KOMAGATA MARU

A full length play

by

Ajmer Rode



Translated from Punjabi by

Ajmer Rode
Surjeet Kalsey

1985

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The play is based on the story of a ship, Komagata Maru, which came to Vancouver in May 1914. The ship had about 375 passengers on board, seeking immigration to Canada. Most of the passengers were from Punjab (meaning five rivers), India, and therefore were British subjects. The Canadian Immigration refused the passengers permission to leave the ship. After two long and tense months in the harbour , the ship along with the passengers, was sent back. On reaching Calcutta, the passengers were greeted with suspicion by the British Indian government. A bloody scuffle between the police and the passengers left more than twenty dead.

Komagata Maru remained in the Vancouver harbour only for two months. However, the impact of the tragedy was so great that the confrontation between the Canadian Immigration and the Punjabi community in Vancouver continued with the same intensity long after the Komagata Maru was gone. ACT THREE has been written to portray that aftermath.

The characters in the play are historical except the

two women characters. The WOMAN in the ship symbolizes the emotional suffering of the passengers. JEAN, the receptionist, symbolizes the then minority white Canadians who sympathized with Komagata Maru passengers.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

At the request of the author, the introductory scene in the original Punjabi play has been dropped.

Some new poems by the author have been included in the English version.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Sincere thanks.

To novelist Gurdial Singh and poet Ron Kawalilak for their valuable suggestions and help in refining the play.

And to poet Surti, my ten years old daughter who enthusiastically went through the manuscript, offering a suggestion or two on each page.

Komagata Maru was serialized in 1982 in the Indo Canadian Times, a Punjabi weekly published from Surrey, BC, Canada.

Komagata Maru was first published in Punjabi in 1984 by Nanak Singh Pustak mala, Bazar Saran Guru Ramdas, Amritsar, India.

A short radio play (Punjabi) based on this manuscript was broadcast on the Co-op radio station, FM 102.7, Vancouver, in July 1986.

Komagata Maru was first produced in Punjabi by the Watno Dur Art Foundation, at David Thompson Secondary School, Vancouver, on 27 October 1979, with the following cast:

[In the introductory scene, not reproduced here, Sukhwant Dhindsa and Pushpinder Rode played the roles of the OLD MAN and the STUDENT respectively]

WOMAN : Amrit Mann

CHILD : Surti

GURDIT SINGH : Gurcharn Dua

SECRETARY : Inderjit Rode

JEAN : Surjeet Kalsey

HOPKINSON : Inderesh

MEWA SINGH : Bhupinder Dhaliwal

EDITOR : Charanjit Sidhu

PRESIDENT : Bhavkhandan

BELA SINGH : Bharpoor Mann

Others : Gurcharn Talewalia, Sahib Dhaliwal, Balwant Kainth

Directed and Designed by Ajmer Rode
Music by Narinder Bhagi and Sudarshan
Lighting by Paul Binning
Make up by Udey Kortana

CAST

WOMAN:
A passenger in the Komagata Maru.

CHILD:
Son of the WOMAN.

GURDIT SINGH:
Charterer of Komagata Maru.

SECRETARY:
Secretary of Komagata Maru.

HOPKINSON:
Inspector in the Canadian Immigration Department; Fluent in English and Punjabi.

JEAN:
Interpreter and receptionist in the Canadian Immigration Department.

MEWA SINGH:
A popular personality among Punjabies in Vancouver.

EDITOR:
Publisher and editor of a newspaper in English. Of Indian origin.

PRESIDENT:
President of the society running Vancouver Sikh Temple.

LAWYER:
Lawyer of Komagata Maru.

Bela Singh.
Dancers and CHORUS Singers.
Men in the court scene.

A C T O N E

****

[Three sub sets are seen on the stage.
Stage left shows the front of
Komagata Maru, which represents
an office in the ship, and sometimes
just an open space.
A table and a chair are situated in
one of the corners of this sub set.
A blue curtain in two pieces, with
a piece of white linen in the middle,
forms the back wall. Red light behind
the linen symbolizes main body of
the ship from which noise and voices
of the passengers are occasionally

heard.

Stage center shows the Canadian Immigration office in Vancouver, while Stage right shows the front yard of the local Vancouver Sikh temple situated in Kitislano at that time. The placement of the Immigration office as the middle subset helps to illustrate that Immigration Department was like a wall between the Komagata Maru and the local Punjabi community.

There is no physical separation in the forward playing areas of the sub sets. Once an action starts in a sub set, performers can later freely use the entire stage with appropriate lighting.

The curtain, once up never drops during the entire play. Scenes are changed by shifting the spot light from one sub set to the other. A blue spot light is used to indicate a background action.]

[Light falls on Komagata Maru.

A WOMAN and a CHILD are seen.

The CHILD is asleep]

WOMAN:(shaking the child gently)

Pauli...Pauli...wake, wake my son. Look, it is morning. Look, look there is light.

[The CHILD rubs his eyes. WOMAN continues after a little pause.]

Look where we've come. We've come to a very beautiful city. very nice. Remember? the letters and pictures your uncle sent us? From this city. Look, big mountains, and green trees just like in our farms.

CHILD:

And flowers and swallows and crows and green parrots ?

WOMAN:

Yes, yes, flowers, swallows, parrots, every thing here. See, you'll forget our farm.

CHILD:

Mother, here people are like us?

WOMAN:

Yes, yes, yes just like us. Nice. Very good. Remember white people in the big city? Here also white people. Very nice. When your uncles come to get us, say, Sat Sri Akal (folds her hands and in Indian way of greeting) like this.

CHILD:

(Imitating his mother)

Sat Sri Akal.

WOMAN:

Very good, (WOMAN laughs, CHILD smiles) very nice my love. Let us go inside now. I'll put nice clean clothes on you.

[She goes inside with the CHILD. As

they walk a morning song from inside

is heard in a female voice]

I open my eyes

in the morning

The Sun still

in the hiding

sends me cool light.

I wash my face

my hands my hair

it feels so good

so fair

to bathe in the light

The day looks bright

My day looks bright...

[The song stops.

Music of ocean waves emerges.

GURDIT SINGH, about fifty,

appears. Looks around, wipes

his face and fixes his turban.

He looks relaxed. The SECRETARY,

in his late twenties, enters.

He wears a turban]

GURDIT SINGH:

At last in Vancouver. The dream city. Wonderful. (turning to the SECRETARY) How do you feel?

SECRETARY:

I am not sure, have you looked outside?, There are fire boats all around, we are surrounded!

GURDIT SINGH: (Laughing)

Well, this shouldn't surprise us. Didn't we discuss this on our way? We are likely to face problems in Vancouver.

SECRETARY:

That is true, but this is far beyond what we discussed. We are being treated like criminals. They haven't let our ship even dock. Ridiculous!

GURDIT SINGH:

You see, the Canadian Government doesn't want us here. The people of Vancouver may also be against us, but despite all that we shall land here.

SECRETARY:

How? By fighting the government?

GURDIT SINGH:

Yes. If we have to.

SECRETARY:

Here, in Canada?

GURDIT SINGH:

Yes, right here in Canada.

SECRETARY:

What kind of fight are you thinking of?

GURDIT SINGH:

A legal one. If the Canadian Government doesn't let us land, I'll take the case to the supreme court. The government is sure to be defeated there.

SECRETARY:

How could you say that? This is not India?

GURDIT SINGH:

Doesn't matter. British courts are same every where. Canada is a British Colony like India. Courts, here also uphold justice.

SECRETARY:

How do you know unless we go to the court?

GURDIT SINGH:

Remember, just a few months ago, Canadian Immigration ordered some Punjabies deported. They took the case to the supreme court. The court ruled in favor of the Punjabies. Immigration could'nt do a thing, you see.

SECRETARY:

Oh, that is really encouraging.

GURDIT SINGH:

Yes it is. And that is why I am not worried that much.

SECRETARY:

But we could still be trapped in some other way. Things might have changed.

GURDIT SINGH:

Nothing to worry about. Before starting I informed the Governor of Hong Kong. Consulted with legal experts. Talked to the Government of India. No legal risks involved in what we are doing.

SECRETARY:

What if they ban immigration of Indians now?

GURDIT SINGH:

Well, to tell you the truth I have another purpose in mind. I want to test the Immigration policy of Canada towards Indians. Can the Canadian Government ban immigration of Indians or not, this question will now be settled once for all.

SECRETARY:

My God!

GURDIT SINGH:

It has become harder and harder to swallow the humiliation. If we Indians want to come to Canada, why aren't we allowed? Why so many hurdles? why?

SECRETARY:

But do you think we have a right to come and live here?

GURDIT SINGH:

Of course we have a right. We are British Subjects. If Canadians and Australians can freely go and live in India, why can't Indians come here?

SECRETARY:

I fully agree. We may win the court case.

GURDIT SINGH:

Sure we will.

SECRETARY:

I have complete faith in you.

GURDIT SINGH:

And I have complete faith in the British government. I am fully familiar with the court system in India. Justice is done there.

SECRETARY:

But do the passengers know what we have to go through here?.

GURDIT SINGH:

No. I haven't told them anything yet.

SECRETARY:

They have very high hopes. If they ...

GURDIT SINGH:

Don't worry. Go and tell them not to worry about the fire boats. Everything will be alright.

SECRETARY:

Sure.

[The SECRETARY exits.
GURDIT SINGH follows.]

[Five passengers from inside the ship come out and start dancing happily, a Punjabi Bhangra style dance, to a simple beat coming from the background. After four or five minutes, voices of a CHORUS emerge from the background. The dance continues]

CHORUS:

The tree in the land
of five rivers
heard the story
fell into a river
and came to the sea.
Wonderful wonderful wonderful
nothing but water to see
He dipped his roots
shallow and deep
but the water was thick
and salty
The water was salty...
The tree of the land
of five rivers
came to the sea
The water was salty...

[As the song proceeds, expressions
on the faces of the dancers change
and become malancholy towards the
end. Light slowly fades on them]

Scene 2.

[Light moves on to the Immigration office. JEAN, the receptionist, is busy in her office work. Mr. HOPKINSON, about thirty five, enters. He is in a great rush]

HOPKINSON:

Hi JEAN, How are you?

JEAN:

Fine. Thanks. How about you Mr. HOPKINSON?

HOPKINSON:

I am fine too. Is Mr. Reid in?

JEAN:

No, He just left.

HOPKINSON:

Christ! I want to see him urgently.

JEAN:

You should have phoned before coming, Mr. HOPKINSON.

HOPKINSON:

I did. Twice. It was busy.

JEAN:

Too bad. I am sorry about that. (Looking at HOPKINSON'S face). what is the matter? You look so nervous.

HOPKINSON:

I am coming straight from the Komagata Maru

JEAN:

Is that right? Tell me...

HOPKINSON: (Interrupting JEAN)

It is full of Hindus. I met GURDIT SINGH.

JEAN:

How did you find him?

HOPKINSON:

Clever... very clever.

JEAN:

Yes?

HOPKINSON:

He is a smart businessman, seems to know all the tricks.

JEAN:

How do you know so much about him ?

HOPKINSON:

I tried to warn him.

JEAN:

Warn him?

JEAN:

Yes, I said he broke the Canadian Immigration law by bringing the ship load of Hindus here...

JEAN:

Then?

HOPKINSON:

He simply laughed. Took me very lightly.

JEAN: (Laughing)

Did that upset you?

HOPKINSON:

Of course it did.

JEAN:

What did he say?

HOPKINSON:

He said he is dealing with Mr. Reid directly.

JEAN:

Was he rude?

HOPKINSON:

No, He spoke humbly but with confidence. His confidence is something that really bothers me. He should not speak that way to me.

JEAN:

Well, he is a businessman, wealthy...

HOPKINSON:

No. He is under the illusion that because he is a British subject he is equal to the Canadians.

Stupid.

JEAN:

Well, according to the law, he seems to be right. Indians are British subjects, we are British subjects, aren't we equal?

HOPKINSON:

But they are Hindus, Hindus can't be equal to Whites.

JEAN:

It is your view. The British Government may have given them equal status. Maybe we don't know.

HOPKINSON:

I know, I know. After the 1857 mutiny against the Brititish rule in India, the British Government tried to please them Indians. They said British subjects in all the British colonies are equal. Any British subjects can live in any British colony they wish to.

JEAN:

Then how on Earth can you stop the Komagata Maru passengers?

HOPKINSON:

I know. But when Hindus started coming here in ship loads, about ten years ago, every body got worried.

JEAN:

Why ?

HOPKINSON:

Well, they thought, if the Hindus continued coming, Canada will be full of them, they'd outnumber us. Whites would be cornered.

JEAN:

Like what happened to natives Indians?

HOPKINSON:

Yes...no, no I mean we whites are definitely a superior race. This can't be applied to Hindus.

JEAN:

Well, I don't agree with you but tell me what happened when the Hindus continued coming.

HOPKINSON:

The governments of Britain and Canada made a secret agreement.

JEAN:

What agreement?

HOPKINSON:

Make all the British subjects appear equal in the eyes of the World. In practice don't let the Hindus enter, if you don't want them to.

JEAN:

Then where is the great British justice of which you are so proud?

HOPKINSON:

British justice is still there, great , magnificent. In Canada, Canadians get full justice. In India, Hindus get full justice. But when it is a question of justice between whites and Hindus, It is a different matter (winks his eye). Mr. Reid knows it well.

JEAN:

But how far can Mr. Reid go using that kind of justice?

HOPKINSON:

Mr Stevens, our Vancouver M.P., and premier Borden, both are against Hindus being allowed to enter Canada. And we know they can do anything they want. Mr. Reid is ever ready to obey their orders.

JEAN:

And you are ever so ready to obey Mr. Reid.

HOPKINSON:

And Bela Singh is ever so ready to obey me.

JEAN:

But Bela Singh is also a Hindu. How come you like him?

HOPKINSON:

Bela Singh is different. He is very loyal to the Government, very useful to us.

JEAN:

He scares me whenever he looks into my eyes.

HOPKINSON:

I need him badly, right now.

JEAN:

why?

HOPKINSON:

I have to find out what the local Hindus are plotting against us.

[JEAN turns away from HOPKINSON and prepares to leave. Light fades]

Scene 3.

[Light on to the Sikh temple. Slow music is heard from inside. MEWA SINGH and the EDITOR are talking in the yard. MEWA SINGH is about thirty and wears turban; The EDITOR, middle aged, is clean shaven. Music fades.]

MEWA SINGH:

I think we should go now. It is already late.

EDITOR:

We should wait for our PRESIDENT. He'll tell us how Immigration people view our going on Komagata Maru.

MEWA SINGH:

I don't think Immigration people will be very kind to us, they may not even let us near the ship. But we should try it any way.

EDITOR:

Yes, we must find out how the passengers are being treated. I want to publish a full report on it in the next issue of my paper.

MEWA SINGH:

Write strong editorial too.

[The PRESIDENT enters. He is in his early fourties]

PRESIDENT: (Shaking his head)

It is hopeless. Rotten.

EDITOR:

What do they say?

PRESIDENT:

Reid was very rude and unreasonable.

MEWA SINGH:

Didn't he know you were the president of the Sikh temple? You were our representative?

PRESIDENT:

He did. But...

EDITOR:

What happened?

PRESIDENT:

I said while the Komagata Maru case is being settled let the passengers see their relatives. Let them come to the city for a short while.

EDITOR:

yes?

PRESIDENT:

Reid said impossible. All passengers, including GURDIT SINGH are prisoners. They can't be allowed.

EDITOR:

Not even on bail?

PRESIDENT:

Not at all. He said we'll hide them.

EDITOR:

How stupid.

PRESIDENT:

I said, in that case allow us to go to the ship.

MEWA SINGH:

(impatiently)

Did he agree then?

PRESIDENT:

No, no. On the contrary he began to shout at me, and said we are interfering in the law, and that we have nothing to do with Komagata Maru.

MEWA SINGH:

How outrageous!

PRESIDENT:

No use of talking to the Immigration directly. We should hire a lawyer.

EDITOR:

Yes, yes, we should. In fact I know a competent one. He has worked with me before. Very sympathetic to our people.

PRESIDENT:

Good. Very good. But we must do more. Let's form a Komagata Maru committee to work with the lawyer and to raise money.

MEWA SINGH:

I agree. We should form the committee immediately. Today.

PRESIDENT:

O.K. Let us not waste time then. Get active and contact people.

[All three leave]

Scene 4.

[Light on Komagata Maru. GURDIT SINGH paces the stage restlessly. His secretary stands, tense]

GURDIT SINGH:

I don't understand, I don't understand a bit, what the Immigration people are doing ... what..

SECRETARY:

They are cheating us, harassing us so that we leave. what else?

GURDIT SINGH:

What kind of government does this country has? So much power to the immigration inspectors? Unbelievable.

SECRETARY:

Reid and HOPKINSON seem to be running this country.

GURDIT SINGH:

I sent so many telegrams to Reid, not a single permission to leave the ship for any one? We can't even dream of it.

SECRETARY:

They should have allowed at least you to leave the ship. What nonsense. If you don't go to the city how can we unload the coal, how can we sell it.

GURDIT SINGH:

If we can't sell the coal, we can't pay the next installment of the ship.

SECRETARY:

The next installment is just five days away.

GURDIT SINGH:

We have to pay no less than twenty thousand Dollars to the owners.

SECRETARY:

It will be very hard. Send another telegram to Reid.

GURDIT SINGH:

No use. Didn't you write to him?

SECRETARY:

I wrote him six, seven letters for food supplies, no reply. It is becoming impossible. I think we should send him an urgent telegram.

[GURDIT SINGH nods in agreement and goes inside. SECRETARY sits in the chair and looks at some papers. The CHILD comes out walking slowly. The WOMAN follows him after a few seconds]

WOMAN:

Pauli, pauli, where are you. I was looking for you. Come.

CHILD:

Mother, I am very hungry. Are we going to eat soon?

WOMAN:

Yes, yes my son yes, we'll eat soon, at night.

Come in. Sleep now.

CHILD:

Do very poor people live here mother? They don't have much to eat.

WOMAN:

No, no my son, no. It is very rich country. That is why we come here. Fruits, vegetables, milk every thing here. Very much. When your uncles come, when we go to city, eat as much as you like. Come in, sleep now, OK, sleep my love.

[WOMAN and CHILD go inside. Light fades. Their shadows appear behind the linen curtain. A few lines of a lullaby are heard]

A pair of cherries
for you my prince
A trickle of dew drops
on your lips... ... ...

[Shadows of the WOMAN and the CHILD disappear. Light brightens on the stage.

The SECRETARY is still busy looking at the papers. GURDIT SINGH enters]

GURDIT SINGH:

I have decided. No more telegrams to Reid. Send a telegram to the Governor General of Canada on my behalf.

SECRETARY:

To the Governor General?

GURDIT SINGH:

Yes. tell him that Reid is totally unfair. He has been cheating us, harassing us.

SECRETARY:

[surprised. but nods in agreement]

Alright... What else we say in the telegram?

GURDIT SINGH:

That I should be allowed to go to the city.

Otherwise Canadian Government will be responsible

for the loss if the ship is taken back from us by the owners.

[The SECRETARY nods and notes]

And make it clear, unless Canadian Supreme Court decides one way or the other about Komagata Maru, we will not leave under pressure from Reid.

SECRETARY:

I'll send the telegram right away.

GURDIT SINGH:

Send another telegram on the behalf of passengers.

SECRETARY:

Yes?

GURDIT SINGH:

That the immigration department has imprisoned us in the ship and is treating us like animals. We want justice.

SECRETARY:

Alright. What else?

GURDIT SINGH:

An Inquiry Board should be formed to solve the Komagata Maru problem.

SECRETARY:

Yes sir, I'll send this telegram too.

GURDIT SINGH:

And try another letter to Reid. He may allow you to go to the city. We must contact our local Indians here. We need their help.

SECRETARY:

Alright sir.

[The SECRETARY leaves]

[The five passengers who danced in Scene 1, appear. This time they don't dance but sing a chorus]

CHORUS:

The tree of the land
of five rivers
came to the sea.

floated and drifted

on waves, gay and malancholy

The tree with long

and naked roots

came to a country

where ports were free

for all but the tree...

Scene 5.

[Light on the Sikh temple. MEWA SINGH is packing clothes and food. Some cooking pots lie around. The PRESIDENT enters.]

MEWA SINGH:

The supplies are ready. We should get them to the ship as soon as we can.

PRESIDENT:

The trouble is how to get the food to the ship. The Immigration people didn't even listen to me.

MEWA SINGH:

Whether they listen or not, we must get the food to the ship somehow. Otherwise it'll be too late.

PRESIDENT:

Do you plan to smuggle it to the ship through police lines.

MEWA SINGH:

Yes. We will rent a boat and take the food to the ship at midnight, when the police are not very active.

PRESIDENT:

I fully agree with the plan but there is a twenty four hour watch around the ship.

MEWA SINGH:

We have to take the risk. We may not succeed, but we have to try.

PRESIDENT:

In that case let us proceed MEWA SINGH. You better contact some others too. I have to wait for the EDITOR. We'll meet at midnight right here.

[MEWA SINGH leaves. The PRESIDENT strolls in a deep thought. The EDITOR enters]

PRESIDENT:

Hello, I was waiting for you.

EDITOR:

How do you do. Did you see my editorial on the Komagata Maru ?

PRESIDENT:

Yes I did. Excellent. It presents our point of view so clearly.

EDITOR:

Thanks.

PRESIDENT:

Are you coming from the LAWYER'S office?

Tell me about the the Inquiry board.

EDITOR:

It is all farce. Reid has been made chairman of the board. We already know his decision.

Ridiculous.

PRESIDENT:

It is really hopeless.

EDITOR:

I have an idea if our LAWYER agrees.

PRESIDENT:

What is it?

EDITOR:

Let us suggest to the LAWYER to hold public meetings. Condemn the Immigration and Reid. Invite newspaper reporters. This may bring the Immigration to their knees.

PRESIDENT:

Excellent idea. Let us talk to the LAWYER and hold the first public meeting as soon as we can.

[Both leave. Light fades]

[Blue light falls on Komagata Maru. No one on the stage. Sound of waves in the background. A motor boat starts and speeds up. Sounds of the birds disturbed by the motor boat noise]

VOICE 1:

Wonderful. We have crossed all the fire boats.

No body stopped us.

VOICE 2:

Looks like police are deep asleep in their boats.

VOICE 3:

Let us not waste our time talking. Let us unload the food and clothes on the ship.

VOICE 1:

Yes. If police finds out about us, anything could happen. Let us finish our work.

VOICE 3:

Great. Passengers from the ship have also come on the dock. Let us hurry.

[Sound of waves. Sound of objects falling in the water. Sound of a fire boat starting and stopping.]

VOICE 2:

MEWA SINGH, seems police have found out about us.

VOICE 3:

Police will think we are Komagata Maru passengers, trying to escape by a boat.

VOICE 1:

Something bad could happen.

VOICE 3:

We have to be ready for anything. Look some other fire boats have also turned their lights to this direction.

[Sound of starting many fire boats. Higher and higher sound pitch indicates that the boats are approaching Komagata Maru]

VOICE OF A POLICEMAN:

(Through a bull horn) Listen, stay where you are. If you move we will fire.

[Sound of a gun fire. sounds of frightened birds. Nervous voices]

VOICE 2:

We have been surrounded by the police.

VOICE 3:

How much stuff still remains unloaded?

VOICE 2:

Nothing. Every thing is on the ship

VOICE 3:

Great. Nothing to worry about then. We have finished our task. Let the police do whatever they want to do now.

VOICE OF A POLICE MAN:

Don't you move. You are all under arrest.

[Another gun shot. Blue flash.

Silence]

[CHORUS is heard in the background]

CHORUS:

The tree of the land
of five rivers
alone and thirsty
waiting on the port
of a country
where trees grow
high and free...

Scene 6.

[Light on the Sikh temple. A banner on the front wall says: PUBLIC MEETING ON KOMAGATA MARU. Two chairs and a table. The LAWYER sits on one of the chairs. The EDITOR stands before a microphone on the table]

EDITOR:

I shall now call upon our LAWYER for the Komagata Maru to speak.

[Claps. The LAWYER takes the microphone]

LAWYER:

Mr. chairman, ladies and gentlemen.

As you know, the purpose of this public meeting is to discuss Komagata Maru. We want to put before you what the immigration department is doing to the Komagata Maru passengers.
Gentlemen, very proudly we tell the world that Canada is a vast country, endowed with great natural resources. Endlessly we preach that we follow the great British Government traditions. We believe in human equality, Canada's doors are open to all nationalities, races, colors. We welcome all.

Yes, we do preach this to the outside world. But look at the Komagata Maru case. The passengers come from a familiar country, they are British subjects, have sacrificed for the British Empire in wars. Yet the Immigration Department has imprisoned them in their own ship - hungry, thirsty, humiliated.
Gentlemen, I ask, do we live in Canada or in Czar's Russia?

The Immigration Department is extremely upset.

Upset, that why so many Hindus are coming here.

But two, three centuries ago, when times in England and Ireland were bad, poverty was rampant, why our forefathers at that time came here? Don't the people in Immigration know why our forefathers came here?

If a ship full of Canadians goes to India, and Indian Immigration denies it entry to its ports, a storm would erupt in the British Parliament. Indians would be called mean, inhuman and tyrants. And now, now there is a hypocritical silence in the British parliament. They are ignoring the Komagata Maru incident as if there were animals, not human beings in the ship. Gentlemen, it is not an ordinary incident, It is a warning of an impending storm.

Gentlemen, don't believe all these stories being spread by the Immigration department. I believe the Indians are one of the finest peoples, physically and mentally. In the coming thirty, forty years , Hindu doctors, engineers and lawyers will be quite common here.
Last year, the noble prize for physics was won by an Indian. We should be proud of it. But the tragedy is we are getting nervous, for no reason.

In the end gentlemen, I want to make it clear that the Komagata Maru passengers want to immigrate lawfully. Not by force. They want their case to be ruled on by the supreme court. But the Immigration Department fears, the Komagata Maru may win the case. That is why they are causing all the obstructions for the Komagata Maru.

The immigration department is never tired of condemning socialists here. I say there is no greater anarchist than the Immigration department itself. And gentlemen, I ask again, do we live in Canada or Czar's Russia?

[Applause]

Scene 7.

[Light on the Immigration Office. HOPKINSON sits holding his head in both hands. He is reading a report. JEAN enters.]

JEAN:

Hello, Mr. HOPKINSON?

HOPKINSON:

(Surprised) Oh, hi JEAN. Please give this report to Mr. Reid.

[HOPKINSON gets up, folds the report, encloses it in an envelope and gives it to JEAN.]

JEAN:

What is this report about?

HOPKINSON:

About a public meeting. You know the LAWYER of Hindus, that damned Irishman, has raised hell against our department. He says that forcing the Komagata Maru back to India is illegal, unjust, this and that...

JEAN:

But the Inquiry Board has already rejected the Komagata Maru case. What is the problem now?

HOPKINSON:

The Hindus have appealed the decision of the Board, in judge Murphy's court.

JEAN:

I see. You are concerned that the Komagata Maru may win the case now.

HOPKINSON:

Who knows. It is possible, (shrugging his shoulders) just possible. But Mr. Reid has really mobilized the press and public opinion against the Hindus.

JEAN:

But judges have to be above this propaganda. It

looks like the decision will be in favor of the Komagata Maru.

[JEAN gets up and makes a pile of books and files. Cleans her desk. Looks as if she is preparing to leave]

HOPKINSON:

No...no, I don't think so. The decision will be against Komagata Maru.

[He takes off his hat and puts it on the pile in a special manner.]

JEAN:

(Turning the hat upside down) No, in favor of the Komagata Maru.

HOPKINSON:

(Turning the hat again)

Nope... , against.

JEAN:

(Smiling mischievously, and turning the hat upside down again)

In favor.

HOPKINSON:

(Turning the hat angrily, and in a loud voice)

Against!

[This time JEAN doesn't speak but turns the hat]

HOPKINSON:

No. no. no.

[HOPKINSON picks the hat and throws it on the pile violently. Papers fly around. JEAN looks at HOPKINSON with surprise]

A C T T W O

****

[Light on Komagata Maru. GURDIT SINGH pacing with brisk steps]

SECRETARY:

(Entering)

Here is a letter for you sir?

GURDIT SINGH:

(Looking at the letter)

It is from judge Murphy's court, about our appeal.

[Opens the letter and reads it]

SECRETARY:

What is the decision?

GURDIT SINGH:

(stares at the SECRETARY for a moment)

The appeal is rejected.

SECRETARY:

My God! We are devastated.

GURDIT SINGH:

No justice for us. Not from Judge Murphy's court even.

[Sits in the chair]

SECRETARY:

What now?

GURDIT SINGH:

What now? I don't know.

SECRETARY:

Return? No. We'll be no where.

GURDIT SINGH:

(Nods in his own thought. Suddenly gets up from the chair)

No, not yet. We'll do something more.

SECRETARY:

Do something. Maybe a further appeal in some higher court.

GURDIT SINGH:

Only if I could see our LAWYER. Could go to the court myself. Here I can't tell him anything.

SECRETARY:

He has done his best for us.

[The SECRETARY goes inside. GURDIT SINGH sits in the chair and starts writing. Light fades. Shadow of the woman appears in the background. Fast movements of her hand indicate, she is talking to others. She gets up and walks out in the faded light]

WOMAN:

See. Now they say I talk too much. I am nuts. But why can't I speak? Why? I'll tell the whole World. Come, see what they are doing to us, see this justice, see with your own eyes, the great justice. I'll speak even louder, much louder.

[She picks up a mug and goes back,

still speaking. As she goes
towards the back curtain, tempo
of her voice rises]

[Shadows of CHORUS singers appear
behind the linen]

CHORUS:

The tree looks at its roots.
the roots,
long and naked,
wonder and ask
what is our destiny...

Scene 2

[Light brightens on Komagata Maru.

GURDIT SINGH in a tense mood.

The SECRETARY enters with a letter]

SECRETARY:

A letter from the LAWYER.

GURDIT SINGH:

(Looking at the letter)

It is about the decision by the Victoria court.

SECRETARY:

Victora court?

GURDIT SINGH:

The LAWYER appealed in Victoria court after judge

Murphy rejected our case.

[Opens the letter and reads it nervously, shakes his head.]

SECRETARY:

What is in it?

GURDIT SINGH:

Case rejected.

SECRETARY:

Rejected?

[Both look at each other as if there were nothing to say.]

GURDIT SINGH:

(shaking his head again)

Case rejected!

SECRETARY:

Is that it? The story finished?

GURDIT SINGH:

Finished.

SECRETARY:

Justice?

GURDIT SINGH:

Finished. Every thing finished. Justice finished.

[Light fades. GURDIT SINGH goes inside repeating "justice finished", The SECRETARY stands for a while restlessly, then drops in the chair. Light fades. Shadows of the singers appear behind the linen]

CHORUS:

The roots wonder
at their destiny...
Waves whisper
and subside
poverty and dignity
do not see, eye to eye.
The destiny wanders
in search of dignity...

[Light brightens. GURDIT SINGH reappears]

GURDIT SINGH:

The LAWYER has also mentioned about the minister of the Interior in the letter.

SECRETARY:

(Getting up) What does he say about him?

GURDIT SINGH:

The minister has authority to allow people stay in the country.

SECRETARY:

Even if the Immigration Department has refused?

GURDIT SINGH:

Yes. He can grant permission. He can allot land in Alberta for farming, the uncultivated land.

SECRETARY:

Then we must appeal to him. All passengers can farm. Maybe ...

GURDIT SINGH:

Yes, that is what I think too. Let us send a telegram on behalf of the passengers. That we are ready to live in any part of the country, we will convert the barren land into a fertile one, just allow us to stay in the country.

SECRETARY:

I will send the telegram right away. He may grant the permission, who knows.

GURDIT SINGH:

Yes. Maybe he is kind.

[He picks up a framed picture and speaks to The SECRETARY]

I have always kept this picture with me, this picture with the Crown and the Balance. This Balance is a symbol of the British justice. I still have a great faith in the British justice, in this Balance.

[The SECRETARY stares at the picture, and without saying a word goes inside. GURDIT SINGH sits in the chair, still looking at the picture. Light fades.]

[Shadow of the WOMAN
appears behind the linen.
She laughs wildly, and speaks]

WOMAN:

Now they say go back. Go back. You Hindus no good, Your country slave, poor, dirty, no good. Don't dirty our land. Go back, ha...ha...ha... go back ha...ha ...ha...

[WOMAN'S shadow disappears. CHORUS shadows appear]

CHORUS:

Roots wonder at
their destiny
the destiny wanders
in search of dignity
destiny the aborigine...

Scene 3

[Light brightens again. GURDIT SINGH is strolling. The SECRETARY enters with an envelope. GURDIT SINGH looks at him inquisitively]

SECRETARY:

Here is a reply of our telegram. From the minister of the Interior.

GURDIT SINGH:

So soon, so soon. well, open it.

SECRETARY:

[Starts to open the envelope, thinks of something, then advances the envelope to GURDIT SINGH]

You open it.

GURDIT SINGH:

Why, why... open it . Well , OK, give it to me. (takes the envelope)

[GURDIT SINGH looks at the picture with Crown and Balance, then looks towards the SECRETARY, opens the envelope and quickly reads it]

SECRETARY:

What?

[GURDIT SINGH silently looks into the eyes of the SECRETARY]

What became of our appeal?

GURDIT SINGH:

(Giving the telegram to the SECRETARY)

Appeal rejected.

SECRETARY:

Rejected?

GURDIT SINGH:

Yes. Rejected. Nobody wants us here. This country is for the whites only. We are useless.

SECRETARY:

But we are British subjects too.

GURDIT SINGH:

Inferior, rejected British subjects. Didn't they tell us we are inferior, didn't they?

SECRETARY:

But justice?

GURDIT SINGH:

Justice, justice, justice, what justice.

SECRETARY:

The great justice of the...

GURDIT SINGH:

The British justice is torn into pieces, the Canadian Government has spat on our faces.

SECRETARY:

And the British imperialism has laughed at it.

[In rage the SECRETARY picks up the picture and is about to throw on the floor when GURDIT SINGH stops him with a gesture of his hand].

They have insulted us, insulted the entire Indian

nation, very hard to bear any more. (puts the picture away)

GURDIT SINGH:

Who is responsible for all this? Canadian government, the backward, mean and racist Canadian government. Even the courts of this country are coward, useless. I'll go to the supreme court in India, in our country, and settle all accounts with this government.

SECRETARY:

(Irritated) India is not our country. It is a colony of the British imperialists.

[He goes inside]

GURDIT SINGH:

(Addressing the SECRETARY from behind)

Believe me. I'll expose the Canadian government; will show to the world its real face, ugly and rotten face.

[Light fades. WOMAN'S shadow appears. She laughs wildly]

WOMAN:

You see, see, they say I am mad, I bark like a dog. Well, well, I am mad, you are wise. Then go serve your masters more, go fight for them, go die for them, go lick their boots, yes, go, go, lick...ha...ha...

[The WOMANS'S shadow disappears.

Shadows of singers appear]

CHORUS:

The roots wonder

at their destiny

The destiny wanders

in search of dignity

destiny the aborigine...

Scene 4

[Light brightens. The SECRETARY

enters]

GURDIT SINGH:

Prepare to leave. We don't want to stay here any longer. This country stinks.

SECRETARY:

We have nothing to eat, not even for a day or two. How are we going to survive two months in the sea?

GURDIT SINGH:

Oh, yes, yes, I forgot. How can we leave without food?

SECRETARY:

We also want to see our brothers in Vancouver. They did so much for us.

GURDIT SINGH:

On one side are our Indian brothers here, who didn't hesitate to sacrifice anything for our sake. On the other are these Canadian officers - beasts in garb of human beings.

SECRETARY:

Let me check Mr. Gill. He has been sick for many days.

[Goes in for a moment then comes back.]

SECRETARY:

HOPKINSON is coming.

GURDIT SINGH:

HOPKINSON? Alone?

SECRETARY:

Yes. Bela Singh and two other officers are talking to the passengers.

GURDIT SINGH:

Let him come.

[GURDIT SINGH and the SECRETARY wait for HOPKINSON for a moment]

HOPKINSON:

Hello.

[GURDIT SINGH and the SECRETARY don't respond]

GURDIT SINGH, have you people completed preparations to leave.

GURDIT SINGH:

(Dryly) We are preparing.

HOPKINSON:

I am going to tell the captain to be ready to leave.

GURDIT SINGH:

Wait. You can't order the captain.

HOPKINSON:

I am sorry you have to leave, but there is no other way. It is an order from the court.

SECRETARY:

We'll tell the captain when we are ready.

HOPKINSON:

I just came to tell you that Mr. Reid wants you to leave tomorrow morning.

GURDIT SINGH:

On behalf of the passengers, our LAWYER has submitted some conditions to Mr. Reid. Are you aware of them.

HOPKINSON:

Yes I am.

GURDIT SINGH:

Unless Immigration Department fulfills these conditions, we won't leave.

HOPKINSON:

These conditions are very unreasonable. We can't fulfill them.

SECRETARY:

Is it unreasonable to ask for permission to see our friends and relatives here, before we leave?

HOPKINSON:

Yes. They can pass on revolutionary literature to you. They have tried to do that before. We know everything.

SECRETARY:

That is not true. But even if they pass on some literature to the passengers, how does it matter now? The ship is going from here.

HOPKINSON:

The passengers can use that literature in India.

We are loyal to the entire British Empire.

GURDIT SINGH:

How about the food supplies? Even this condition is unreasonable to you?

HOPKINSON:

Yes.

SECRETARY:

What? Even this is unreasonable?

HOPKINSON:

Yes. If we supply food to you, it will establish a bad precedent here. In future other ship passengers in similar cases would consider it their right to demand food supplies.

GURDIT SINGH:

The immigration Department imprisoned us like criminals. It is always the responsibility of the jailor to feed his prisoners. That is all. We don't want to listen anything else.

HOPKINSON:

You will have to listen. Under no circumstances are we going to provide food to you. This has been decided.

SECRETARY:

Mr. HOPKINSON, do you know the ship has no food supplies at all, not even for a day. The journey will take at least a month and a half. All the passengers will surely die.

HOPKINSON:

I don't want to listen anything like that. You have to leave tomorrow morning. This is an order. Understand?

GURDIT SINGH:

Well, we have decided too. Unless our conditions are fulfilled, we won't leave under any circumstances.

HOPKINSON:

Under any circumstances? Are you sure?

SECRETARY:

Yes.

GURDIT SINGH:

Mr. HOPKINSON, you better go and tell Mr. Reid about our firm decision.

HOPKINSON:

I repeat. If you don't start tomorrow morning, you will be forced to leave.

SECRETARY:

(Sarcastically) Are you going to push the ship away?

HOPKINSON:

Yes. Five hundred police have been ordered for that.

GURDIT SINGH:

Who gave these orders?

HOPKINSON:

The mayor of Vancouver. Mr. Malcolm Reid.

This is an order of the Canadian Government. I want to make it clear to you for the last time.

GURDIT SINGH:

(Angrily) Mr. HOPKINSON, it doesn't make any

difference, who gave these orders. The orders don't mean anything now. You better go and tell Mr. Reid about our decision. Go.

[GURDIT singh ignores HOPKINSON and starts doing something else.]

HOPKINSON:

(Leaving in anger) You will know very soon what these orders mean.

[HOPKINSON leaves. The SECRETARY follows HOPKINSON. GURDIT SINGH strolls restlessly for a moment then drops in the chair. Light fades]

[Shadow of the WOMAN appears. With her face down, she sobs. Stops sobbing. slowly lifts her head and starts speaking]

WOMAN:

You know how Kirpal died? My elder son Kirpal. He

died on the front, fighting for his white masters. You know, his boss got hit and said, water, please water... My son went to put water in his mouth and was killed. He gave life for his white Sahib. See, I sacrificed my son for them, and now see... the reward... my little one dying without water ... without food... Curse, curse on them.

[Suddenly she stops and comes out in the faded light]

WOMAN:

Tell them, the slave is dead

CHORUS:

tell them, the slave is dead

WOMAN:

tell them, we won't beg

CHORUS:

tell them, we won't beg

WOMAN:

tell them, the fire shall rise

CHORUS:

tell them, the fire shall rise

WOMAN:

tell them, open your eyes

CHORUS:

tell them, open your eyes

[Tempo goes higher and higher as she repeats these lines. CHORUS singers repeat the lines behind the linen. She abruptly stops and goes inside]

[Light brightens on GURDIT SINGH. The SECRETARY enters in a hurry]

SECRETARY:

It is exactly what he said!

GURDIT SINGH:

What is it?

SECRETARY:

Police have come in a big boat to attack us.

GURDIT SINGH:

What? How did you find out?

SECRETARY:

The boat is right beside the ship. They have even tied a rope to climb on the ship.

GURDIT SINGH:

That means they will order the captain to start the ship.

[Both nervous. stroll with brisk steps]

SECRETARY:

What do we do now? The passengers are in a rage.

GURDIT SINGH:

Try to keep them calm.

SECRETARY:

Calm? They are already cutting the rope with a knife.

GURDIT SINGH:

What?

[Light fades. The SECRETARY leaves.
Sounds of cutting and breaking the rope from the background. Noise. A gun shot.
Light again on GURDIT SINGH. The SECRETARY enters]

SECRETARY:

What to do now. The police have started firing. They are trying to climb on the ship again. I think they want to arrest you. Don't come outside.

GURDIT SINGH:

They want to arrest me?

SECRETARY:

Yes. But passengers are very mad. Nobody can stop them now.

GURDIT SINGH:

Has anybody been hit with gun shots?

SECRETARY:

No. It is difficult to be hit from below.

GURDIT SINGH:

(Suddenly changing his mood)

Alright then. Go pick up coal pieces, pick up iron, wood, whatever is available, attack the boat, attack fiercely, I can't stop anybody, I don't want to stop any body now.

[Light fades. Sound of objects falling in water. Voices, noise, confusion,

gun shots. The scene continues for some time]

Scene 5

[Light on Immigration. HOPKINSON enters and walks around restlessly. JEAN looks at him]

JEAN:

What is the matter Mr. HOPKINSON? You look as though you have a serious problem.

HOPKINSON:

Very serious. Have you seen Bela Singh?

JEAN:

No. But what is the crisis now?

HOPKINSON:

Haven't you heard anything about the Komagata Maru - about what happened last night?

JEAN:

No, I haven't read the newspaper yet. What happened?

HOPKINSON:

Last night we tried to send the damned ship back with the help of police.

JEAN:

You mean you attacked the Komagata Maru? Those people?

HOPKINSON:

Well, something like that. The plan was to arrest GURDIT SINGH.

JEAN:

So? Did you arrest him?

HOPKINSON:

Arrest? We hardly escaped from there.

JEAN:

Why?

HOPKINSON:

Hindus armed with coal pieces, wood and iron surprised us and attacked our boat. We were completely shocked. Nobody ever expected this.

[JEAN laughs]

HOPKINSON:

The problem is very serious.

JEAN:

What did the police do?

HOPKINSON:

They fired but the Hindus ignored the shots.

JEAN:

(again laughing)

Well, you knew most of them served in the British army. Was there any damage?

HOPKINSON:

The glass windows broke. The police captain had his nose broken, another policeman had his ear damaged, Mr. Stevens was injured, About twenty other persons were hit and you...you are laughing.

JEAN:

(serious) Is that right! it was like a full battle.

HOPKINSON:

Yes, it was a battle, and Hindus won, the bloody Hindus won.

JEAN:

What kind of a victory is this for them. They will be in more trouble now.

HOPKINSON:

You sympathize with them Hindus. Why? Just talk to Mr. Reid.

JEAN:

Why? Is he very mad?

HOPKINSON:

Nobody slept after the incident. It was a great insult.

JEAN:

And when newspapers print it, the World would laugh at it.

HOPKINSON:

But the Hindus will have to pay for it.

JEAN:

But who is really responsible for what's happened. We drove them to this stage.

HOPKINSON:

(Ignoring what JEAN said)

Mr. Reid has arranged every thing. The Warship Rainbow has already reached the Komagata Maru.

JEAN:

Are you serious. A Warship has been sent against the Komagata Maru?

HOPKINSON:

Yes. Its guns are already trained on the ship.

JEAN:

I can't believe it.

HOPKINSON:

Don't believe it then. But tonight the Komagata Maru will be blown into pieces. The Hindus will pay for what they did to us.

JEAN:

Oh, no. We can't do this. It will be such an ugly and horrible act. Haven't you thought about the innocent children and elderly on the ship?

HOPKINSON:

Everybody will go with the culprits. The survivors will be shipped to Hong Kong in some other ship.

JEAN:

Mr. HOPKINSON, you can't support this. I can't believe it. They are human beings like us.

HOPKINSON:

They are an inferior type of human being. They are Hindus.

JEAN:

How about your own mother. She was a Hindu too.

HOPKINSON:

Shut up. This is all nonsense. I don't know anything about my mother.

JEAN:

And about your father?

HOPKINSON:

My father was an Englishman.

JEAN:

Your mother was a Punjabi. How can you hide it from the World ?

HOPKINSON:

Again the same nonsense. Didn't I tell you I don't know anything about my mother.

JEAN:

If I give you a firm proof, then?

HOPKINSON:

Well... OK, OK, my mother was a Hindu. That is why I hate Hindus.

JEAN:

Hate your mother's race?

[HOPKINSON stares at JEAN]

[Phone rings. JEAN answers and gives it to HOPKINSON without saying anything]

HOPKINSON:

Hello, Bela Singh, where are you speaking from?

I am waiting for you here... yes, yes right now.

Go to the temple as soon as you can and bring all the news....This is very very important. Our next step will depend upon what you find out ...OK? Bye.

[HOPKINSON hangs the receiver, says bye to JEAN and leaves. JEAN doesn't respond]

[Light on the Sikh temple.

The EDITOR is looking at a

news paper. MEWA SINGH enters]

MEWA SINGH:

Any other news about the incident of the last night.

EDITOR:

Our LAWYER thinks, Komagata Maru will be attacked tonight. Reid and Stevens are very proud and stupid.

MEWA SINGH:

Don't they realize, how the world would react to it?

EDITOR:

At this time they don't care how the World would react. They are bent on revenging the Hindus, want to teach them a lesson.

MEWA SINGH:

But we can't let this happen quietly. Our people are already exploding in anger.

EDITOR:

How you mean? Have they decided something?

MEWA SINGH:

People are so mad... they say we would burn down whole of Vancouver, if the passengers are forced back without food supplies.

EDITOR:

No, no... we can't let this happen. This will be a complete devastation.

MEWA SINGH:

Well... then... do you know of any other way to bring the Immigration people to their senses.?

EDITOR:

Many innocent people will become victims. We won't be able to clear our souls of the guilt, we'll ruin our reputation here for ever. No, no we can't let this happen.

MEWA SINGH:

I am not in favor of burning the city either.

But there should be a limit even to atrocities.

People are really angry, they have already decided in the meeting. I... let us go inside. May be they will change the decision if you persuade.

[The EDITOR and MEWA SINGH go inside. Blue light falls on the door of the temple. Voices are heard from the inside.]

VOICE 1:

I say start from the court, burn every thing that comes on the way.

VOICE 2:

Why from the court. Start from the Immigration Office.

VOICE 3:

I say, first pick up Bela Singh and HOPKINSON, bring them here and sprinkle them with...

VOICE 4:

Oh, no...no. Not like this.

[Confusion. Noise of
heated arguments is
heard for a few seconds.
Light moves to the Immigration
sub set]

A C T T H R E E

****

[Light on the Immigration. Silence. HOPKINSON in a tense mood. He picks up the Phone, then puts back without speaking]

[Light on the Komagata Maru sub set. It is abandoned. Music in the background rises and fades. WOMAN'S voice is heard, followed by the CHORUS]

WOMAN:

It is alright...

Alright...

We shall not forget it

You shall not forget it

what happened to us

we will remember

You also remember

We shall not forget it

We shall not forget it...

CHORUS:

We shall not forget it

you shall not forget it

what happened to the tree

what happened to us

we shall not forget it

we shall not forget it...

[The CHORUS voices rise. Suddenly the Spot Light focuses on HOPKINSON. Voices become louder and louder. He covers his ears with his hands. Voices stop.]

HOPKINSON:

The Komagata Maru is gone but its ghost is still around, in the streets , on the shore ...

The Komagata Maru is gone, now the fight is with the ghost.

[Phone rings, HOPKINSON picks up]

HOPKINSON:

Hello, HOPKINSON speaking...

Oh yes, Mr. Reid, I am here...

yes come here...

.....

Komagata Maru is gone but Hindus won...

.....

.....

Well they attacked us, humiliated us, and in spite of this all we bowed to their demands, provided them with food supplies, permitted the local Hindus to go on the Komagata Maru ...

.....

Yes we agreed to whatever they asked.

They won...

.....

.....

Oh no. Bela Singh told me it was a fake threat to burn down the city...

just to pressure us to agree to their demands...

.....

.....

yes, yes, it is all due to these local Hindu leaders...

Even now they will try to raise hell about the Komagata Maru incident. They will incite ordinary Hindus against us...

We must write to the Government of India to deal with the Komagata Maru people firmly...

.....

.....

Sure, I'll keep an eye on them here. The Komagata Maru is gone but its ghost haunts the Hindu leaders here...

Yes...

OK. Thank you sir.

[He puts the phone down. Music in the background. Light moves to the Komagata Maru sub set. Angry CHORUS voices emerge and rise]

CHORUS:

We shall not forget it

You shall not forget it

what happened to the tree

what happened to us

we shall not forget it...

[Light on HOPKINSON again. He covers his ears with hands. The CHORUS stops]

HOPKINSON:

How long, how long will I have to hear these bloody voices.

A VOICE:

As long as these Hindu leaders are alive. Finish these voices HOPKINSON, finish them... finish

HOPKINSON:

If I don't?

THE VOICE:

Then you will be finished.

HOPKINSON:

So I have to finish these voices. The Hindu leaders have become my enemies. They are after me, they are after the British Empire. They want to keep the Komagata Maru spirit alive so I can't sleep peacefully. They want to frighten me with these voices. I'll finish these voices forever. forever. forever. (changing into a low pitch) Forever, forever.

[He suddenly picks up the phone and speaks loudly]

Bela Singh!

Scene 2

[Light on the Sikh temple. A soft music flows from inside. MEWA SINGH and the PRESIDENT are seen in the yard.]

PRESIDENT:

Komagata Maru must have reached Yokohama by now.

MEWA SINGH:

The British Government will create difficulties for them there too.

PRESIDENT:

Sure they will. The Komagata Maru story has spread around the world. The British imperialism will be exposed everywhere.

MEWA SINGH:

The Komagata Maru tragedy is an insult to the entire Indian nation.

PRESIDENT:

And we shouldn't tolerate this insult quietly.

MEWA SINGH:

In California, Ghadar Party has given a call to fight for the freedom of India.

PRESIDENT:

I fully agree with their aims. Unless we are a free people, we should never expect justice from anywhere. We'll be humiliated every where.

[The EDITOR enters]

EDITOR:

Have you heard the news? War between The English and the Germans.

PRESIDENT:

Is that right?. It will be a war on a big scale then.

MEWA SINGH:

India will also be engulfed in it.

PRESIDENT:

The British will use Indian people to fight their war.

EDITOR:

Indians should oppose the British. They don't treat us better than dogs.

PRESIDENT:

The tragedy is that our armies are very loyal to their masters. All Maharajas are boot lickers of the British.

MEWA SINGH:

We should spread the Komagata Maru story as much as we can.

PRESIDENT:

Its influence may reach the Indian army too.

EDITOR:

But the British and the Canadian governments will do their utmost to twist the story to condemn us. (suddenly). Oh, I have to attend a press meeting. See you later.

[The EDITOR exits]

MEWA SINGH:

Even here, HOPKINSON is badly after us. Bela Singh threatens our people. Yesterday his goons pursued Sohan Lal. Luckily he was able to save himself.

PRESIDENT:

Is that right? That is very serious. We should keep an eye on HOPKINSON and Bela Singh.
Let us go inside and discuss it with others.

[Both go inside the temple. Light moves on to the Komagata Maru sub set. CHORUS in the background]

CHORUS:

We shall not forget it
You shall not forget it
We shall not forget it
We shall not forget it...

[Light fades. CHORUS stops]

[Blue light falls on the Sikh

temple. A man with a neat red turban stands with his face towards the temple, and back towards the audience. Slowly he takes out a revolver from his right pocket, checks and puts it back. Then similarly checks a revolver in his left pocket.

He takes three, four steps towards the temple and quickly enters the gate. Temple music is heard for a few moments. A shot is heard from inside. A deadly quiet prevails. Another shot, and a noise of confusion emerges. Then many shots are heard.

The man with the red turban comes out of the temple. His face is not very clear. He quickly disappears behind the stage. Noise rises again. MEWA SINGH and another person emerge supporting an injured person.]

[Light moves to the Komagata Maru sub set. CHORUS voices emerge]

CHORUS:

Silence... silence...

in my ear

someone told me

on empty beaches

in wounded temples

destiny wanders

in search of dignity

destiny the aborigne...

[Light moves to the Immigration Office.

HOPKINSON on the phone.]

HOPKINSON:

Yes, yes, that is what we exactly wanted. good.

Very good.

.....

.....

No, nothing to worry about. Every thing will be

alright.

.....

.....

What ? Somebody threatened you?

.....

.....

No, no. Don't worry. They won't dare. Now they will calm down.

.....

.....

OK. See you.

[HOPKINSON strolls for a moment. laughs ...laughs loudly]

Now the Hindus will come to their senses. Now I'll wrestle the Komagata Maru ghost.

Ha...ha...ha.

[Light fades. Music and voices emerge from the background]

CHORUS:

We shall not forget it

we shall not forget it

we shall not forget it...

[The voices subside, but music becomes louder and louder. Light brightens on stage. HOPKINSON covers his ears with hands. The music stops. HOPKINSON laughs again]

HOPKINSON:

Bastards. They'll kill each other. stupid.

[A voice emerges from behind]

VOICE:

No, not yet. Not Bela Singh. He is useful.

HOPKINSON:

Yes, yes. Not Bela Singh. Bela Singh must be acquitted from the murder case.

[HOPKINSON quickly exits.]

Scene 3

[Light falls on the Sikh temple. Sad music. MEWA SINGH sits on a bench with his head lowered. He gets up slowly and starts walking in deep thought. Music stops. The EDITOR enters with a

news paper in his hand]

EDITOR:

MEWA SINGH.

[MEWA SINGH responds with a smile but doesn't speak]

You look very sad.

MEWA SINGH:

Since our PRESIDENT was murdered here nothing looks the same. I don't feel at home.

EDITOR:

He was a great leader. His death is an irreplaceable loss to us.

MEWA SINGH:

When I recall the shooting here, I can't control myself. I feel like... (anger shows in his eyes)

EDITOR:

The most painful thing is that Bela Singh is acquitted. Every body knows he fired. He himself admitted he killed the PRESIDENT.

MEWA SINGH:

Bela Singh has started showing his machoism again.

EDITOR:

Our people are scared now. They think HOPKINSON and Reid support Bela Singh, He can do any thing he wants.

MEWA SINGH:

I think our appeal against him is useless.

EDITOR:

I agree. HOPKINSON will become his witness again.

MEWA SINGH:

HOPKINSON! the very name makes my blood boil. So mean. So treacherous.

EDITOR:

Bela Singh is even worst. He has threatened me several times... They don't like what we write in my paper.

MEWA SINGH:

I don't understand, how they can be stopped, how they can be punished.

EDITOR:

Who can punish them. The whole government supports them.

[MEWA SINGH keeps quiet]

Yesterday Bela Singh's men tried to kill Sohan Lal, don't understand why.

MEWA SINGH:

Because Sohan Lal is treasurer of the Komagata Maru committee.

EDITOR:

Oh, yes, Komagata Maru must have reached India by now, at the Bajbaj Ghat harbour, near Calcutta.

Scene 4

[Light on Komagata Maru sub set. The scene shows Bajbaj Ghat, India, where Komagata Maru has just docked. A Sign board reads: Bajbaj Ghat. A few stones and drift wood pieces lay scattered]

SECRETARY:

Let us leave this place and go somewhere to spend the night. How far is Calcutta from here?

GURDIT SINGH:

About fourteen miles. No train will be available at this time.

SECRETARY:

Better to walk than to stay here. Let us leave this place right now.

GURDIT SINGH:

But we should wait for Mr. Cumming.

SECRETARY:

No use.

GURDIT SINGH:

Cumming is chief secretary of Bengal. We will put before him what happened with us in Canada, what police did to us here. Cumming is the one who convinced us to return here from the station.

SECRETARY:

It is absolutely disgusting. Cumming cheated us. Otherwise we would have reached Calcutta by now.

GURDIT SINGH:

In fact I too feel the same way. They seem determined to send us to Punjab.

SECRETARY:

They want to bury the whole tragedy of Komagata Maru as soon they can. But what shall we do in Punjab. Passengers sold their farms to pay for

the fare. They want to find work in Calcutta and earn something before they can show their faces back home.

GURDIT SINGH:

We have lost hundreds of thousands dollars - we have to clear the Komagata Maru accounts with the owners. We have to sue the Canadian Government in Calcutta supreme court...But police wants to stuff us in the railway wagons like animals and ship to the Punjab. No, never, We'll never go, come what may.

SECRETARY:

We have been already harassed to the extreme. No breakfast, not even a drop of water. Walked three miles in the Sun, Cumming brought us back - police shouted, pushed, punched our people - it is very humiliating - can't be tolerated any more.

GURDIT SINGH:

We are really trapped. We have to keep our wits. Let us somehow free ourselves and reach Calcutta. It'll be alright then (pause)... Police has abused me, accused me pushed me around. I have been treated in the same way.

SECRETARY:

That is why passengers are so angry. At least they should treat you with respect. Now passengers have been forced to sit on the ground like animals. Even the holy Granth Sahib is also on the ground. Now they insist we go back to the ship to spend night.

GURDIT SINGH:

Back to the ship ? Never. I see some evil design in that.

SECRETARY:

Yes. they can take the ship to some deserted island, once the passengers are in. We can't trust them anymore.

GURDIT SINGH:

Yes. Even Cumming cheated us.

SECRETARY:

Police is sniffing like dogs all around us. I think they want to arrest you.

GURDIT SINGH:

Arrest me?

SECRETARY:

Yes. First they tried to call me away from others. I didn't go. Passengers want you to stay in the center. It is not safe to stay away from them. If you are arrested, passengers will lose heart.

[GURDIT SINGH nods in agreement]

The evening prayer is about to start. Let us go in and discuss plans for the night with others.

[They go behind the back curtain. Blue light falls on the stage. The prayer is heard from the background. After a few moments, it is disrupted by a rude voice]

VOICE 1:

Where is GURDIT SINGH? Where are you? Come out of the crowd right away.

[Voice of the prayer fades, another voice is heard]

VOICE 2:

Sir, it is our prayer time. As soon as the prayer is over, GURDIT SINGH will come out.

[Soon the dialogue between the first and the second voice changes into an argument]

VOICE 1:

No, I can't wait.

VOICE 2:

Please try to understand. We are in the middle of praying. Don't interfere.

VOICE 1:

Nonsense. You are all culprits. Making a fool of me.

VOICE 2:

You better speak with some dignity. We are already fed up with you.

VOICE 1:

Oh, I see. You are going to teach me manners. You people won't listen. OK, I'll pull that thug out myself. Now get out of my way, get out, I say get away you idiots.

[Confusion and noise. A third distinct and dominant voice is heard]

VOICE 3:

That is the limit now. They didn't stop to interrupt even our prayer. Better dead than this. Tehil Singh, why don't you snatch the stick from this white idiot. Look at him! He is beating us like animals. Give him two, three strong at his back. we'll see what happens later.

[Two gun shots]

VOICE 2:

Look out. Hold Thakur, hold him.

[Two, three more shots. Silence prevails for a moment. Suddenly the gun shots start from all around. Noise of confusion and panic]

[Light brightens. The WOMAN emerges on the stage. Gun shots continue. With each shot, she bends to the side where the shot appears to be coming from. she stills on the stage front. Light fades slowly. Awe and silence prevail]

[CHORUS voices slowly rise]

CHORUS:

Silence... silence...

destiny

wanders in search of dignity...

The chimpanzee

hiding in a great ebony

sighs:

slavery and dignity

do not walk

side by side.

On crimson beaches

in torn moon light

destiny

wanders in search of dignity...

destiny the aborgine...

Scene 5

[Light falls on the Sikh temple. MEWA SINGH and the EDITOR in disturbed and angry moods]

MEWA SINGH:

But why did they fire, why? why?

EDITOR:

It is a massacre, unparalleled.

MEWA SINGH:

They could arrest them, imprison them. But to fire on defenseless people like that...How barbarous, how inhuman!

EDITOR:

Not only that. The police pursued the passengers to shoot them. Are they police or mad dogs? As if massacre were fun for them.

MEWA SINGH:

Here they murdered our PRESIDENT. There they massacred Komagata Maru. It is all being done to intimidate us, to make us coward for ever...so that we never dream of equality, never stop wagging our tails behind the white masters, and they can throw biscuits to us whenever they please , can get rid of us when they wish, can shoot us when they want...

(Changing into a low voice, painful and reflective)

they shoot us so we remain dumb, utter only yes sir, yes sir. They want our children to grow dumb, live dumb, and die dumb.
They want to kill self respect in our people forever, forever.

EDITOR:

But they don't know, nations don't die like that.

Under oppression, they vitalize, glow red and

rise to end the tyranny. Why were the Komagata Maru passengers treated like this? Because they came from a slave country to live in a country of their master's race. But how long will our people tolerate this extreme humiliation, how long?

MEWA SINGH:

Not very long. We can't go on like this forever. We can't. Something restless, utterly restless has entered into my bones, blood is surging in my veins... as if a pool of calm water has suddenly boiled off in me. As if...I...I... My head is splitting.

[MEWA SINGH leaves. The EDITOR Doesn't see him]

EDITOR:

The steam is useful, only when it is under control. MEWA SINGH, let us...

[Turns back and finds MEWA SINGH is already gone. He wonders for a moment then leaves]

Scene 6

[Light on the Immigration Office.

HOPKINSON alone sitting at the table, in a deep thought. A clear and loud voice is heard from the background]

VOICE:

Mr. William C. HOPKINSON.

[HOPKINSON feels happy]

VOICE:

White.

[HOPKINSON smiles]

VOICE:

English.

[HOPKINSON very happy, laughs]

VOICE:

Mr. William C. HOPKINSON, the true son of the Canadian government, obedient, loyal to the British empire.

[HOPKINSON proud, points his thumb towards his chest]

VOICE:

Loyal Mr. HOPKINSON, imagine the palace of British empire. White, grand, high.

[HOPKINSON nods, shows pride on his face]

VOICE:

Loyal and obedient HOPKINSON, a crack has appeared in the palace.

[HOPKINSON gets up at once. His face is serious and questioning]

VOICE:

Who caused this crack?.....the Komagata Maru.

[Expression of surprise on HOPKINSON'S face]

VOICE:

Yes. this crack is very small yet. Tomorrow it could become a wide gap. Yes this small crack can eventually lead to the crumbling of our grand palace.

[HOPKINSON seems a bit puzzled]

HOPKINSON:

(in a low voice, but fast) No. never, never.

VOICE:

Yes, HOPKINSON, the Komagata Maru is not an ordinary incident. The whole World has watched it.

[HOPKINSON stops and thinks]

VOICE:

The great palace should remain great and white forever; is that not what you want?

[HOPKINSON nods]

VOICE:

And Hindus, on their knees, should rub and polish it day and night to keep it brilliant?

[HOPKINSON nods more]

VOICE:

But never enter it.

[HOPKINSON nods still more to express agreement]

VOICE:

Is that why Hindus were shot at Bajbaj Ghat?

[HOPKINSON keeps nodding]

VOICE:

Then listen. The shots at Bajbaj Ghat were heard by the Hindus in India, Hindus in America.

[HOPKINSON serious, keeps nodding]

VOICE:

Don't you see? Canadian Hindus are in a fit of rage after hearing these shots. They are looking at our palace with red eyes... with stones in their hands?

[A pause. HOPKINSON gets up with anger in his eyes, and walks back and forth restlessly]

VOICE:

There is still time , Mr. HOPKINSON, still...

HOPKINSON:

(In great anger) I...

VOICE:

Loyal, obedient, Mr. William HOPKINSON, recognize your duty.

[HOPKINSON walking restlessly, suddenly stops]

HOPKINSON:

(In a loud pitch) Bela Singh !

[HOPKINSON makes a brisk about turn

and goes inside]

Scene 7

[Light on the Sikh temple. MEWA SINGH paces restlessly. The music in the background fades, a VOICE emerges]

VOICE:

MEWA SINGH, what are you thinking?

[MEWA SINGH shows no change in expression]

VOICE:

About the appeal against Bela Singh?

[MEWA SINGH becomes attentive]

VOICE:

(Laughing sarcastically)

Which court are you going to, to beg for justice?

[MEWA SINGH shows an expression of surprise]

Yes, yes, to beg. why? didn't like what I said?. You want justice from these courts don't you? Come on MEWA SINGH. How long would you kid yourself? How long?

[Pause. MEWA SINGH looks shaky]

VOICE:

Massacre of Komagata Maru, of the PRESIDENT. Who is next? the EDITOR?

MEWA SINGH:

(In a loud VOICE) No!

VOICE:

Are you going to tolerate it quietly?

MEWA SINGH:

No!

VOICE:

Remember what the Guru said?: When all other means fail, drawing the sword is justified...

[The VOICE stops. Music resumes. MEWA SINGH paces restlessly for a moment, then suddenly walks into the temple]

Scene 8

[Light on the Immigration Office. The stage in this sub set now shows the front of the Canadian Supreme court indicated with a banner. A blue curtain, and a step ladder with three steps in front of the curtain, suggest the front of the court room.

Outside, on the left stand MEWA SINGH and his two companions, one of whom is without turban. On the right are three men belonging to another group. Both sides are busy in talking within their own groups. MEWA SINGH is quiet and serious. HOPKINSON enters. Shakes hand with a turbaned man in the other group and appears talking to him.

HOPKINSON turns to MEWA SINGH and looks

at him in an intimidating manner. MEWA SINGH looks straight into his eyes. Tense situation persists for a moment. HOPKINSON shrugs his shoulders turns and moves towards the court room door. MEWA SINGH calls him from behind:]

MEWA SINGH:

HOPKINSON !

[HOPKINSON turns and looks at MEWA SINGH MEWA SINGH again looks straight into his eyes and smiles. HOPKINSON looks irritated, shrugs, and starts to move again. MEWA SINGH at once takes a revolver from his pocket and aims at HOPKINSON. HOPKINSON raises his arms in defence and utters no...no.
The scene freezes]

[CHORUS voices emerge from the background]

CHORUS:

Silence...

silent destiny,

on salty oceans

on crimson beaches

in torn moonlit nights

in supreme court lights

wanders in search of dignity...

***** C U R T A I N *****