goodbye to Marlene, with that walk on the Galle Face Gardens, that I never had.

(They meet centre stage, just inside the curtain line, and begin their single spot mimed walk. The music of the sitar comes up softly.)

RANJIT

I'd better walk behind them.

(Somewhat behind them, but to the left of Marlene, he too begins a mimed single spot walk. All the others are blacked out by the lighting.)

CHAU. *(To Marlene, while walking)* A line from Githanjali, before I go.

MARLENE "Clouds heap upon clouds as it darkens. Ah love, why dost thou let me wait, inside, at the door, all alone?"

(He stops 'walking' and Marlene on his left and Ranjith, still behind and to her left, also stop.)

CHAU. "The baby cries out when from the right breast the mother takes it away. In the very next moment *(slyly indicating Ranjith)* to find in the left one its consolation" - also from Githanjali!

(All three resume mime walking again, as the sitar music rises, but this time it is clear that the two bodies in front, though still side by side, have tilted in divergent directions.)

- LIGHTS FADE, CURTAIN -

THE END

Price Rs. 30.00