

could get his hands on her. But since he didn't promote me despite me giving him my sister, why would he do it for this girl instead...? But, she's not that bad! No harm in trying.

Reboti. Khetro, go to your room. Khetromany leaves from the right

The Foreman. Now, Sadhu, don't make any trouble, come with me to the factory.

Reboti. *(To the foreman, holding him)* Oh, Sir! He just wanted to drink some water... How can he go to the Saheb, which is so far away, without eating first? *(To the audience)* Why did we come to this damned place just to become beggars? We're doomed.

The Foreman. Oh, stupid woman! Stop grunting. If you want to give him water, do it quick or else I'll take him.

They all leave to the left, the Foreman being the last

Act 1 Scene 3

The factory of Begunbari. On the verandah of the large bungalow, Mr. Wood and Gopi stand next to the table upon which is paper and an inkstand. *Sadhu, Ray and the two Guards enter from right*

Mr. Wood. Why are these bastards' hands tied up with ropes?

Gopi. My Lord, this Sadhu is a well known ryot. But

under Nobin's influence, he's been trying to damage our indigo crop.

The Guards untie Ray and Sadhu

Sadhu. My Lord, I've never done anything to your indigo, nor will I today. I'm a poor ryot, I only have twenty bigahs of land. If nine are used for indigo, obviously I'm not going to be happy. But my Lord, what's in it for you? It's only my death.

Gopi. The Saheb fears you will have him locked up in your Eldest Babu's godown.

Sadhu. Now, Mr. Secretary, you give a dog a bad name and hang him. How should a meaningless creature like me imprison the mighty, the powerful Saheb?

Gopi. Sadhu, stop your rhetorical blubbering. It doesn't sound so good coming from a peasant's mouth. It's like a sweeper's broom touching my body.

Mr. Wood. That rascal has become very wise.

Gopi. My Lord, since the school opened in the village, the ryots are making more and more trouble!

Mr. Wood. I'll write our Indigo Planters' Association to petition the Government. We'll fight until the schools close.

You have **Gopi.** That fool wants twenty bigahs, to bring the case to court. We're just going

to use nine for the *Mr. Wood walks towards Sadhu* indigo. Why can't you grow rice on the rest?

Mr. Wood. *(To Sadhu)* My Lord, we can easily take over the twenty bigahs...

Sadhu. *(To himself)* Oh my god...! The witness for the spirit-seller is shit the drunkard! *(Openly)* Indigo ! requires four times as much work than paddies. And if I have to grow indigo myself, what's left will remain barren.

Mr. Wood. Bastard! Scum! Take the advance payment and grow the indigo, you piece of shit! *(Grabs Sadhu's wrist and pull him towards the table and kicks him with his feet)* You're going to get a taste of my whip! *(Takes the whip)*

Sadhu. My Lord, why swat a fly and soil your hands, we are...

Ray. *(Angrily)* Sadhu, shut up my brother and sign the paper they gave you... The day is almost over and we haven't been able to either bathe or eat yet. I'm starving.

Gopi takes Sadhu's hand and press it in the inkstand and then on the paper

Mr. Wood. So you didn't go to the court yet, admit it, you fool! *(Twists Ray's ear and makes him kneel)*

Ray. *(Breathless)* Oh mother! Mother...! It hurts...

Mr. Wood. Bloody digger, you're in for it! *(Whips Ray)*

Nobin enters from right

Ray. Oh Baro Babu, I'm dying! I need some water. They're killing me.

Nobin. Saheb, if you whip all your peasants to death, who's going to cultivate your indigo? Please, let them go.

Mr. Wood. *(To Nobin)* Mind your own business!

Sadhu. Last year, you took four bigahs of my most

fer-tile land. Today, the foreman has taken the rest. All of this has been done without my consent. What can I say, Sir? But I guarantee you that I will grow your indigo without any advance payment.

Mr. Wood. What? If there's no advance, there's no rules, bastard, dirty pig, ungrateful...! *(Whips him)*

Nobin. *(Covers the back of Sadhu with his hand)* My Lord, you've almost killed him! This poor man has a whole family to feed...! You also have a family, Saheb! How would your wife feel if you were taken prisoner at dinner time?

Mr. Wood. *(To Nobin)* Shut up, you piece of shit! You will sign for an advance of sixty bigahs for indigo plantation. Then, afterwards, I will let you go, or else I will break that whip on your head!

Nobin. Oh Mother Earth! Never,

ever in my life, have I been so humiliated...! *(Laments)*

Gopi. Nobin, you better go home, don't make anymore trouble.

Nobin. Sadhu, pray to God. He's the only one standing by the helpless.

Nobin walks away from right and Ray walks next to Sadhu

Mr. Wood. Slaves and sons of slaves...! *Secre-*

tary, do your lousy job, give him the advance payment.

Mr. Wood walks away from left and Gopi gives paper to Sadhu

Act 1 SCENE 4

The Eldest Babu's hall, Soirindri, Sabitri and Aduri are seated on the sofa,

Reboti and Khetromany enter from right

Soirindri. Welcome, my dear sister, I was hoping you'd visit.

Reboti. Thank you for your kind words. Khetro, bow down before your aunts.

Khetromany bows down

Soirindri. *(Blessing Khetromany)* Remain with your husband for life; wear vermilion even in your white hair, and the next time you go to your father-in-law's house, take your new-born son with you.

Nobin calls from aside "Aduri"

Sabitri. *(To Soirindri)* Oh! my daughter, go. I think, he's asking for water.

Soirindri. *(To Aduri)* Aduri, he's calling you.

Aduri. Calling me, but asking for you.

Soirindri. Smart mouth...! Sister Ghose let's meet another day.

Soirindri leaves from left, Sabitri, Khetromany and Reboti sit

Reboti. Oh my mother, now that we're alone. Some great danger has befallen me. Podi, the sweetmeat maker, came to our house yesterday.

Sabitri. My god! My god! Who allows that nasty fool to enter your house? What's left of her virtue? It's over for her, she's known to be a real hooker.

Reboti. My mother, but what could I have done? My house isn't surrounded by walls. And you know what she told me? The thought of it makes me shiver. This dreadful creature told me that the young English planter, as he was riding his horse, saw Khetromany and fell for her. She wanted to bring my daughter to the factory.

Aduri. How awful...! What a horrible smell of onions! How can we stay next to a Saheb. Awful! Awful! To breathe this horrible onion smell! I can bear anything but the smell of onions... How awful!

Reboti. That foolish woman says, he will give us money, leave our field and also provide our son-in-law with a good job. I curse money! Is virtue something to be sold? Has it any price?

Aduri. Oh, that beard! When he speaks he bleats like a goat, he never shaves and doesn't stop eating onions. I could never get

Is your father here?

Khetro. He's gone to the Eldest Babu's house, but he'll be back soon. What were you talking about?

Ray. Nothing. Now, bring me some water, would you...? I'm dying of thirst.

Khetromany exits to left (To the audience) I begged and begged, but that pig wouldn't listen!

Sadhu enters from right

Sadhu. Ray, why did you come so early?

Ray. It's this bastard of a foreman! He's marked off our land. How shall we eat? How will we survive...? With these lands, we used to be able to pay back all our debts! *(To the audience)* What a disaster! What this white man's indigo has done to us?

Ray falls on his knees and covers his face with his hands

Sadhu. We were hoping to farm this land and now, if it's gone, why should we stay here? *(Putting his hands on Ray's shoulder)* Don't cry little brother...

Khetromany and Reboti enter with a water bottle from left

Tomorrow we'll sell the plough, the cows, say goodbye to this village and go work for the Zeminary Babu Basanta.

Khetromany gives the water to Ray

Now, have some water, don't lose hope, drink... Tell me, what did you say to the foreman?

Ray. What could I have said? He began to mark off the land, carving a bright red line in the ground as if he was thrusting a burning stick into my heart. I fell at his feet, offered him money, but he didn't listen. He said, "Go to your Eldest Babu! Go see him, he's the master." I told him I'd take him to court.

Ray stands up, Khetromany and Reboti move to the right (Seeing the foreman at a distance from the left)

Look, that bastard, he's coming with his guards.

They will take us to the Saheb's factory. *The Foreman and the two Guards enter from left, Sadhu walks towards The Foreman, the two Guards go behind and hold each Sadhu and Ray, Reboti walks forward and Khetromany steps backward.*

The Foreman. Bind the hands of that damned Ray, that dirty pig, tie him up now!

The Guard ties Ray's hands and Reboti walks over to Sadhu

Reboti. *(To the foreman)* Oh, my god! What are you doing? It's horrible! *(To Sadhu)* Don't stand here looking at this! Go to the Eldest Babu's house and tell him to come.

The Foreman. *(To Sadhu)* Where do you think you're going? You come with me, you hear? We won't make any advance payment to this Ray. It's not enough to sign with your thumbprint. You are educated, you will sign your name on the factory account book.

Sadhu. Sir, do you call this giving me an advance on indigo? Aren't you just forcing it down my throat instead? *(To the audience)* Oh misery, you're still with me. This land was Rama's kingdom before indigo was established here. Now see your poor son becoming a beggar and famine has spread across this land.

Reboti. *(Walks over to the foreman, pointing at Ray)* Show him mercy! At least let him drink some water.

The Foreman. *(Aside, observing Khetromany)* That girl's good looking, the young Saheb would be happy if he

without laws where villains do as they please. Under British power, no one can kidnap anyone!

Reboti. Oh Mother! Any form of violence can be committed in a ryot's house. Taking away the women and forcing their husbands to accept the advance payment to grow indigo.

Sabitri. What anarchy is this! This is horrible! Did you inform Sadhu?

Reboti. No, mother. He was already mad because of the indigo. If he hears this, he might, out of rage, bash his own head with an axe.

Sabitri. Very well, I'll ask my husband to talk to Sadhu. What misfortune this is!

These English planters can do anything. Then why do I hear that the Sahebs are reliable?

These English

planters are also Sahebs, aren't they?

(Silence) Now evening has come upon us, Reboti Ghose, you better go home. May the Goddess Durga be with you.

Reboti. I'll go mother. *Khetromany and Reboti exit to the right*

Act V Scene 2

The bedroom of Nobin Basu Aduri pushes the bed onto the stage

Aduri. Ah! What should I do? Where to go now? My heart is broken. They've beaten him so severely that he's barely breathing...! Our mistress will die when she sees him.

Sadhu. *(Aside)* Aduri, can we come now?

Aduri. Yes, yes... Bring him. No one's here. *Enter Sadhu and Torapa carrying Nobin's corpse*

Sadhu. *(Laying Nobin's body on the bed)* Where is our mistress?

Aduri. With everybody outside waiting for him. Will she survive when she sees her dead son? How many people's lives will be destroyed now that the Eldest Babu will never get up again! Why did he let his son go to the Saheb today?

Sadhu. Our madam and Soirindhri begged Nobin not to go. Soon after, he brought me to the indigo field along with Torapa, and with tears in his eyes, he said to the English, "Sir, I bring you a present of fifty rupees. I beg you, only for this year, to stop planting indigo in the rice fields. Even if you don't accept, please take the money and, out of pity, don't sow this land before my father's funeral is over." This monster replied, "Your father hung himself in the English prison like thieves and robbers do." Then kicking Nobin's knee, he said: "This is the gift for your father's ceremony."

Aduri. Oh my god! Oh my god! *(Placing his hand on his ears)*

Sadhu. Nobin's eyes became red, then he jumped on the English who fell to the ground. The factory's chieftain and ten guards stood around him. The Eldest Babu had once saved them from a case of robbery; so they felt a bit ashamed to raise their hands against him. *(Silence)* The English gave a blow to the chieftain, took his stick and smashed it against Nobin's head. His head fractured open. Nobin fell to the ground unconscious. Then Torapa, who was observing from a distance, rushed violently towards the group, took Nobin's body and fled.

Torapa. The Eldest Babu told me to stand back since they might attack me. But I wouldn't have hidden if I had known they would beat Nobin...! If I had jumped in sooner, I would have saved him. Oh! Allah! He helped me so many times, but I wasn't able to defend him once. *(Placing his hand on his face)*

Aduri. What is this blood around Torapa's mouth?

Sadhu. Torapa was furious. Like an wounded mongoose showing its teeth and biting, he bit off the english man's nose.

Torapa. I'm keeping his nose. I'll show it to Nobin as soon as he gets better. *(Shows the nose)* If the English hadn't run away, I would have torn his ears off too, off that bastard. I will hide inside the barn, and when night falls, I'll run away.