

That Land Beyond the Waves

Cast of Characters:

1914

Harnam Singh.....	A new immigrant to Canada , 30s
Ram Singh.....	South Asian community leader, 40s
Ali.....	Another community leader, late 20s
Bakshu.....	Cook at the community cook-house, mid 30s
Santa Singh	A Saw-mill worker, late 20s
Ganda Singh	A Saw-mill worker, late 20s
British Sergeant.....	Late 40s
Three British Policemen.	
Simran	Harnam's sister, late 20s (appears as a vision)
Jagroop	passenger on Komagata Maru, late 20s
Tarak Nath	A Gadar Party activist, 40s
Frances	British immigrant to Canada, mid 30s
Peter	Frances' husband. A Saw-mill owner, mid 30s
Martha.....	Frances' friend, 30s
Laurie	Frances' friend, late 20s
Ted	Laurie's husband, 30s
Dave	Martha's husband, 40s
Richard.....	A press reporter
Two Aboriginal men	
Six Caucasian boys who sing "White Canada Forever"	
A couple of teenagers who play catch on the beach	

2014

Sonia.....	South Asian Descent, student, early 20s.
Leona	Caucasian , student, early 20s.
Christine.....	Caucasian , student, early 20s.
Harjit.....	South Asian Descent Sonia's father, mid 40s
A Barrista	

Time and Place

The play takes place in two time zones, 1914 and 2014. In both time zones most of the action takes place in Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada. The opening scene in Act II takes place at the Waterfront in Vancouver.

Setting

There is a round table C with three chairs around it that serves as multiple locations during the play. These locations include:

Kitchen/Dining table at Frances's house.

Kitchen/Dining table at Harjit and Sonia's house.

A picnic table at the waterfront.

There is a rectangular table L with three chairs, that serves as the location of a coffee shop.

UC is a small room that serves as Pantry in Frances' house.

There is a community cookhouse R with a couple of benches randomly placed and a slab for cooking RC. In the second act the cookhouse is replaced by the Façade of the Sikh Temple at Abbotsford.

UL is a slab that serves as a Coffee-shop service counter as well as kitchen in Frances's house.

Act I

THE LIGHTS GO UP

CHRISTINE is standing at the service counter of the Coffee shop.

SONIA and LEONA are sitting at the table; Leona is reading a book while Sonia is busy texting. Christine approaches Leona and Sonia. She is carrying a tray with three cups of coffee

CHRISTINE

Here you are. Mocha supreme for Sonia and Blond Roast for you, Leona. Now you girls better tell me that you've come up with an idea for our presentation, otherwise I'm gonna charge you for this service, with the tip.

LEONA

I think we should go with the original plan.

SONIA

You mean the Komagata Maru?

LEONA

Yes.

SONIA

O, C'mon Leona. We have discussed this earlier. Komagata Maru has been done to death. Everybody knows that there was a ship with three hundred odd Indians that was sent back by the Canadian government of the time. Everybody knows about the Komagata Maru.

CHRISTINE

Not everybody knows about it.

SONIA

C'mon...even the Prime Minister has apologised for the incident.

LEONA

Not everybody knows who the Prime Minister is. Right Christine?

CHRISTINE

Oh Shut up, wise ass.

SONIA

I don't think Komagata Maru story has any juice left. People have written plays on it, documentaries have been made, books have been written, reports published. Trust me, you can't get an 'A' if you make a presentation on the Komagata Maru.

CHRISTINE

So we'll get a 'B'. What's the big deal?

SONIA

It is a big deal. I must get an 'A' in this course.

CHRISTINE

Why?

SONIA

Cuz that's what I want. And if Professor Smith yawns once during our presentation, he'll not give us an 'A' and trust me Komagata Maru is so overdone.

CHRISTINE

I don't think you should be concerned about Professor Smith's yawns. After all it's an early morning class. Half of the people are yawning in any case.

LEONA

OK Sonia... if you think everybody knows everything about Komagata Maru, maybe we should try to find another topic.

CHRISTINE:

Isn't that why we came here in the first place, and FYI, I don't know everything about Komagata Maru except that a bunch of Indians were refused entry by the Canadian government.

LEONA

(looking at her computer)

That's a long list of books that have been written on the topic. That should come in handy for secondary sources.

CHRISTINE

That should make Professor Smith happy.

SONIA

Leona.....?

LEONA

Hey Sonia...What is the meaning of gadaar?

SONIA

I don't know. What about it?

LEONA

Here it says that the Komagata Maru incident played an important role in motivating and organizing Indian revolutionaries who later on launched an independence movement called gadaar.

SONIA

Spell it.

LEONA

G-A-D-A-R.

SONIA

That's Gadar. It's the name of a Bollywood movie.

LEONA

And was this movie made in 1915 with Indian revolutionaries playing the lead?

SONIA

What are you talking about? What has the movie got to do with Indian revolutionaries?

CHRISTINE

Are we going to include a Bollywood movie in our presentation? Cool.

LEONA

No. We are not going to include a Bollywood movie in our South Asian Diaspora History presentation. I just came across this reference that connects a 1915 freedom movement in India with the Komagata Maru and thought maybe Sonia could throw some light on it.

SONIA

What is your point?

LEONA

My point is that Komagata Maru may have been (makes air quotes) done to death, but you don't know everything about it. Neither do I.

CHRISTINE

Don't even look at me.

LEONA

And it'll be the same with Professor Smith and the rest of the class. There might be tens of books on the topic but I'm certain none of my family members have read any. Christine?

CHRISTINE

I said don't look at me.

LEONA

And what about you Sonia? Or your brother Inder for that matter? Have you read any? Do you guys have a book on Komagata Maru in your house?

SONIA

All right...you can go easy on the sarcasm. I get your point.

LEONA

Good. So here's what I propose. Let's spend some time exploring the topic and if we can find an angle to the story that could give us an 'A', we'll go ahead and do it.

CHRISTINE

When you say spend some time, you mean like now?

LEONA

Of course.

CHRISTINE

(grabbing the computer).

OK...

LEONA

Not on the computer, Google Brain.

CHRISTINE

Then how?

LEONA

We'll go the old fashioned way (takes out a bunch of books from her bag).

SONIA

(Browsing the books)

Leona, you are cunning. You came prepared.

CHRISTINE

(Selecting a book)

I'll take this one. It's got the maximum pics.

LEONA

OK...take it. Read it tonight. And you too Sonia. Pick one, any one, and read it cover to cover and we'll meet here tomorrow at seven and if we still feel that this story is not worth making a presentation on..

CHRISTINE

(interrupting)

Then we'll make one on a Bollywood movie

SONIA

Yeah. Professor Smith will surely give you an 'A' for that.

CHRISTINE

What's this obsession with the 'A'?

LEONA

Yeah. Stop being so uptight Sonia. You'll never get a boyfriend that way.

CHRISTINE

Yeah. Guys are afraid to approach smart 'A' girls.

SONIA

I don't need any guy approaching me.

LEONA

Why? Has your Dad found one for you in India?

SONIA

Oh Shut up Leona.

(END OF SCENE)

LIGHTS ON TABLE C: Sonia's house.

As lights come on, Sonia is seen standing near the slab fixing two plates of dinner. Her books are lying on the table She carries the plates to the table.

SONIA

Dad, Dinner's ready.

HARJIT

(O.S)

I am coming.

SONIA

(starts texting)

Enter HARJIT

HARJIT

How many times I have told you not to bring your cell-phone to the dinner table.

SONIA

I am not texting. I mean I am. But it's not for fun. It's school related.

HARJIT

(rolling his eyes like a teenager)

Whatever.

SONIA

O, C'mon Dad.

HARJIT

No texting while you are eating.

SONIA

I thought the rule was no talking while eating.

HARJIT

Yes, that rule was applicable when kids used to talk.

SONIA

You mean to say I don't talk.

HARJIT

Not as much as I would want you to.

SONIA

Really. OK. What do you wanna talk about?

HARJIT

Anything. Like what did you do this evening?

SONIA

I was at the Coffee shop with Christine and Leona. We are working on a presentation.

HARJIT

I don't understand this Canadian concept of studying at coffee shops. In our days, we used to go to the parks to study (picks up the newspaper).

SONIA

So you want me to go to a park in this wet B.C. weather to study?

HARJIT

(reading the newspaper)

That's not the point.

SONIA

Why are you reading the newspaper now? I thought you wanted to talk.

HARJIT

I am talking.

SONIA

While reading the newspaper?

HARJIT

I am multi-tasking. What assignment were you girls working on?

SONIA

We are planning to make a presentation about the Komagata Maru incident. Do you know something about it?

HARJIT

Of course. Everybody, at least every Indo-Canadian knows about it. There was this Japanese ship Komagata Maru that came to Vancouver and the racist goras didn't allow it to land.

SONIA

And?

HARJIT

And the ship went back to India.

SONIA

That's it?

HARJIT

Pretty much. Of course the passengers must have suffered a lot. The government recently apologised for the incident. I thought that was a nice gesture.

SONIA

So what happened to those who went back?

HARJIT

I don't know. I believe they were all Punjabis so they must have gone back to Punjab. But I don't really know. Who knows?

SONIA

(Showing him the book)

That's something I intend to find out tonight.

HARJIT

Good luck with that. I got an early shift tomorrow. So, good night.

SONIA

Good Night Dad.

(Exit Harjit. Sonia opens the book and reads aloud)

while lights slowly fade.)

SONIA

On September 26, 2014, Komagata Maru reached the coast of British India. The authorities feared that the ship was carrying seditious material and elements. They searched the ship for three days and when they found nothing of consequence, they ordered the ship to go to the port of Budge Budge, about seventy miles from Calcutta from where they were ordered to board a train to Punjab. The passengers, who were penniless by now, didn't want to go to Punjab. Rather, they wanted to stay in Calcutta and find some sort of employment there. They decided to walk to Calcutta in the form a procession carrying the holy Guru Granth Sahib to a Sikh temple in Calcutta. They gathered at Budge Budge Station for prayer and Ardas.

Lights go off Sonia.

General lighting DC/DR reveals three gun-wielding policemen who are standing facing the audience. We hear a voice reciting Kirtan followed by Ardas.

VOICE

(O.S)

Ek Omkar, Satnam, Karta Purakh Nirbhau, Nirvair, Akal Murat....

Enter Sergeant.

SERGEANT

What in the name of the lord is going on here?

POLICEMAN 1

Sir, I believe these people are praying.

SERGEANT

Praying? Are They? Here, at this god-forsaken shit-hole of a place? They are bloody making a fool out of you.

POLICEMAN 2

Pardon my audacity sir, but who are these people and what are they doing here at Budge Budge.

SERGEANT

If you must know, these are a bunch of revolutionaries, mutineers, who went to Canada on board Komagata Maru. They were refused entry and now they have come back to India with hopes of achieving what the likes of them could not achieve in 1857.

POLICEMAN 3

Do you mean mutiny, Sir?

SERGEANT

Yes. Another one. And who knows in this so called prayer of theirs they might be praying for the success of their plan. And do you have any idea what that means for us, the British? Every white man brutally murdered, every white woman raped and forced to produce the likes of them. So stop asking these stupid questions and follow the orders. (Calling out) Hey! All of you. Get on the train.

VOICE

(O.S)

But this train goes to Punjab. None of us wants to go to Punjab. We want to go to Calcutta.

SERGEANT

None of you is going to Calcutta. Do you hear that? Now you get on that train right now, otherwise I might have to use force.

VOICE

(O.S.)

Let us at least finish our prayers.

SERGEANT

To hell with your prayers. On the count of three, if you don't start boarding, you will be shot down. (to policemen) Take positions.

POLICEMAN 1

Sir, it will be a massacre. These people are like sitting ducks.

SERGEANT

Well, then go hunting. One, two.

Policeman 2 moves towards the audience.

SERGEANT

Where on earth are you going?

POLICEMAN 2

Sir, there's a child among them. (Exits through the audience).

SERGEANT

Fire.

The Sergeant and the two policemen point their guns towards the audience. Total darkness on stage. Sounds of gun shots for forty five seconds to one minute.

(END OF SCENE)

The Lights go up on the Coffee shop. Sonia, Christine and Leona are a sitting. The books are piled up on the table.

CHRISTINE

How could they do this? I mean it's atrocious. It's inhuman...it's sick. That's what it is. It is sick.

SONIA

It's colonialism.

CHRISTINE

I feel so bad. I am sick to my stomach.

LEONA

Yes. It is disgusting. Firing at unarmed, tired, dejected and rejected passengers of Komagata Maru barely a few hours after they landed in India is insane and yes Christine..it is sick. I'm not sure if I want to pursue this angle for our presentation. It is too horrible.

CHRISTINE

Me neither.

SONIA

You have some other angle in mind?

LEONA

Actually, quite a few. For instance, these people, the ones on board the Komagata Maru weren't the first ones to come to Canada from India.

Right?

SONIA

No they were not. There were a few thousand Indo-Canadians living in Canada at that time. Majority of them lived in Vancouver and the lower mainland.

LEONA

And barely anyone had his family with him.

CHRISTINE

They were not allowed.

SONIA

A couple of exceptions here and there but generally they were all men.

LEONA

And certainly they could not marry white women. (beat) Don't you think it's a unique scenario of male bonding?

(END OF SCENE)

The lights on the coffee shop go off and they go up on the community cook-house. BAKSHU is sitting there cooking food.

SANTA SINGH is sitting on a bench with a piece of paper in his hand. He is sobbing and repeatedly wipes his nose with the loose end of his turban. GANDA SINGH comes to him with a cup of tea in his hand.

GANDA

Oye Santeya...What happened...Kyon moonh latka ke baitha hain? Is everything alright?

(Santa doesn't respond; but his sobs acquire a renewed energy)

GANDA

Oye, be a man, why are you crying like a woman? Tell me what happened?
(Santa shows him the piece of paper)

GANDA

What's this?

SANTA

You don't know what's this? It's a telegram.

GANDA

Waheguru ! Is everything alright?

SANTA

Didn't you hear me? I said it's a telegram. Has a telegram ever brought good news?

GANDA

You are right. Once my neighbour, you know, Gurnam, Chhaju's uncle's son. You remember him right? He came to Canada but was deported.

SANTA

Ya...I remember...and I know the Immigrant tax story of Gurnam...You have told it a million times.

GANDA

Yes..the same Gurnam, once he received a telegram (pause) in English.

SANTA

In English?

GANDA

Yes, it was the government

SANTA

What did it say?

GANDA

I don't exactly remember, but it was terrible news. Gurnam had to stay away from his home for a very long time. Terrible news.

SANTA

I'm sure my telegram also has some terrible news. I am so far away from my home. What if there's been a flood, or a fire, or Waheguru na kare, something's happened to my mother. I'm so far away, I can't do anything (sobs).

GANDA

(joining in with the sobs)

Don't cry yaar....Let me read it

SANTA

Can you read?

GANDA

No. But Bakshu can! Oye Bakshu!

BAKSHU

What's it?

GANDA

Come here brother, we need your help. Santa is in big trouble.

BAKSHU

Why? What happened?

GANDA

He's got a telegram from home.

BAKSHU

Khuda Khair Kare. That can't be good news.

SANTA

I know

GANDA

Can you please read it for him?

BAKSHU

Sure. Show me.

Ganda hands over the telegram to Bakshu. Santa covers his face in his haunches.

GANDA

Hausla rakh Santeya

BAKSHU

Ya Allah. It's in Hindi.

GANDA

In Hindi? Are you sure?

BAKSHU

I think so. That looks like Hindi.

GANDA
(To Santa)

Who in your village knows Hindi?

SANTA

I don't know. Lala is the only educated man in our village. He has studied upto Grade III. But he only knows the Landa language. Then there's the Bhai at the Gurdwara, but he doesn't know Hindi.

BAKSHU

First, a telegram, and that too in Hindi. Ya Allah! You are the merciful one.

SANTA

Why don't you read it?

BAKSHU

I surely will. My Hindi is not so good, but I'll try.

Santa is getting inconsolable

BAKSHU

(reads the telegram)

That's bad news.

SANTA

What does it say?

BAKSHU

It says, Maa mar gayi. Your mother died.

SANTA

Haye Maa.....Ni tu kithe chali gayi. Tainu vekh vi na sakiya aakhri vaar.
What's the fun of living in this far off country and making all this money
If I couldn't be with my mother when she closed her eyes.

Everyone around starts weeping.

Enter Ali

Santa lets out a long, loud wail.

ALI

Oye! What happened?

GANDA

Ask what hasn't happened?

ALI

OK. What hasn't happened?

GANDA

Nothing good has happened. Santa has lost his mother.

ALI

Oh my God! When? How?

SANTA

Bakshu...show him the telegram.

GANDA

Even before Bakshu read it, we knew it was bad news. Has a telegram ever brought good news?

BAKSHU AND SANTA

Never

ALI

Did you say Bakshu read it?

BAKSHU

Yes, and it was not easy. You see, it's in Hindi.

ALI

(snatches the telegram from Bakshu)

BAKSHU

You can read. It's clearly written Maa mar gayi.

ALI

(reads the telegram)

You fool. How many times I've told to buy a pair of glasses.

SANTA

Why? What happened?

ALI

The telegram doesn't say Maa mar gayi. Your mother hasn't died.

BAKSHU

It doesn't?

SANTA

Then what does it say?

ALI

It says Gaa mar gayi, not maa mar gayi. Your cow has died, not your mother.

SANTA

Really! Waheguru tera lakh lakh shukar hai.

GANDA

Well, somebody died. I told you a telegram never brings good news.

SANTA

I need something to drown the sorrow.

ALI

Of losing your mother?

SANTA

Of losing my cow. And you know for Hindus, cow is like mother. Come Ganda Singh, let's go inside, drown our sorrows.

GANDA

You are right brother, in times like this she is our only companion.

(Exit Santa and Ganda)

BAKSHU

Saaley, they just need a reason to drink. Khushi ho ya gham, khoob piyenge hum.

ALI

Bakshu, is the food ready?

BAKSHU

It'll take some time.

ALI

Then go and cook it, instead of wasting your time in idle woman-talk.

BAKSHU

What to do? We don't have any women here, so we have to do everything that women would do, cook , wash clothes, clean dishes, mop floors, and do the woman talk.

ALI

(sternly)

Go and prepare the food.

BAKSHU

All right, all right. Angry man (goes back to the kitchen area).

Enter Santa and Ganda. Santa has a bottle of whisky in his hands.

SANTA

(singing)

Haye O Rabba...nahiyo lagda dil mera.

Nahiyo lagada dil mera.

GANDA

Sajna baaj hoya hanera

SANTA AND GANDA

Hai O Rabba ...Nahiyo Lagda dil Mera.

ALI

Lo Aa gaye saley talli ho ke.

SANTA

My mother is alive so I am happy.

GANDA

I am his friend, and his mother is alive, so I am happy.

Bakshu brings a dhol and Santa and Ganda do an improv Bhangra

Enter RAM SINGH AND HARNAM SINGH. Harnam Singh is wearing a garland of flowers.

The Bhangra stops.

RAM SINGH

Brothers, I want you meet Harnam Singh of Village Sarhali, Amritsar. Harnam was one of the thirty nine Indian passengers on the ship Panama Maru. I would like to welcome him to Abbotsford and am happy that he has decided to live here with us in the Fraser Valley.

ALI

Welcome brother Harnam. It's great to have you here. You must have suffered a lot in prison while waiting for the court's decision.

HARNAM

Thank you Brothers! Thank you for this warm welcome. And yes you are right, the prison was awful. I felt like a caged bird whose wings have been clipped. Still worse was the wait and uncertainty; not knowing what will happen to us. Will be allowed to come to Canada or will be sent back to face poverty and humiliation in India? You know one has to sell practically all of his possession to make this journey and if the venture fails, then one is left with nothing to survive on. It's a life of shame and utter disgrace.

ALI

Well, thankfully that didn't happen. Our lawyer, Mr. Edward Bird prepared a superb case and your Habeas Corpus petition was accepted and here you are, with us. It's time to celebrate.

They all start Bhangra.

(END OF SCENE)

The lights go up on Kitchen/dining table in the house of Frances and Peter. Martha, Frances and Laurie, dressed in 1914 evening dresses, are sitting around it having tea.

MARTHA

Did you notice the length of Linda's skirt today at the church?

LAURIE

Linda always had a horrible sense of fashion.

MARTHA

And make-up

LAURIE

Well. You can't blame the woman for showing her ankles. After all her face hasn't attracted any man so far.

HARNAM SINGH

(O.S.)

Firewood man.

FRANCES

Ah! There's the firewood man. I'm sorry ladies, I'll have to let him through

the main door. Peter is yet to fix the rear entrance.

MARTHA

That's all right dear.

Frances goes to the door and re-enters with Harnam Singh. Harnam is wearing crumpled trousers and a coarse coat. He is carrying the sack of Firewood on his back. He has a flowing beard. His turban is tightly wound around his head although it is not very smartly tied.

Harnam bows courteously to the ladies and Frances leads him to the pantry.

MARTHA

(wrinkling her nose)

I hope Peter fixes that door soon.

LAURIE

You're mean.

Re-enter Harnam and Frances.

FRANCES

(Frances gives Harnam some money)

Here, and thank you for your trouble.

HARNAM

Thank you Madam.

Exit Harnam

MARTHA

That man reeked.

LAURIE

Oh cut it out Martha. You're mean.

MARTHA

I might be. But he reeked. Frances dear, do you have some incense sticks or something.

FRANCES

Now, you are exaggerating.

MARTHA

Don't tell me you didn't smell anything. You sure need to get those sinuses unblocked.

FRANCES

Thanks. I am trying to do the best I can.

LAURIE

He did smell peculiar.

MARTHA

You may call it peculiar, for me, he reeked.

LAURIE

I think this peculiar odour might be due to his country of origin. Probably that's why they say that the Hindu race is inassimilable in the cold climate of Canada. I'm sure they wouldn't smell like this in their home country.

MARTHA

I bet they do. That's why their wives don't come with them. They'll be saying, good riddance, skunk.

FRANCES

They are not permitted to bring their wives with them

MARTHA

Good for us. Good for Canada. Imagine the likes of him settling here permanently and procreating more the likes of him.

LAURIE

That's why they are not allowing any more Hindus into Canada. After all Canada is and should always be a White Man's country.

MARTHA

Amen to that. And now before my white nostrils burst by this Hindu smell, let's go for a walk and get some fresh air.

FRANCES

You girls go ahead. I think I'll stay home. The sinuses are a bit aggravated today. Maybe I'll inhale some steam.

LAURIE

That's a shame. It's such a glorious day. The weather has been awesome lately. The driest spell I have seen in a long time.

FRANCES

I would certainly like to join you but...

MARTHA

(interrupting)

Don't stress yourself. I think steam should do you some good. Have a good evening dear.

LAURIE

Good evening.

FRANCES

Enjoy your walk.

Exit Martha and Laurie

Frances starts picking up the cups and dishes. She puts a kettle on stove to boil water. There is a knock on the door.

FRANCES

Who is this?

HARNAM

(O.S.)

Firewood Man.

FRANCES

Please come in. The door's open

Enter Harnam

HARNAM

I am sorry Madam. Did I disturb you?

FRANCES

No. Not really. What is it?

HARNAM

When I reached the next block, I realized that you have given me more money than required. I gave you two dollars worth of wood but you gave

me two dollars and fifty cents. I came to give fifty cents back.

FRANCES

Oh, But that was supposed to be a tip.

HARNAM

A tip?

FRANCES

A sort of a thank you for your services. You did put the sack of wood in the store.

HARNAM

But you said thank you.

FRANCES

Yes, but giving a tip is a gesture, a thank you gesture. You can keep the fifty cents.

HARNAM

I am sorry, but I can't. I can only take what I deserve to take. Delivering firewood is my job and that firewood was worth two dollars and two dollars is what I should take. I hope you don't get angry.

FRANCES

I am not angry. Somewhat amused, yes, but not angry.

HARNAM

Thanks. You see I am very new in this country so I don't know a lot about its customs.

FRANCES

Well. Then this is an important custom. It is customary to tip for a service

and it is polite to keep the tip. So you should keep the fifty cents.

HARNAM

OK...I don't want to be impolite. So I will keep the fifty cents.

FRANCES

How long have you been here in Canada?

HARNAM

A few months. Do you remember the Panama Maru ship case?

FRANCES

I don't think I have heard of it.

HARNAM

Thirty nine of us came by that ship and the British Columbia government kept us as prisoners in Victoria saying that we will be sent back to India. But thanks to Mr. Edward Bird, our lawyer, do you know him?

FRANCES

I don't think I do.

HARNAM

Mr. Bird filed a Habeas Corpus petition on our behalf and the court allowed us to enter Canada.

FRANCES

And this happened a few months ago?

HARNAM

Yes.

FRANCES

I should read the newspaper more regularly. I want to, but my sinuses give me such headaches that (pause) anyway, thanks again.

HARNAM

Do you have sinus problem?

FRANCES

Sinuses, allergies, you name it. But we can't do much about them can we? Well thank you very much. I think I'll need some rest now.

HARNAM

Oh sure Madam. I am leaving now. Thank you for teaching me about the Canadian customs.

FRANCES

You're welcome. Have a good day.

HARNAM

Good day Madam.

Exit Harnam

The water boils. Frances picks up the kettle and exits.

(END OF SCENE)

*Lights go up on the cook-house.
A wrestling match is about to begin. Harnam and Ganda are preparing to wrestle. Ram Singh is immaculately dressed and sitting on a chair whereas, Santa, Ali and Bakshu are sitting on benches. The*

match starts. Harnam Singh manages to pin down Ganda. Everyone applauds. Ram Singh stands up.

RAM

Well done, Harnam. That was great. Ganda Singh, you fought well. Better luck next time. (addresses the gathering) Brothers, I've got news for you.

ALI

What news?

RAM

(Takes a paper out of his pocket)

I've received this telegram.

SANTA

Another telegram!

BAKSHU

Khuda Khair kare.

GANDA

It's definitely bad news.

RAM

It's not bad news. It's good news.

ALI

But what is the news?

RAM

Inspired by the success of Panama Maru case, that brought Harnam and thirty eight of our people to Canada, a businessman in Singapore called

Gurdit Singh has chartered a Japanese ship called Komagata Maru and set sail for Canada with more than 300 passengers on board. Isn't that good news?

GANDA

It's big news for sure. I am not sure if it is good news or bad.

HARNAM

Ganda Singh is right. The immigration people have become more vigilant after the Panama Maru episode. And this ship is carrying Indian passengers but it's coming from Singapore and Hong Kong, so it violates the continuous journey legislation and Hopkinson and Reid will cause all sorts of problems.

ALI

The continuous journey clause is humbug. Everybody knows that it is impossible to travel from India to Canada without stopping at various ports on the way for food and fuel. The courts will never accept this completely illogical and insane clause in the immigration laws.

RAM

I agree with Ali. If there is one thing the British are known for all over the world, it is the fairness of their legal system that treats all the citizens as equal. Harnam Singh's presence among us is a classic example of this. Another good news is that there are a few women and children on board the Komagata Maru.

ALI

This can mean trouble. Member of Parliament Stevens and the immigration people will never allow our families to come to Canada.

RAM

People like Stevens, Hopkinson, and Reid are always saying or doing something or the other to discourage the immigration of Indians to Canada.

ALI

They have this weird notion of Canada being a white man's country.

RAM

But the courts have usually ruled against such racist laws and I am sure that we will be welcoming the passengers of Komagata Maru in less than a month.

ALI

Inshallah!

SANTA

Jo Bole So Nihal.

EVERYBODY

Sat sri Akal.

All exit except Ram Singh and Harnam

RAM

Harnam. I have got a special news for you.

HARNAM

Special news?

RAM

Yes. One of the women passengers on Komagata Maru goes by the name of Harsimran Kaur.

HARNAM

Is that true? You are not joking? Please say that this is true.

RAM

This is true. I didn't want to reveal in front of everybody. Gurdit Singh has specifically mentioned this. After all he is from your village, Sarhali.

HARNAM

Oh! This is so wonderful. Thank you. Waheguru! Thank you.

(END OF SCENE)

Lights go up on Frances house.

Frances is sitting at the table having tea. A mellow symphony plays on the gramophone.

HARNAM

(O.S.)

Firewood man.

Frances stands, lowers the volume on the Gramophone. Goes towards door and lets Harnam in. Harnam places the bag of wood on the floor.

FRANCES

Here you can place it right beside the grain-sack (pays him the money) and thank you for your trouble.

HARNAM

(looks at the money)

Thank you for the tip madam (hesitates).

FRANCES

Is there something else?

HARNAM

No Madam. Nothing. I should go.

FRANCES

Do you want to say something? Go ahead.

HARNAM

I just wanted to ask you how are your sinuses?

FRANCES

My sinuses! They are the same as they have been for many years. Sometimes blocked, sometimes running....

HARNAM

Oh! If you don't mind, I can give you something to cure them.

FRANCES

You have a cure for my sinuses?

HARNAM

My mother used to give it to me when I was young. My nose was always running. So she would boil some herbs in water and give it to me. It tasted awful, but it worked. Would you like to try it?

FRANCES

Do you have those herbs?

HARNAM

Yes, I do. I carried some with them when I left India. They said Canada was

a cold country and I thought they will help me if my nose started running again in this cold. But I have had no problems as such. I find this weather very healthy. It is clouded most of the time and it rains a lot. I love it.

FRANCES

You love the rains?

HARNAM

Yes. Don't you.

FRANCES

Not really. I am more of a Sun person. Rains depress me.

HARNAM

Oh! Then you must be finding it very difficult to live here.

FRANCES

Well it is OK. Not an ideal place I believe but you learn to survive, right?

HARNAM

Would you like to try those herbs? I am sure I won't need them. The weather here suits me very well. I feel healthier than I used to feel back home in India.

FRANCES

Good for you. I am glad to hear that. And yes I will not mind trying those herbs. Do you think you can spare some?

HARNAM

Very gladly madam (takes out a packet from his pocket). Here. Boil them in water. Keep boiling till the water is half its volume and then filter it and drink it twice a day. You can add sugar if you find it too bitter.

FRANCES

Thank you. I appreciate it. (takes some money out of her purse) Here.

HARNAM

Oh no Madam! I can't take money for that.

FRANCES

But..

HARNAM

Please Madam. I will not take money for this. I insist.

FRANCES

Very well. Then wait a minute. (She goes to the Kitchen and packs some cookies in a packet and comes back). Here I insist that you take these cookies. I am sure you'll enjoy it.

HARNAM

Thank you madam. You are very kind. (he is beaming and there is a spring in his step). I should go now.

FRANCES

Wait a minute. There is something more isn't it? Do you have something else to say?

HARNAM

Well..madam.. I am very happy today.

FRANCES

I can see that.

HARNAM

I would like to share good news with you, if you don't mind.

FRANCES

Good news? Go ahead. Tell me.

HARNAM

Well. A Japanese ship, Komagata Maru, carrying Indian passengers is coming to Canada and among those passengers is my sister, Harsimran Kaur. I haven't seen my sister for almost a year. I am so happy that she is coming to Canada.

FRANCES

I am happy for you. You will meet your sister shortly.

HARNAM

Yes, and her child, my nephew will meet his uncle shortly.

FRANCES

That's wonderful.

HARNAM

I should leave now. Thanks for talking with me. I just hope that they don't face the kind of troubles that I faced. It'll be terrible if she has to spend time in the prison the way I had to before the court allowed me to enter Canada.

FRANCES

Don't you worry. I am sure nothing of the sort will happen. Canada is a very big country. It has room for everyone.

Exit Harnam.

(END OF SCENE)

Lights Downstage.

Waterfront at Vancouver:

People of all races including two well-dressed Sikhs are walking about and enjoying the bright evening.

A newspaper boy comes rushing in.

NEWSPAPER BOY

Extra, Extra. Read all about it. Hindu invasion of Canada. A Japanese ship carrying one thousand Hindus coming to Vancouver. Extra, Extra. Read all about it.

People buy newspaper. They segregate into different ethnic groups while reading the paper. The largest group is of about six white young men, who after reading the paper move about the stage staring threateningly at people of other ethnicities especially at the Sikhs and form a parade formation DC and start the chanty of "White Canada Forever".

BOYS

Then let us stand united all
And show our father's might
That won the home we call our own
For white man's land we fight.
To Oriental grasp and greed
We'll surrender, no never
Our watchword be God Save the King
White Canada forever

All the other groups exit stage. The boys are the last to exit.

The chanty continues off stage for some time.

(END OF SCENE)

Lights on Frances' House. PETER is having tea and reading the newspaper. Frances is at the kitchen counter wiping water off the dishes.

FRANCES

Peter. You need to mow the lawn today dear. The grass is up to my knees now.

PETER

Right after I finish this cup of tea.(a beat) Did you read this dear?

FRANCES

What?

PETER

A Japanese ship by the name of Komagata Maru is bringing a thousand Hindus to British Columbia. The press is calling it the Hindu invasion of Canada.

FRANCES

I didn't know the ship was carrying a thousand passengers.

PETER

Did you know about the ship?

FRANCES

Yes. Our firewood man told me about it. His sister is on that ship. He was very excited.

PETER

Since when did you start getting friendly with firewood men?

FRANCES

Oh Peter! Don't be ridiculous. He is not my friend. But he is nice fellow. He brought me herbs to cure my sinuses.

PETER

A Hindu brought you herbs to cure your sinuses? What is going on in this house?

FRANCES

What is the big deal? I thought you were fond of the Hindus. You employ them at your mill.

PETER

I employ them because they are very hard workers. They work twice as much as an average white man at almost half the wages. They are good for my business. But I am most definitely not fond of them. You are not planning to use those herbs, are you? Because who knows what is in them. They might be poisonous. Don't tell me you have already used them.

FRANCES

No dear. I took it from him for the sake of being polite. And then threw them in the garbage. (goes behind the kitchen counter) See there is that packet. Come take a look.

PETER

(unwilling to move)

It's all right. Just try not be friendly with these people. They are not our kind. And bloody hell, a thousand more of them coming.

FRANCES

A thousand on board! That must be a massive ship.

PETER

It'll be in the harbour in a few days. You can go to Vancouver and take a look. Ask Henry. He might even arrange a tour for you.

FRANCES

That's an excellent idea. I'll talk to Martha and Laurie. Maybe we can arrange a picnic. The weather is glorious. Would you join us if Ted and Dave were to come?

PETER

And do what? Go to a bar while you women go shopping in Vancouver.

FRANCES

I promise. No shopping. We'll set up a table on the beach and play bridge.

PETER

With six people?

FRANCES

OK... We'll play Whist.

PETER

Or poker?

FRANCES

Or both?

PETER

OK.. I think I can use a day off from work.

FRANCES

Sounds good. I'll make the arrangements. Do you think the ship will be in the harbour by this weekend.

PETER

(stands up)

I guess so. If not then make plans for the next weekend.

FRANCES

Where are you going dear?

PETER

To the bedroom. For a nap.

FRANCES

What about the lawn.

PETER

I'll do that tomorrow.

Exit Peter

FRANCES

But Peter, the grass is already up to my knees. (to herself) Never mind. (picks up the newspaper and reads. While reading it she comes downstage. The lights fade out on the table. A potlight on Frances).

FRANCES

(reading)

Four centuries ago, a ship sailed westwards from Europe to reach India and now a ship is sailing Eastwards from India to reach the western world. The general impression among the public and the government is that the Hindu migration to Canada should be stopped with immediate effect if Canada is to remain a white man's country. It will be apt to quote Kipling here who said 'East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet.

(END OF SCENE)

Coffee-shop. Lights go up on the Table. Christine, Leona and Sonia are sitting.

CHRISTINE

East is East and West is West, And never the twain shall meet. Boy, that Kipling was a real nut case.

LEONA

You can't blame him. His vision was limited. He could hardly see beyond the jungle.

SONIA

But when Komagata Maru came to Canada, the Canadian Immigration Department seemed to agree with him totally. They didn't want the twain to meet.

LEONA

Obviously they failed. (pointing to the three of them) The twain has met and gelled pretty well.

CHRISTINE

Talking about meeting of twains, how are things between you and Josh, Leona?

LEONA

I think we came here to talk about the assignment. So no boys talk.

CHRISTINE

O, C'mon Leona. We're at a Coffee-shop. Three girls and a computer. We've discussed our assignment for thirty minutes. Now's the time for boy-talk. That's the (thinking hard) what's the word?

SONIA

System?

CHRISTINE

No.

SONIA

Deal?

CHRISTINE

No. The word for doing things in a pre-decided, organized way.

LEONA

Protocol?

CHRISTINE

Protocol. Exactly. That is the protocol.

LEONA

What business is yours what happens between me and Josh?

CHRISTINE

Cuz we are curious to see.

LEONA

See what?

SONIA

Whether the twain shall meet or not?

LEONA

Sonia? Et tu?

SONIA

We can take a break.

CHRISTINE

Yeah. A break. Let's take a break. Komagata Maru is not going anywhere.

SONIA

Not for two months at least.

CHRISTINE

So where are things with Josh?

Sound of shots being fired O.S.

CHRISTINE

Oh my God! What was that?

LEONA

Sounded like gun-shots

CHRISTINE

Gun-shots?

SONIA

Just shut up and stay where you are.

More gun-shots.

Blackout.

Sound of news opening credit music.

NEWSCASTER

(V.O.)

In yet another incident of gang related violence, an Abbotsford man was shot dead outside the busy Seven Oaks Mall. The victim, who has been identified as Gurinder Singh, a twenty five year old Indo-Canadian man from Abbotsford was known to the police. The police believe it to be a targeted attack and fear that retaliatory shootings might happen in future.

(END OF SCENE)

Lights on Sonia's house.

Harjit and Sonia are sitting. Harjit switches the T.V. off with the remote.

HARJIT:

Another one of our boys gone.

SONIA

Our boys?

HARJIT

Didn't you hear? Indo-Canadian boy killed in gang violence! I don't know what's wrong with our community. Someone should do something about it.

SONIA

About what?

HARJIT

About the involvement of Indo-Canadian boys in gang violence.

SONIA

Why only Indo-Canadian boys dad? Why not the White boys? Or Black boys? Or First Nation boys?

HARJIT

What are you? A communist now?

SONIA

I am not a communist. I am just surprised at the emphasis you are giving on the fact that he was an (making quotation marks in the air) Indo-Canadian. Wouldn't it have bothered you if he was of some other skin color?

HARJIT

It would have.

SONIA

But not as much?

HARJIT

Obviously it affects more when it's one of our own. After all we are Indo-Canadians.

SONIA

I am not.

HARJIT

What?

SONIA

I am not Indo-Canadian.

HARJIT

Really? Then who are you?

SONIA

I am a Canadian. Period.

HARJIT

What are you talking about? Are you denying your identity?

SONIA

On the contrary dad, I am asserting my identity. I am a Canadian whose grand-parents came from India. That's it. But I am Canadian.

HARJIT

With this brown skin of yours? You are living in a fool's paradise.

SONIA

Yes, with this brown skin, I am Canadian. No hyphen in my identity, dad.

HARJIT

Go out there and see if anyone buys that. And what is the expression you use...yes... FYI your great-grand father was the first in our family to come

to Canada, not your grandparents.

SONIA

But you never told me that.

HARJIT

I didn't know this either. It was Gurbaksh uncle, you know your grandfather's friend? He told this to me today at the Gurdwara. I was talking to him about Komagata Maru and he said that your great-grand father was here in Abbotsford when Komagata Maru came to Canada.

SONIA

How exciting? Did he say something more about him? OMG! Who knows, he might have been a part of the Shore Committee that was formed by the Indians to help the passengers. Dad, do you have his picture. If I could add a personal angle to this story, I'll surely get an "A". Do you have his picture?

HARJIT

I don't have anything except his name.

SONIA

But there must be some record.

HARJIT

Maybe in the historical Gurdwara on South Fraser way. You should check it out.

SONIA

I sure will dad. Oh! this is so exciting. Wait till I tell Leona and Christine about it.

(END OF SCENE)

Lights on cookhouse

Ali is sitting on a bench writing something

Enter Bakshu

BAKSHU

Thank god everyone is away. I tell you there is no privacy here.

ALI

That's because there are no women here. What do you need privacy for?
Are you turning into a Gora?

BAKSHU

I need to talk to you privately.

ALI

Privately? Are you turning into a revolutionary?

BAKSHU

Oh Nahi yaar! I want you to write a letter for me.

ALI

To whom?

BAKSHU

To my wife?

ALI

To your wife? Why?

BAKSHU

Why does one write a letter to one's wife?

ALI

I mean...why do you want me to write it? You know how to write.

BAKSHU

But I want you to write it in English.

ALI

In English?

BAKSHU

Yes.

ALI

Can your wife read English?

BAKSHU

No.

ALI

Then what's the fun of writing a letter that she can't read.

BAKSHU

She can't read Urdu or Punjabi either. She never went to school.

ALI

But at least someone from the village can read it to her.

BAKSHU

That's what I don't want. I don't want anyone to read what I write to her.

ALI

She won't know either.

BAKSHU

But she'll understand.

ALI

Understand what?

BAKSHU

She'll understand that I'm doing well. She'll understand that I love her and she'll understand that I won't let anyone, or anything, even the seven seas come between her and me.

ALI

But I'll know what you have written.

BAKSHU

You are different. She doesn't know you. The image that she'll see when she gets the letter will be mine and I don't want any stupid letter reader to interfere and distort that image.

ALI

I see. OK. I'll write it.

BAKSHU

One more thing.

ALI

What?

BAKSHU

I want you to write it in verse.

ALI

In verse?

BAKSHU

Yeah, like a poem.

ALI

I'm not a poet. I'm just a letter writer

BAKSHU

So what?

ALI

So, I can't write poetry, especially in English.

BAKSHU

It's just like Urdu poetry.

ALI

How do you know?

BAKSHU

Poetry is about emotions, right?

ALI

Right.

BAKSHU

Are the English emotions different from the Indian ones? Does a white man love his wife any less or any more than I love my Zubaida?

ALI

OK..what do you want to say to her.

BAKSHU

Tell her..tell her

Enter Ram Singh.

RAM

Where is everybody? Where is Harnam? (calls out) Oye, Harnam, Oye Santa Singh.

BAKSHU

What's the matter Ram Singh ji. Is everything all right?

RAM

Everything is all right. I have got terrific news. I want to share it with everyone.

ALI

Why don't you share it with us first?

RAM

No. I want to tell it to everyone. (Enter Harnam, Ganda and Santa)
There they are.

HARNAM

What's the matter Ram Singh ji?

RAM

Mewa Singh has sent a message from Vancouver. The Komagata Maru is about to enter the Canadian waters. Harnam Singh, your sister will be here with us in less than a week. And so will Santa Singh's brother, Ali's cousin and Meet Singh, your brother-in-law and uncle. They'll all be here in less

than a week.

SANTA

This calls for a celebration. What do you say Ganda Singh?

GANDA

It sure does. I'll get the bottle. What do you say Bakshu?

BAKSHU

(Brings the dhol)

I say Balle balle balle

All of them do Bhangra.

The light slowly fades. A spot downstage on Harnam.

HARNAM

One more week. Actually less than a week and my sister will be here with me.

Enter Simran Downstage on the other end of the stage.

SIMRAN

One more week and I will there.

It's been so many days,

So many weeks since we set sail

From that land to that

That land beyond the waves

The land they say is the land

Of milk and honey

Of gold and rubies

And joys aplenty
There lives my brother.

HARNAM

I will meet my nephew. Oh he's so cute and so naughty. I should remember to buy some candy.

SIMRAN

There lives my brother
Who took care of me
When my husband died
Fighting for the British
A war he didn't know much about
But he fought, for he was promised
A life of honour and dignity
Wherever he went, in this land or that
And he went to that land
That land beyond the waves
Never to return; leaving me
A widow with a child
In an unkind world

HARNAM

My nephew Tej, he's sure to ask me for some candy when he comes. I should also buy some new clothes for him, good warm clothes. Don't want him to catch cold or fever here. I should get some clothes for my sister too.

SIMRAN

And then my brother
Went to that land
And I have been waiting
To join him there

And now the time has come
When we will be together
I will find a bride for him
He'll look so handsome as a groom
And we'll sing the songs
Of joy, and tell jokes
And talk about that land
That land we left behind.
The bow and the stern
fight the waves day and night,
And they come back with vengeance
Crashing and splashing
Fighting a battle they lose
Yet they stop not the effort
Striving hard to keep me away
From you, you who wait for me
In that land beyond the waves.

HARNAM

And I should buy some nuts. Lots of nuts. Almonds, Walnuts and Pistachio. They keep one warm. But first I should go to the Gurdwara to thank Waheguru for his Mehar. Yes. That's the first thing I should do. I should go to the Gurdwara.

Sound of Waves splashing

(END OF ACT I)

ACT II

The set remains the same except that instead of the cookhouse R there is now visible the façade of the historic Sikh temple at Abbotsford. Lights Downstage and L. The whole of Downstage is a beach from where people can see the Komagata Maru marooned in the sea (The effect sought is that when they look towards the ship, they are looking towards the audience). FRANCES, MARTHA, PETER, LAURIE, TED and DAVE are sitting around the coffee table that now serves as a beach picnic table with an umbrella stuck in the middle of it.

LAURIE

Hasn't this been a gorgeous spell of weather this summer?

MARTHA

Absolutely. Almost seven weeks now without a drop of rain. I don't remember when was the last time I saw a cloud in the sky. It's been Sun, Sun, glorious Sun.

PETER

And still it took you ladies more than a month to plan this picnic.

FRANCES

You know how hard it is nowadays to plan an excursion with everyone having different schedules.

DAVE

Maybe someday they will invent machines to help people manage their

schedules and arrange for meetings. That'll make things easier.

LAURIE

Well, machines or no machines. We are here at the beach on this glorious day. And the ship is still there although I must say I am bit disappointed. It's not as big as I thought.

MARTHA

Me too. I mean, for a thousand people, I was hoping to see a bigger vessel.

TED

Oh you're mistaken. There aren't a thousand Hindus out there. They are about three hundred and seventy something passengers and twenty odd Japanese crew members.

MARTHA

Well, that's a drag. A thousand would've been more fun to watch. Dave, did you bring the binoculars?

DAVE

Of course I did. Here (hands Martha the binoculars).

MARTHA

(looks through the binoculars)

Boy O Boy! Just look at them. Turbans and beards, turbans and beards.... lining the deck. Here Dave, have a look

DAVE:

(takes the binoculars)

A thousand or three hundred, those are a lot of Hindus. I wouldn't want them here in Canada.

PETER

Lemme see.(takes the binoculars). That is a big lot. I say they should let the healthy ones in. I can use a few more at my mill.

TED

You should set up a mill in India. There you'll find plenty of them...two dozen to a dime.

PETER

That's not a bad idea. A mill in India, another one in China, that'll be good for cheap labour.

MARTHA

And keep Canada pure for the white people.

PETER

I am sure Frances will like that too. I hear out there it's sunny most of the time and it rarely rains.

FRANCES

Oh please! Nobody is going to India or China or wherever. May I have those binoculars for a moment please?(As Frances looks through the binoculars, a group of men with guns in their hands march past the stage singing "White Canada Forever" A couple of youth enter and start playing catch UC) Peter, Martha, Did you see what I am seeing?

TED

What? One of their 33 million gods?

MARTHA

My god! They have more gods than people and I certainly don't want their gods or their people here. (Hums White Canada Forever)

FRANCES

No. I see a child and a woman, probably his mother. I think she might be....

PETER

She might be who?

FRANCES

Oh! Nothing. How would I know?

MARTHA

Are you all right dear?

FRANCES

I am all right. I think I should go for a walk.

PETER

I'll come with you.

FRANCES

You don't have to Peter. I'll just take a stroll and be back. Why don't you start playing poker? I believe it works better with five players.

Exit Frances R. Enter a RICHARD L

RICHARD

(Approaching the picnic party)

Good afternoon folks! Hope you are enjoying a wonderful day at the beach? My name is Richard and I am reporter with the Independent. Would you folks mind if I asked you a few questions?

MARTHA

About what?

RICHARD

I am doing a story on the public response to the coming of Hindus on board that ship Komagata Maru. Sort of trying to gauge the public mood and sentiment. Do you support the government decision to deny entry to the passengers of the ship?

MARTHA

I fully support this. We already have more than our share of Hindus here in Canada. I think the government is absolutely right in denying them entry.

RICHARD

(to Peter)

And what about you, sir? Do you share the lady's views?

PETER

Not completely. I have some Hindus working in my mill and they are very good workers and God knows we need a lot more labour force in this country than we currently have. And as I look at that ship, I see good working hands that can be used to build this country. I say they should let the healthy ones in and send the others back.

RICHARD

There are reports that there are a few women on board too. Do you think that the Hindus be allowed to bring their families here?

MARTHA

Absolutely not. What do you say Dave?

DAVE

I think there is no reason that they be allowed to bring their families here. We don't want them settling here permanently, do we?

TED

But you don't want them to sleep around with white women either, do you?

LAURIE

Oh Ted. Stop being horrible.

TED

But that's bound to happen one day or the other if we don't allow them to bring in their women. I think I read somewhere about this white woman who married a Hindu (to Reporter) you might know something about it sir.

RICHARD

You are correct sir. Unfortunately I reported that story. There is this guy call Gayan Singh who somehow managed to make Annie Wright agree to marry him. She later converted to his faith, even got a Hindu name, some Labb Kaur or something, dreadful story.

MARTHA

He might have used some black magic to hypnotise her. Otherwise what Canadian woman in her right frame of mind would do such a thing? That's why I say, stop this infection before it spreads any further.

RICHARD

Thank you madam, thanks to all of you folks. You have been very helpful. Don't forget to read the Independent tomorrow.

Exit Richard

TED

What about the game of Poker? Are we playing or not?

LAURIE

How about some food first?

DAVE

Sounds good.

TED

Shouldn't we wait for Frances.

PETER

She won't mind. There is plenty of food. And I am hungry.

DAVE

So am I.

Laurie and Martha start laying the table. Lights dim on the table.

Two Aboriginal men, carrying Salmon enter R. They look towards the ship.

ABORIGINAL MAN 1

What's the deal with that ship? It's been there for almost two months now.

ABORIGINAL MAN 2

It's a Japanese ship. The government is not allowing it to enter Canada.

ABORIGINAL MAN 1

Why?

ABORIGINAL MAN 2

Because it is carrying Indians.

ABORIGINAL MAN 1

Indians? You mean our people?

ABORIGINAL MAN 2

No. The other Indians. The real Indians, from India.

ABORIGINAL MAN 1

Oh..OK.. the people who wear turbans. Right? And look like us?

ABORIGINAL MAN 2

Yes.

ABORIGINAL MAN 1

But why doesn't the government let them in to Canada?

ABORIGINAL MAN 2

They say they only want white people to come to Canada.

ABORIGINAL MAN 1

So they have stopped the ship?

ABORIGINAL MAN 2:

Yes, that's why they have stopped the ship.

ABORIGINAL MAN 1

I wish we had done the same.

ABORIGINAL MAN 2

Too late for that now. Let's go home before this fish goes bad.

(Exit Aboriginal men)

Enter Harnam UL. He crosses the youth who were earlier playing catch, but are now sitting on the beach, playing some board game. Harnam reaches DC. Dim lights on the picnic table and the youth playing the board game.

HARNAM

(looking towards the ship)

It's been forty days. My sister and nephew are there, right there, in front of me. But I can't meet them, I can't play with my nephew, I can't hug my sister, although they are right there, there, in front of me. O Waheguru! What kind of a trial is this? I am so close to them and yet so far. I can't even send the candy and nuts that I bought for them. I wonder if they are getting enough food, or water. It hasn't rained in a month. Why hasn't it rained? It's always raining here, but now when they need water, no rain, nothing. It's my flesh and blood out there on the ship and I can't do nothing, nothing, nothing. If I could, I would swim to the ship and meet my sister, but that tug boat, Sea-Lion will stop me. Maybe I can do this at night, when they can't see me. I think that's a good idea. I'll try to swim to Komagata Maru at night.

Enter Simran under a spotlight

SIMRAN

If only I could swim across the ocean to meet Harnam. He must be so worried. It doesn't seem very far. I can certainly swim the distance. It's been forty days since we came here. Forty long days and forty dark nights (looks at a medal in her hand), this medal they gave him, my husband; they said he fought well, he saved the life of his British Sergeant. They will certainly honour this medal. I should continue to pray and not lose hope.

HARNAM

Maybe I should get a boat, a small boat, so small that it could not be detected during night. That seems like a better idea. That way the provisions I want to take to them will remain dry. It's time for action, otherwise there is no hope.

SIMRAN

(talking to someone off stage)

What did you say? They have agreed to allow those passengers to land who have been to Canada earlier. Ah! Finally some good news! They are leaving tomorrow ! Waheguru! At last a ray of hope.

Exit Simran

Enter Frances

FRANCES

Harnam? Is that you? What a pleasant surprise!

HARNAM

Hello Madam Frances. How are you?

FRANCES

I'm very well. Thank you. What brings you to Vancouver?

HARNAM

I came to have a look at Komagata Maru.

FRANCES

Oh yes! You told me. Your sister on board. Right?

HARNAM

Yes madam. And I am very worried about her, and especially my young nephew. I have heard that there is severe food and water shortage on the ship and the government is not allowing anybody to go near it.

FRANCES

I am so sorry to hear that. But I have some good news for you. I read in the papers today that the courts have accepted the petition of one of the passengers on board Komagata Maru and they are going to use this as a test case. If the court allows him to stay in Canada then other passengers will also be admitted.

HARNAM

That is really a good news madam. I haven't read the paper today but I am sure people at the Gurdwara will be very happy.

FRANCES

I am sure they will be. So keep faith in God and hope for the best.

HARNAM

That's all we can do. Have faith in God and hope for the best. There is nothing else to be done.

FRANCES

Maybe there is. My brother Henry, he works for the government. I'll talk to him. Maybe he'll be able to help your sister.

HARNAM

Oh Thank you Madam Frances. You are very kind.

FRANCES

I don't promise anything. But as you said, let's hope for the best.

HARNAM

You are right madam.

FRANCES

Well, I should go now. Peter must be wondering where'd I wandered off ?
You take care of yourself.

HARNAM

You too madam. Bye.

*(Frances goes towards the picnic table. The light
fades on Harnam who exits UL)*

MARTHA

(seeing Frances)

Here comes our solitary reaper.

PETER

Where have you been?

FRANCES

Just went for a walk along the beach.

LAURIE

While you were walking, Peter was losing in Poker. He is poorer by a few bucks since you left him

FRANCES

I won't worry a lot about that. He'll make a lot of money when he starts that mill in India. Right dear?

(END OF SCENE)

The Lights go up. We see the façade of the Sikh Temple in Abbotsford.

Sonia, Christine and Leona come out of the temple.

CHRISTINE

Well..that was a bummer.

LEONA

Yeah, I can't believe you can't read Punjabi Sonia?

CHRISTINE

Exactly, why can't you read Punjabi?

SONIA

I don't know (to Leona), I guess the same way you can't read Polish or (to Christine) or you can't read Spanish or German or wherever your folks came from. I mean who needs Punjabi, right?

LEONA

We need it now. There is like a ton of information in those documents in there, but all in Punjabi, and the guy at the Temple is no good with English.

CHRISTINE

We need a (thinking hard) you know, what's the word?

SONIA

A what?

CHRISTINE

You know a guy who can read Punjabi and.....

LEONA

Translate for us in English.

SONIA

You mean a translator?

CHRISTINE

Yes Exactly. A translator is what we need.

SONIA

But where are we gonna get a translator?

LEONA

How about Inder?

SONIA

He can barely speak Punjabi. He can't read.

CHRISTINE

There must be somebody.

SONIA

There must be plenty of people who can do this. But who's got the time?
Everybody is so busy.

LEONA

I am gonna learn Punjabi.

SONIA

Our presentation is due next week. I don't think you can learn enough by
then to translate the documents.

LEONA

Not for the presentation. I am gonna learn just for the sake of knowing the language.

CHRISTINE

Me too. Then I can watch Bollywood movies without having to read the sub-titles.

SONIA

Bollywood movies are in Hindi.

CHRISTINE

OK..then I'll learn that. Any Idea when is the next Shahrukh Khan movie coming out?

LEONA

OK..guys, no Hollywood, no Bollywood. We have a situation to deal with. I mean look at those documents, there is an important part of Canadian history there waiting to be discovered. You gotta do something Sonia. Find someone who can help us out.

SONIA

I think I know someone who can.

LEONA

Who?

SONIA

There is this relative of mine. I'll ask.

CHRISTINE

Don't just ask. Plead.

LEONA

Plead? Wow. You got the right word first time. Nice improvement

CHRISTINE

Oh Shut up.

SONIA

Hey guys I'm starving. Where do you wanna eat?

LEONA

Wherever you say.

CHRISTINE

Guys we are standing in front of a Sikh temple, let's go have Langar.

SONIA

Langar? Christine, I'm impressed.

LEONA

Sounds good. Let's go.

CHRISTINE

I hope they have that awesome Langar Daal.

LEONA

And the Chickpeas. Chana masala.

SONIA

OK, we are going to the Temple now. Can we think of God for a moment?

CHRISTINE

Yeah sure. God. Please find us a translator.

They go back inside.

Enter Ram Singh, Ali, Bakshu and JAGROOP.

Bakshu is carrying a dhol (drum) and Jagroop has a garland of flowers around his neck.

Bakshu beats the dhol; Harnam, Ganda Singh, and Santa Singh come out from the Sikh Temple. They seem quite happy.

RAM SINGH:

(Signals Bakshu to stop playing the dhol)

Brothers, I on behalf of all of Indians in Abbotsford, welcome Jagroop Singh back to Canada. Jagroop is one of the twenty two passengers of Komagata Maru who have been permitted to land since they have been to Canada on earlier occasion. This is a small but important victory for us and with the grace of God almighty, we will soon be able to meet all our brothers and sisters who are stranded on Komagata Maru.

ALI

Ram Singh is right. We are trying to communicate with Ottawa and are hopeful that we will get a good response from there. Mr. Edward Bird is also hopeful that court will ultimately decide in our favour.

SANTA SINGH

This calls for celebration. Bakshu, let's prepare a special feast for Jagroop. What do you say?

BAKSHU

Excellent idea. But we can't have a real feast here at the Temple, (to Santa) you know what I mean. Why don't we have one at the cook house? Give me a couple of hours, and everything will be arranged.

GANDA SINGH

Good idea. Oye Santeya, Let's go and help Bakshu make the arrangements. Jagroop can freshen up in the meantime.

SANTA

You are right (makes a gesture referring to alcohol), we need to make the arrangements. (to the rest of the party) You meet us at the cook house in a couple of hours.

Exit Santa, and Bakshu

RAM SINGH

Ali, Ganda, I want to discuss something important with you. Let's go to the office. Harnam, you take Jagroop to my house. I have made all arrangements for him. And we'll meet all of you at the cook house at six.

Exit Ram, Ali, and Ganda

HARNAM

Let's go Jagroop.

JAGROOP

Wait a minute. You are Harnam Singh from the village Sarhali near Amritsar, right?

HARNAM

Yes. Did Ram Singh mention this?

JAGROOP

Harsimran told me about you. Your sister.

HARNAM

My sister. Harsimran. She told you. You met her. Of course, you met her.

How's she? And how's my nephew Tej.

Jagroop remains silent

HARNAM

Why don't you say something? Is everything alright? Please say something.

JAGROOP

They are alright. Like everybody else on the ship. Hungry, starved, thirsty, but alive. Conditions are not good. You know one day (checks himself).

HARNAM

What? What happened? Why did you stop? Please tell me.

JAGROOP

One day, your nephew Tej, he became unconscious.

Enter Simran under a spotlight

SIMRAN

(overlapping Jagroop's lines)

One day, your nephew Tej, he became unconscious.

HARNAM

Unconscious?

SIMRAN

He was thirsty, very thirsty, but there was no water. And he fell down. I called for help and they all rushed where Tej lay, muttering something. Brother Jagroop couldn't see his condition and went to the captain of the ship and asked him to give me some water but he refused.

HARNAM

How could he?

SIMRAN

It's a jungle out here. The Japanese crew don't care about us. They are allowed to go to the city to buy food but there is nothing for us.

HARNAM

Then what happened?

SIMRAN

Jagroop pa ji couldn't tolerate it anymore so he pushed the captain aside and raided his cabinet. Unfortunately, there was no water there either.

HARNAM

Waheguru.

SIMRAN

But he had beer. Jagroop took a bottle of beer and put some beer in Tej's mouth. After some time Tej regained consciousness.

HARNAM

Was Tej alright after that?

SIMRAN

Oh he was uncontrollable. He made me run all over the deck trying to catch him. He's become very smart you know too. Talks about you a lot.

Exit Simran

JAGROOP

(overlapping Simran's lines)

Talks about you a lot. We became good friends. He told me that you used to play what is name of the game...

HARNAM

Lukan—meeti. Hide and seek?

JAGROOP

Yes, Lukan—meeti with him. I played that game with him a couple of times. I tell you what, that kid has become the darling of everybody on board. His innocent smile and kid-talk is like a ray of sunshine in those dark and gloomy waters. And your sister, she is so full of hope. She is always cheering everybody up, and praying to god for this ordeal to be over.

HARNAM

It's so good to hear that they are well. I was so worried. Let's go. You must be very tired.

JAGROOP

Harnam. I have a gift for you.

HARNAM

A gift?

JAGROOP

Not really a gift. Something much more important than a gift. It's from your sister.

HARNAM

From my sister? What is it?

JAGROOP

(Takes out a small packet from his bag)

Here. Your sister sent it for you.

HARNAM

(opens the packet)

It's a Rakhri. She sent me a Rakhri.

JAGROOP

She said.

Enter Simran under a spotlight

SIMRAN

(overlapping Jagroop's lines)

Harnam, I'd love to tie the Rakhri on your wrist myself, and I will if I am allowed to enter Canada. In case I can't be with you on the auspicious day of Rakhri, then you should tie it on your wrist and remember that I'll always love you and always pray for your well-being and happiness. May Satguru always keep you under his protection.

Exit Simran

HARNAM

Oh she will be here. It's still two months before Rakhri, and I'll make sure that Harsimran is here before that. She will tie this Rakhri herself on my wrist.

JAGROOP

We all hope she does. Let's go.

Exits Jagroop

Harnam looks at the Rakhri for some time and

follows Jagroop.

(END OF SCENE)

The Light go up on Sonia'and Harjit's house. Harjit is reading the newspaper and having tea.

Enter Sonia carrying a backpack full of books.

SONIA

Good Evening Dad.

HARJIT

Good Evening. Seems like a heavy day at school.

SONIA

End of semester Dad. Everyone is stressed out. Even the teachers are no exception.

HARJIT

How's your presentation coming?

SONIA

It's developing, (looks at the newspaper). What are you reading? Matrimonials?

HARJIT:

Don't worry, I am not reading them for you.

SONIA

Then for whom? Inder?

HARJIT

No. Nobody in particular. Just browsing what's available in the market. And in any case most of these are for *those* kind of marriages.

SONIA

Oh! *Those* kind of marriages.

HARJIT

Whatever.

SONIA

(After a beat)

Dad, I wanna learn Punjabi.

HARJIT

Excuse me.

SONIA

I said I wanna learn Punjabi.

HARJIT

But you know Punjabi.

SONIA

I can communicate a li'l bit. But I want to be able to read it and write it.

HARJIT

What's going on here? Ever since you were in elementary school, I have trying to teach you to read and write Punjabi but you never took any interest. And now, all of a sudden you want to learn Punjabi? Is this about a boy?

SONIA

No Dad. It's about the presentation.

HARJIT

You are making this presentation in Punjabi?

SONIA

No Dad. I went to the Gurdwara today to look at some of the archives. And most of them are in Punjabi and none of us could read it. We asked the priest to help us, but he doesn't know a lot of English.

HARJIT

So you plan to read it yourself. Isn't your presentation due in a couple of weeks?

SONIA

Yes. It is

HARJIT

And you plan to learn to read and then decipher those texts within a couple of weeks.

SONIA

I know it's tough.

HARJIT

It's impossible.

SONIA

But we need that information. It's vital to our presentation.

HARJIT

Why don't ask someone who knows Punjabi to help you.

SONIA

Do you think I should?

HARJIT

Why not?

SONIA

Do you know somebody who can do this for us?

HARJIT

Hmmm, Satnam can do this.

SONIA

But Satnam uncle is in India right now.

HARJIT

Oh yeah, Satnam is in India. Well, I can't think of anyone right now. But I'm sure you'll find somebody.

SONIA

I know someone who could do this.

HARJIT

Who?

SONIA

You.

HARJIT

Me?

SONIA

Yes. You know Punjabi. You could translate the documents for us.

HARJIT

Oh no! Not me.

SONIA

Why not? You are my father. You should help me with my studies.

HARJIT

How am I gonna find time for that?

SONIA

Please Dad. This will ensure an A grade.

HARJIT

An A grade? Are you sure?

SONIA

Positive Dad. And if I could find anything related to my great grandfather, it might be an A+.

HARJIT

An A+?

SONIA

Yes Dad.

HARJIT

But you will learn Punjabi nevertheless.

SONIA

Leona and Christine also want to learn.

HARJIT

Really? Alright then. When do you want me to start?

SONIA

Asap.

HARJIT

No texting language in this house please.

(END OF SCENE)

The Lights go up on the pantry/storage room of Frances' house.

Enter Frances and Harnam. Harnam is carrying a sack of firewood.

FRANCES

You can place it at its usual spot Harnam. Thanks. And here (pays him the money).

HARNAM

Thank you Madam Frances (moves to exit but hesitates).

FRANCES

Is something the matter Harnam?

HARNAM

I was thinking...

FRANCES

Go on.

HARNAM

You know my sister. She is still on the Komagata Maru.

FRANCES

Is she? Have you heard something from her?

HARNAM

Some passengers who had been to Canada earlier were allowed to land and one of them came here to Abbotsford. He told me some horrible things.

FRANCES

Oh No! Is your sister alright?

HARNAM

She is fine. But one day my nephew fainted due to thirst and hunger. The food and water situation on the ship is very bad. (A beat) Did you get a chance to talk to your brother? You said he might be able to help.

FRANCES

I haven't had a chance to do so. Henry was in Ottawa. He just came to Vancouver a couple of days ago. I'll talk to him about this. I'm sure he'll do something.

HARNAM

I hope so. Although, there is another ray of hope.

PETER

(O.S.)

Frances, is the tea ready?

FRANCES

Just coming dear.

HARNAM

You know the passenger you told me about, Munshi Singh, the courts are going to hear his petition tomorrow

PETER

(O.S.)

Frances.

FRANCES

Coming dear.

HARNAM

And our lawyer, Mr. Bird, he says that he will surely win the case.

FRANCES

I am sure he will. Now I think I should go. Peter is getting anxious.

HARNAM

I am sorry. I did not want to interfere.

FRANCES

That's all right. You take care.

HARNAM

Bye Madam.

Exit Harnam

Frances comes to the Dining Table. Enter Peter.

PETER

What took you so long?

FRANCES

It was the firewood man.

PETER

You do seem to have a fondness for that Hindu.

FRANCES

Poor man. He is so worried about his sister. She is aboard that ship Komagata Maru. He was saying something about the case being in court. I told him I'd talk to Henry. He should be able to help her.

PETER:

(reading the newspaper)

I don't see any possibility of that happening.

FRANCES

What do you mean?

PETER

Here...Mr. Stevens, the Member of Parliament has given a rather interesting statement. Listen to this. "What we face in British Columbia and Canada is this—whether or not the civilization which finds its highest exemplification in the Anglo-Saxon British rule shall or shall not prevail in the Dominion of Canada. We have on the bench of British Columbia today, men who are willing to give a decision contrary to the general public opinion and contrary to what is the clear meaning of the Immigration Act. Some people say why don't you go to courts with your case? We are prepared to go to courts if we can get a fair court to go to."

FRANCES

What does that mean?

PETER

To me it seems that the government doesn't even trust the courts on this matter. I don't see any hope for these people now.

FRANCES

I don't see any reason to talk to Henry after this.

PETER

Oh yeah. No good can come out of it.

FRANCES

You are right.

(END OF SCENE)

The Lights go up on Sikh Temple.

Enter Ram Singh and Ali

RAM SINGH

(Reading the Newspaper)

The judges of the court of appeal have unanimously decided that Munshi Singh could not be admitted to Canada, for a variety of reasons. The continuous journey regulation has been violated and he will be an unskilled labourer in Canada. (Pause) So there goes our last hope Ali.

ALI

(takes the newspaper)

I don't believe it. Look at what one of the judges has said. "Better that peoples of non-assimilative—and by nature properly non-assimilative—race should not come to Canada, but rather they should remain of residence in their country of origin and there do their share, as they have in the past in the preservation and development of the Empire." Non assimilative... what on earth does he mean by that?

RAM SINGH

That the white people are more suited to this climate than we brown people are.

(END OF SCENE)

*The Light go up on Frances' house
Frances is pouring tea for Peter.
She sneezes.*

PETER

God bless you.

FRANCES

Thanks (sneezes again).

PETER

Allergies again? What is it this time?

FRANCES

You name it. I got it? I don't think I'll ever assimilate in this climate. Rain, Rain, Rain and if it's not raining water then it's raining pollen.

PETER

What did Dr. Mackenzie say?

FRANCES

What will he say? He hasn't figured out his wife's allergies so far.

PETER

(reading the newspaper)

Bad news for your Hindu friend.

FRANCES

What happened?

PETER

The government tried to use force to make the ship leave Canadian waters. They sent a tug boat called Sea Lion with one hundred and fifty policemen but the passengers attacked the Sea Lion using coal as missiles. Many policemen were injured.

FRANCES

That's awful.

PETER

That's nothing. Tomorrow they are going to employ HCMS Rainbow. And trust me you can't face the Rainbow with coal. The Komagata Maru story is over. Tomorrow the ship will be forced out of Canadian waters.

FRANCES

(sneezes)

Poor Harnam. He'll be heart-broken. (She takes out the packet of herbs that Harnam had given her and puts them in the Kettle)

PETER

I have a feeling, it's going to be ugly. (A beat) What's that smell?

FRANCES

It's from those herbs that Harnam gave me. I think I am going to try them.

PETER

Are you serious? I thought you said you threw them away.

FRANCES

Well I didn't and I am willing to try anything to make these allergies go away. Otherwise we are moving back to England.

(END OF SCENE)

The Lights go up the Sikh Temple. Sonia, Leona, Christine and Harjit are standing in front of the temple.

HARJIT

I still can't believe you tricked me into doing this.

SONIA

Dad you are the best.

HARJIT

Enough with the buttering. I am doing this, OK. And actually to be honest, I am sort of excited about this. Who knows I might find the record of my grandfather in there. By the way, is there some specific aspect that you girls want me to focus on?

SONIA

Dad, we have explored so many aspects that it is quite difficult to pinpoint on a specific one.

LEONA

So far, we have learned a lot about the time Komagata Maru spent in Canadian waters and the condition under which it was forced to go back.

CHRISTINE

And also how the British government massacred the passengers when the ship went back to India.

SONIA

For me the most exciting part has been the way the local community organized itself to help the people on board the ship.

LEONA

But what did they do after the ship went back?

SONIA

What do you mean?

LEONA

Komagata Maru organized the Indo-Canadian community in a way that had never happened before.

HARJIT

I think you are right.

LEONA

So what happened here, after the ship left for India? Was there any retaliation? What happened to the key players like Hopkinson, M.P. Stevens and Malcolm Reid?

CHRISTINE

Why didn't I think of that? After all there must have been relatives of those who suffered and died on Komagata Maru. Do you think someone would have hit back?

SONIA

You mean revenge?

CHRISTINE

Yes. Revenge. Did someone seek revenge for those atrocities?

HARJIT

Good point Christine. I have a vague recollection of reading somewhere that there was some violence in Vancouver after the return of Komagata Maru. I am sure I will get some information about those events from the document in the Gurdwara.

SONIA

Revenge! That sounds exciting.

LEONA

Talking about excitement, check out Sonia's FB page?

SONIA

Leona, not in front of Dad.

HARJIT

I think I should go inside now. Got a lot of reading to do (Goes inside the temple).

CHRISTINE

Thanks a lot for doing this Mr. Singh.

CHRISTINE

OK, what if we find something really exciting about this revenge angle?

LEONA

What do you mean?

CHRISTINE

I mean that we have studied so many aspects of this event, and all of them are equally important, and now if we find that the revenge aspect is also very exciting, then what aspect are we gonna focus on for our presentation?

SONIA

She is right. Prof. Simth has set a time limit of fifteen minutes. If we go beyond that, we risk getting a "B".

CHRISTINE

Oh please. Not with the "A" grade again.

SONIA

Don't underestimate the power of the "A". That's what helped me rope in my Dad.

CHRISTINE

Oh! So the problem is a genetic one.

SONIA

Shut up Christine.

(END OF SCENE)

The Lights go up on Frances' house. Peter is reading

a book. Frances is knitting.

PETER

This book here says that allergies are genetic in their origin. They don't have a lot to do the climate.

FRANCES

Are you saying that I underwent a genetic transformation when I came to Canada? My genes are the same Peter. The climate has changed and I thought my body was not suited for this climate until....

PETER

Until what?

FRANCES

Until I tried the herbs that Harnam gave me.

PETER

You mean to say that that Hindu's herbs worked.

FRANCES

Have you heard me sneeze today?

PETER

I don't think so.

FRANCES

And yesterday?

PETER

I don't remember.

FRANCES

I haven't had a bout of sneezing for almost a week now. And this has never happened before. His herbs are magical.

PETER

That is amazing.

FRANCES

My sinuses are clear. Everything smells so fresh.

PETER

You know what I smell?

FRANCES

What?

PETER

I smell a business opportunity. Why don't I import these herbs from India and sell them here. I could make a killing. Do you think your Hindu friend will give me the formula?

FRANCES

Did you say Hindu friend?

PETER

We are all God's children, aren't we?

FRANCES

If you had not objected to me trying it out earlier, you might have gone to India on Komagata Maru. Too bad the ship's already left.

HARNAM

(O.S.)

Firewood man.

PETER

Here he is. Let me open the door (exits to open the door).

FRANCES

Peter?

Enter Peter with Harnam

PETER

You can come this way. The other door is again giving me some trouble. You know what? I'll take this from you and take it inside (takes the sack of wood from Harnam).

HARNAM

But Sir. This is my duty.

PETER

It's alright? I can use some exercise. You sit down. I am sure Frances would like to have a chat with you.

Exit Peter.

FRANCES

Your herbs worked wonders. I have been feeling so much better over the last few days.

HARNAM

I am happy that I was able to help.

FRANCES

I wish I could say the same. I am sorry I couldn't do much to help your sister.

HARNAM

You should not say that madam. It's not your fault.

FRANCES

But I do feel bad about what has happened. I hope you believe me.

HARNAM

I believe you madam. I know who is to blame for this. And I wish I could do something about it.

FRANCES

Now Harnam, you shouldn't let the emotions get the better of you. You should relax. This is not the end of the world. You will meet your sister someday, when you go visit India. Or who knows the government might change the laws in future.

HARNAM

I am sure I will meet her someday. But today I miss her so much. Madam Frances, Can I ask you a favour?

FRANCES

What is it Harnam?

HARNAM

(Takes out the Rakhri from his pocket)

Would you tie this on my wrist?

FRANCES

What is this?

HARNAM

This is Rakhri. Every year on the full moon night in August, sisters all over India tie this band over the wrist of their brothers. This is a symbol of a sister's love for her brother and a brother's pledge to protect her at all costs, never to make her unhappy.

FRANCES

That is so sweet.

HARNAM

My sister sent this Rakhri to me. Maybe in her heart she always knew that the government won't let her meet me. But she sent this, so that I can tie this and feel her love for me. Today is the full moon night. Would you be my sister madam Frances and tie this on my wrist?

FRANCES

(Hesitates)

Oh Harnam....I don't know..

HARNAM

If you don't want to do this, it's OK (moves towards the door).

FRANCES

Harnam wait (goes near him and takes the Rakhri) Will it be the right wrist or the left one?

HARNAM

Right one. (Frances is about to tie the Rakhri) Wait. (He picks up a piece of cloth from the table and covers Frances' head). Now tie it. (Frances ties the Rakhri. Harnam touches his eyes with his wrist and then kisses the Rakhri. Then he takes out some money from his pocket) This is for you.

FRANCES

I can't take money from you.

HARNAM

Please don't say no. This is the tradition. Brothers give their sisters gifts on this day. I didn't bring any gift but you should at least accept this from your Indian brother.

FRANCES

(takes the money)

Harnam, you are so sweet. I'll pray for your sister's safe return to India. I hope you meet her soon.

HARNAM

Thank you. I promise that I will never do anything to make you unhappy and if need be, I'll protect you with my life. (Frances is too overwhelmed with emotions to respond.) I should go now.

FRANCES

God be with you Harnam.

Exit Harnam.

(END OF SCENE)

The Lights go up on the Sikh Temple. Harjit comes out the temple. He is carrying a book in his hands. He stands facing the audience. The lights fade on Harjit whereas they go bright on the Temple giving Harjit's figure a silhouetted appearance. A bullet shot is heard, followed by another one and then there

is a volley of shots. Harjit covers his ears with his hands. The firing continues. Harjit falls on his knees and then goes into foetal position still covering his ears with his hands. The lights fade on the Temple. The shots can still be heard.
Lights go up on Harjit's house. Sonia, Christine and Leona are sitting at the dining table.
Harjit enters, he looks dazed.

SONIA

Hi Dad!

CHRISTINE AND LEONA

Hello Mr. Singh.

HARJIT

Hello.

SONIA

Dad, are you ok?

HARJIT

Can you get me a glass of water?

SONIA

Sure Dad. (Sonia goes to the Kitchen counter. Harjit sits in the chair vacated by Sonia. Sonia brings a glass and gives it to Harjit and stands behind him. Harjit gulps down the water in one go) Dad, are you ok?

HARJIT

I am alright.

LEONA

Sonia, I think we should go.

HARJIT

No Leona. Stay. I want to share with you what I found in those papers. It was horrible. The extent of violence that happened in the aftermath of the Komagata Maru incident was simply horrible. First, two informants of Hopkinson were killed. Then Bela Singh, the principal informant of Hopkinson opened fire indiscriminately inside the Gurdwara at Vancouver and killed Bhag Singh and Battan Singh and injured many others. Can you believe it? Sikhs murdered by fellow Sikhs inside the Sikh temple. It was horrible. And then when it seemed that the bloodshed will never stop, Bhai Mewa Singh decided that it was time for Hopkinson to go.

LEONA

And what about Reid and Stevens?

HARJIT

Malcolm Reid was transferred out of the Immigration Department and from Vancouver. He was in any case, a puppet in the hands of Member of Parliament H.H. Stevens, who lived up to the age of 95.

SONIA

Hopkinson was the face of the government.

CHRISTINE

And he was half Indian.

LEONA

Although he never accepted this. But he knew the Indian languages, could mix up with Indians and had his network of informants within the community so he would be an obvious target. Was Stevens never attacked

Mr. Singh?

HARJIT

No. Not even once.

SONIA

It's weird. Isn't it? In those violent days, the chief perpetrator of the crime goes scot free.

LEONA

He was a lucky bastard. Sorry Mr. Singh.

SONIA

Dad, did you find something about your grand-father?

HARJIT

Not much. His name was listed as one of the members of the Abbotsford Gurdwara committee, but that's about it. Nothing exciting that you can use for your presentation.

CHRISTINE

What was his name?

HARJIT

Harnam Singh. His name was Harnam Singh.

(END OF SCENE)

Lights go up on the Sikh Temple. Harnam comes out of the temple. He is holding a newspaper in his hand. He stands outside the façade. Lights dim. Enter Simran

SIMRAN

On September 26, 2014, Komagata Maru reached the coast of British India. The British authorities feared that the ship was carrying seditious material and elements. They searched the ship for three days and when they found nothing of consequence, they ordered the ship to go to the port of Budge Budge, about seventy miles from Calcutta from where we were ordered to board a train to Punjab. We were penniless by now, and tired and hungry and didn't want to go to Punjab. We wanted to stay in Calcutta and find some sort of employment there. We decided to walk to Calcutta in the form a procession carrying the holy Guru Granth Sahib to a Sikh temple in Calcutta. We gathered at Budge Budge Station for prayer and Ardas.

V.O.

Ek Omkar, satnaam karta purakh.....

Enter sergeant with three policemen

SERGEANT

None of you is going to Calcutta. Do you hear that? Now you get on that train right now, otherwise I might have to use force.

SIMRAN

Let us at least finish our prayers.

SERGEANT

To hell with your prayers. On the count of three, if you don't start boarding, you will be shot down. Take positions.

POLICEMAN 1

Sir, it will be a massacre. These people are like sitting ducks.

SERGEANT

Well, then go hunting. One, two.

SERGEANT

Fire.

*A volley of bullets is fired.
Harnam covers his ears with his hands. The firing continues. Harnam falls on his knees covering his ears with his hands. The lights fade on the Temple. The shots can still be heard. The lights come back on. Harnam stands up. He sees the vision of Simran covered in blood. He tears up the paper and lets out a loud scream. Ram Singh and Ali rush out of the temple.*

RAM SINGH

What's the matter, Harnam?

ALI

What happened?

HARNAM

The Komagata Maru Ali, the Komagata Maru. They fired on the passengers in Budge Budge. They just shot. Nobody knows how many died. Nobody knows what happened to the survivors. Harsimran, Tej, I don't know if they are alive or not. And if they are alive, where are they, in what condition (a beat) I am gonna kill the bastards who did this to them.

ALI

What do you want to do?

HARNAM

I don't know. All I know that I will not rest till I have taken revenge for the suffering of my sister, my Tej.

RAM SINGH

You know a lot of Indians are going to back to India to take part in Gadar.

HARNAM

Gadar?

ALI

Yes, Gadar. Mutiny, revolution, to overthrow the British government with force. You can join them.

HARNAM

You are right. That's what I should do. I am going back to India. I am going to kill those British Sergeants who shot at my sister.

Enter Santa Singh and Ganda Singh

GANDA

Did you hear?

RAM SINGH

What?

GANDA

Bhai Mewa Singh of Vancouver, he killed Hopkinson.

ALI

What?

SANTA

Yes, right there in front of the court. Hopkinson was going to testify in favour of that traitor Bela Singh. Bhai Mewa Singh shot him down there, in full public view and then surrendered to the police.

RAM SINGH

Wow! Now that's revenge. That bastard Hopkinson deserved this.

HARNAM SINGH

You are absolutely right. He deserved this. But there is somebody else who also deserves this.

ALI

Whom are you talking about?

HARNAM

Stevens. Member of Parliament, H.H. Stevens.

RAM SINGH

No Harnam. You are not doing anything stupid. You are going to India to join the revolutionaries.

HARNAM

I will go to India. I will definitely go to India (moves towards exit R).

ALI

Where are you going?

HARNAM

I am going across the border.

ALI

To America? Why?

HARNAM

I have some shopping to do.

(END OF SCENE)

Spotlight Down Center where TARAK is standing. It's a stormy night. Tarak is well bundled up. His face is hardly visible behind his muffler. Enter Harnam.

HARNAM

Is that you Tarak?

TARAK

Who are you?

HARNAM

I am Harnam Singh, from Abbotsford.

TARAK

I don't know you. What is your name?

HARNAM

Harnam.

TARAK

I am asking you for the last time. If you don't answer correctly, then this meeting is over. What is your name?

HARNAM

(a beat)

Gadar.

TARAK

What is your religion?

HARNAM

Gadar.

TARAK

What is meaning of Gadar?

HARNAM

Freedom of India.

TARAK

Are you ready, Harnam? This will require ultimate sacrifice.

HARNAM

I am ready. Mewa Singh has inspired everyone. These atrocities have to stop. No one should suffer the way the passengers of Komagata Maru suffered, the way Harsimran suffered, the way my nephew Tej suffered. This must be stopped.

TARAK

That's the spirit my friend. Incidents like Komagata Maru can be stopped only if India becomes a free country. It is useless to expect justice from the British government. And for that purpose, India needs young people like you to go there and wage a war against the British. Gadar is going to be a reality. (Takes out a revolver and gives it to Harnam) Here, take this and go to India. Thousands of Indians are going home to fight the British. Go join them. India needs you. Your country needs you.

Exit Tarak

HARNAM

(stands in the spotlight with the revolver in his hands)

V.O.

One day, your nephew Tej, he became unconscious.

Nobody knows where Harsimran is, in what condition Tej is.

Mewa Singh has killed Hopkinson.

“What we face in British Columbia and Canada is this—whether or not the civilization which finds its highest exemplification in the Anglo-Saxon British rule shall or shall not prevail in the dominion of Canada.

White Canada Forever.

Sounds of gunshots and screams.

M.P. Stevens has defended the government’s decision to send Komagata Maru back to India.

HARNAM

(seething with anger)

Stevens. You Bastard.

(END OF SCENE)

Light go up on L. Some set changes have been made to make the Kitchen/dining room look richer than earlier. This is the house of Member of Parliament Henry Stevens. His picture hangs on Wall UL.

Enter Harnam with a revolver in his hands. There is nobody in the room. Harnam looks around, puzzled what to do. He sees a door leading to an inner room UL. He walks towards it. The door

opens and Frances comes in through it. Harnam immediately hides his revolver in his pocket.

FRANCES

(lets out a scream, then realizes that it Harnam standing in front of her)
Harnam? What are you doing here?

HARNAM

I..I.. I am ... Madam Frances..What are you doing here?

FRANCES

I am visiting my brother. I told you about him. Henry. He is back in town, so I though I'll go visit him.

HARNAM

Oh! I'm sorry. It must have been a mistake. I thought this was the house of M.P. Stevens.

FRANCES

Oh, But you are right. This is the correct house. M.P. Stevens is my brother. Henry Herbert Stevens is his full name. I of course call him Henry.

HARNAM

Stevens is your brother?

FRANCES

Well of course he is. Do you want to meet him? Is this about your sister?

HARNAM

Yes, this is about my sister. Do you know where she is Madam Frances?

FRANCES

In India I believe. That's where the ship went, right?

HARNAM

Yes, and do you know what happened there?

FRANCES

What?

HARNAM

The passengers were fired upon indiscriminately.

FRANCES

Oh God! Why?

HARNAM

Because your brother had wired the Indian government that there might be mutineers on that ship, with arms and ammunition to wage war against them. Can you believe it Madam Frances? Those people hardly had enough food to survive the high seas, how would they be carrying arms? Was a single shot fired from the ship when the tug boat Sea Lion attacked it? No. They defended themselves by using coal as missiles. Coal, madam Frances, not bullets. But they were greeted with bullets when they reached India. I don't know if my sister is alive or dead. I don't know if my nephew is alive or dead. And if they are alive, where are they? In what condition are they? And you know who is responsible for all this Madam Frances? It's your brother. Member of Parliament H.H. Stevens. (Takes the revolver out). And today he'll have to pay for his sins.

FRANCES

(taken aback)

Harnam...What are you doing? No Harnam... This is not right. Everything will be all right.

HARNAM

Nothing will be all right as long as people like Stevens are alive. You know Madam Frances, I was going to leave Canada to go to India to fight against the British. Then I thought, what about those who have committed atrocities on Indians in Canada? Who will punish them for their wrong doings? That's when I decided that I will not leave Canada till I have sent Stevens where his other accomplice Hopkinson already is. To Hell.

FRANCES

Harnam, you are in a state of shock. You are not thinking clearly. You can't do this. They will catch you, they will hang you.

HARNAM

I don't care. All I can think of now is how many Komagata Marus will be sent back if people like Stevens are allowed to stay in power. How many husbands will not meet their wives, how many children will not meet their fathers and how many sisters will not be able to tie Rakhri on their brothers' wrist? No Madam Frances. This has to stop.

FRANCES

I once tied a Rakhri on your wrist Harnam. Remember.

HARNAM

Yes, I remember.

FRANCES

And you promised me something. Do you remember?

Harnam looks away

FRANCES

You promised that you will never do anything to make me unhappy. You

called me your sister, and I could see it in your eyes, I was your sister that day. Am I not your sister today, Harnam? Will you make this sister of yours unhappy? I don't want to lose two brothers in one day. For the love of your sister Harnam, I beg of you, please forgive Henry. Let him live. Please.

HARNAM

(A pregnant pause)

Madam Frances, A promise is a promise. Your brother will live. He is a lucky man. He has a sister like you. Please teach him to see beyond the colour of a man's skin.

FRANCES

Oh Harnam!

HARNAM

Goodbye Madam Frances. I am going to India. But I will come back. I will come back when my country will be free. Not as a British subject but as a citizen of an independent India. Good Bye. Vande Mataram.

Exit Harnam

(END OF SCENE)

Lights go up.

A screen comes on UC. Sonia, Leona and Christine are making their power point presentation.

SONIA

376 people, 22 allowed to land, 20 killed in India, Four murdered in Canada. One person hanged and many others imprisoned, these are the statistics.

CHRISTINE

But how many stories are hidden behind these statistics.

LEONA

Stories of loved ones, of brothers and sisters, of husbands and wives, of friends and relatives, not allowed to meet, to re-unite, to be with their loved ones.

SONIA

And today, one hundred years later, let us ask ourselves, did the Komagata Maru story end in 1914?

CHRISTINE

Are there still Harnam Singhs among us waiting for their sisters to tie Rakhri on their wrists?

LEONA

Is there still a Ram Singh or a Santa Singh waiting to meet his wife or children?

SONIA

Or a Hasan Ali wanting to bring his parents here so that he can take care of them.

CHRISTINE

Are there still immigrants in Canada forced to live separated from their families?

SONIA

If the answer to any of these questions is yes,

LEONA

Then the Komagata Maru story is not over, it's definitely not over.