



Cambridge IGCSE™

DRAMA

0411/13

Paper 1

May/June 2020

PRE-RELEASE MATERIAL



This material must be given to candidates on receipt by the centre.

INSTRUCTIONS

- The questions in Paper 1 will be based on the stimuli and the play extract provided in this booklet.
- You may do any appropriate preparatory work. It is recommended that you perform the extract, at least informally.
- You will **not** be allowed to take this copy of the material **or** any other notes or preparation into the examination.
- A copy of the pre-release material will be provided with the question paper.

This document has **28** pages. Blank pages are indicated.

STIMULI

Choose **one** of the following three stimuli and devise a piece of drama based on it. You should work in groups of between two and six performers. Your piece should last approximately 15 minutes.

In the Written examination, you will be asked questions about your piece that will cover both practical and theoretical issues.

Stimulus 1

Historical situation: *Mutiny on HMS Bounty* (1789)

Stimulus 2

Theme of motion picture: *The Wizard of Oz* (1939)

Stimulus 3

Photograph: Two students juggling in the streets of Bogota



EXTRACT

Taken from *Charandas Chor*, by Habib Tanvir.

These notes are intended to help you understand the context of the drama.

The extract is taken from Habib Tanvir's play, *Charandas Chor*, which was written in 1975 and first performed that year at the Kamani Auditorium, Delhi.

The play is in two Acts, and the extract consists of an abridged version of the entire play.

The action follows the fortunes of the main character, CHARANDAS, who is a professional thief. Near the start of the play, he makes a vow to his Guru (wise teacher), which ultimately leads to his downfall.

Characters

CHARANDAS
 HAVALDAR
 PEASANT
 BEJEWELLED WOMAN
 GURU
 DISCIPLES 1, 2, 3
 GAMBLERS 1, 2, 3
 LANDLORD
 PRIEST
 MINISTER
 MUNIM
 SENTRY
 QUEEN
 PUROHIT
 MAID

Other roles such as dancers, singers, passers-by, priests, soldiers, etc. can be played by members of the company.

ACT ONE: SCENE ONE

A rectangular platform centre stage. At the back of this platform, slightly off-centre to the left, a tree.

CHARANDAS enters, a heavy bundle of clothes on his back. He comes in singing:

The cat is out, the cat's about
The cat is on the prowl
All in a trice she brings down mice
And then she has a fall.

The mice they gather round about her
And tickle her whiskered chin
They giggle and wiggle, her ears they twiggle
'How come you're all done in?'

Rumble, tumble, take a ride
Off with the lid, and what's inside?
The cat is up, she wants to sup
The mice had better beware
She'll hobble, she'll wobble, she'll gobble them up
She's searching everywhere.

Rumble, tumble, take a ride,
Off with the lid, and what's inside?

As he ends his song, the HAVALDAR comes running in and grabs hold of CHARANDAS.

- HAVALDAR:
Got you! Thought you could get away, did you? What've you got there? Better confess right away! Don't you know who I am—Mister Babu Das, havaldar of the old cadre. [Lifts CHARANDAS up and down three times, then throws him down. CHARANDAS cowers, holding his bundle.] I'll stuff you with sawdust! Put down that bundle, you bloody thief—or I'll chop off your head and suspend it in mid air, you fool! Put it down!
- CHARANDAS:
Help! He'll chop off my head and suspend it in mid air! Oh, oh, oh!
And what else will you do, maharaj?
- HAVALDAR:
I'll cut off your hands and feet and scatter them to the winds, you swine!
- CHARANDAS:
Help! He'll cut off my limbs and scatter them all over! Ah, ah, ah! And what will you do next, maharaj?
- HAVALDAR:
I'll grind your skin and bones into a fine paste, and serve it to the dogs, you scoundrel!
- CHARANDAS:
Help! I'll be turned into mincemeat and fed to the dogs! Ai, ai, ai! And when will you do all this, maharaj?
- HAVALDAR:
If I had my way, I'd do it straight away, you rogue. But what to do, I'm on government duty right now. [Shouts] Put down that bundle! [Menacingly] Put it down! [CHARANDAS lets go of his bundle. He unties it and examines the contents.] So many clothes—do they belong to your father?
- CHARANDAS:
They're not mine.
- HAVALDAR:
Of course they aren't. Whose are they, then?
- CHARANDAS:
My customer's.

HAVALDAR: Your customer's? Ha, ha, ha. Are you a dhobi, then?
 CHARANDAS: Yes, maharaj. Original dhobi.
 HAVALDAR: Why didn't you say so earlier, you ass? 50
 CHARANDAS: You didn't give me a chance, maharaj!
 HAVALDAR: All right, listen. There's been a theft in this village. A golden platter has been stolen. Have you done it? If you have, just tell me and I won't report it. We'll share the booty.
 CHARANDAS: I don't steal, maharaj. 55
 HAVALDAR: Good, good, you shouldn't steal, my son. Listen, you go from house to house and you know everybody. If you happen to know the thief, just tell me and I'll give you a reward.
 CHARANDAS: A reward?!
 HAVALDAR: Yes. 60
 CHARANDAS: I won't tell you here.
 HAVALDAR: Why not?
 CHARANDAS: Can't you see all the people gathered here?
 HAVALDAR: Where?
 CHARANDAS: Look in front of you. 65
 HAVALDAR: What to do, then?
 CHARANDAS: Let's go over there. [They go to a corner of the stage.]
 HAVALDAR: Come on now, tell me.
 CHARANDAS: Give me the reward.
 HAVALDAR: Tell me first! 70
 CHARANDAS: First the reward.
 HAVALDAR: You don't trust even a high-ranking officer like me, do you, you suspicious lowlife? Here, take two rupees. I'll give you more later. Come now, out with it.
 CHARANDAS: Oh, maharaj, listen. He who's done the stealing is—thief. 75
 HAVALDAR: That I know!
 CHARANDAS: You know that?
 HAVALDAR: Of course!
 CHARANDAS: Then what're you waiting for? Go catch him!
 HAVALDAR: Who? 80
 CHARANDAS: Thief!
 HAVALDAR: I'll thrash you, you idiot! Do I look like a thief to you! Son, I'm asking you his name.
 CHARANDAS: His name?
 HAVALDAR: Yes. 85
 CHARANDAS: He who steals, maharaj, is only called—thief. He has no other name. Obviously, he who steals is a thief, who doesn't know that! But his name ...

While the HAVALDAR is pondering this, CHARANDAS slips out. Turning around, the HAVALDAR can't believe his eyes. He stares at the ground. A passer-by, noticing him, stops and does the same. The HAVALDAR looks up at the sky. The passer-by does the same. Suddenly the HAVALDAR sees him and they both freeze. The next moment the passer-by suddenly takes to his heels. The HAVALDAR chases him. CHARANDAS enters from the other side, undoes his cloth bundle and takes out the golden platter. 90
 95

CHARANDAS: So that's how I saved the golden platter. He didn't see it.
 [A poor PEASANT enters, carrying some sattu tied in a piece of cloth slung over his shoulder.] Hey you—what's that you've got there?
 Hand it over, quick. Or I'll gobble you up raw! 100
 PEASANT: Oh ho! Gobble me up raw, will you? I'll gobble you up, you damned

crook!

CHARANDAS:

PEASANT:

CHARANDAS:

Come here. May I ask you something, my friend?

Ask away.

Tell me, how did you guess? [The PEASANT laughs] Shut up! [The PEASANT freezes]

105

What've you got there in that bundle, you fool?

Go on, put it down. Give it here, you bastard! Now get lost! Scram!

[The PEASANT runs off, scared. CHARANDAS undoes the bundle.]

Arrey, sattu, it's only some flour! Come here! Come on back, don't be

110

scared. Sit down, let's share this like brothers. Come, sit. [Shoving him

down] Sit, you ass! [As the PEASANT falls, CHARANDAS catches

the clink of coins tucked into the waistband of his loin cloth.] What've

you got hidden there? [Snatching the purse] Come on, hand it over.

Now get lost! Go on now! Beat it!

He makes a threatening gesture. The PEASANT runs off in fear.

115

CHARANDAS sings.

The cat is out, the cat's about,

The cat is on the prowl,

She's after prey, day after day,

In weather fair or foul.

120

Rumble, tumble, take a ride,

Lift the lid and what's inside?

The cat's become the cover,

The mice all run and hide.

Lift the lid and what's inside?

125

The cat's the cover, so we find,

Everyday you see less mice

They're gobbled up, this isn't nice,

The cat she preens, she is the queen,

She wears a royal crown

130

And one by one she sights the mice

And then she brings them down.

Rumble, tumble, take a ride,

Lift the lid off, what's inside?

A wealthy merchant's wife enters, covered in ornaments from head to toe.

135

CHARANDAS:

What a load of jewellery! [Thinks briefly, then abruptly starts bawling gustily.]

WOMAN:

What's the matter, brother? Why're you crying? Don't cry.

CHARANDAS

[crying]: I have bad news for you.

140

WOMAN:

Bad news? For me? Are you from my village?

CHARANDAS:

Yes. I'm from Bhatgaon.

WOMAN:

Bhatgaon? But I come from Nandgaon.

CHARANDAS

[hitting himself]: What a fool! Nandgaon, bai, Nandgaon. I'm also from Nandgaon.

145

WOMAN:

All's well with Chhotey Babu, I hope.

CHARANDAS:

Keeps calling for his didi all the time.

WOMAN:

His didi? But he doesn't have an older sister! I'm his bhabhi.

CHARANDAS:

Oh, yes, of course. He keeps calling for his bhabhi. He's very ill, you know. Insists that he'll only drink his medicine from your tender hands.

150

Better come along at once.

- WOMAN: All right, I'll just let them know at home ...
 CHARANDAS: No time for that. Hurry up, or he'll pop off.
 WOMAN: Oh my God! All right, all right, let's go!
 CHARANDAS [after walking a few paces]: Oh, I forgot! 155
 WOMAN: What's the matter now, brother?
 CHARANDAS: Bai, this is a very dangerous place. A man was attacked right here just the other day and left to die a slow, painful death. [Points at his own bundle] Look, his things are still lying there.
- WOMAN: Oh my God! 160
 CHARANDAS: I think you'd better take off all your jewellery and wrap it in this cloth. [He hesitates] And after all, you're a helpless lady.
- WOMAN: Yes ...
 CHARANDAS: What if someone should attack you?
 WOMAN: Oh my goodness! 165
 CHARANDAS: It is best to put your jewellery here. [Spreads the cloth on the ground.]
 WOMAN: All right, bhaiya, I'll do as you say.
- As she removes her ornaments one by one and places them in the cloth, he interrogates her.*
- CHARANDAS: Where did you get these ornaments made, bai? 170
 WOMAN: At Raigarh.
 CHARANDAS: Raigarh! That's the best place, of course, for jewellery. What's the jeweller's name, bai?
 WOMAN: Ramlal.
 CHARANDAS: Ramlal! Who doesn't know Ramlal? He's the very best jeweller in all Chhattisgarh! They're made of pure gold, of course, aren't they? 175
 WOMAN: Yes, brother. Hundred per cent gold. [She ties the cloth into a bundle.] Come, give it to me.
 WOMAN: No, I'll carry it.
 CHARANDAS: You might lose them, bai. I'll look after them carefully.
 WOMAN: No, I'll look after them. 180
 CHARANDAS: Bai, you're a woman. What'll you do if a thief attacks you? I'm a man! I'll tackle him bravely. Give them to me.
 WOMAN: No.
 CHARANDAS: [snatching the bundle from her]: Give it here! 185
 WOMAN: [crying]: You rogue! You tricked me! You told me lies, you scoundrel, and now you've stolen my jewels! You thief!
 CHARANDAS: Why are you crying, bai? What to do, god made me a thief.
 WOMAN: You bastard! You've brought me all the way here, and now you're thugging me! May your corpse be laid out!
 CHARANDAS: No, don't curse me, bai. That won't suit me—too much enforced rest. 190
 WOMAN: May you die!
 CHARANDAS: Don't say that, bai! Then we won't see each other again. [As she continues to cry, he also begins weeping.] Oh, my God! It breaks my heart to see a woman weep. Oh no, I shouldn't rob a woman. No, no, I won't do it. [He hands her the ornaments.] Here, take this, bai. Take good care of it.
 WOMAN: [taking the bundle and giving him a sound beating]: You outcast! Cheat! 195
- She goes off. He falls down. The HAVALDAR comes on. CHARANDAS starts polishing the HAVALDAR's shoes with his cloth. As the HAVALDAR looks down to examine his shoes, CHARANDAS escapes. The HAVALDAR, realizing that he's been fooled again, chases him.* 200

HAVALDAR: I'll get you yet, you bastard! Where can you run to? 205

SCENE TWO

Village square. The GURU enters singing.

The baba roams the forest alone
 The sadhu roams the forest alone
 The koel's lonely song
 Resounds through the groves
 As the baba sings all on his own
 The householder is snug in his home
 The tramp on the road prefers to roam
 While the baba roams the forest alone

210

GURU: Rise! Open your eyes! Look at the world! 215

The GURU sits down on the platform, spreading his mat. His followers begin to gather around. A few of them come up and touch his feet, then join the others, who start to sing a hymn.

DISCIPLE 1: Gurudev, I touch your feet! Gurudev!

GURU: Bless you, my son.

220

DISCIPLE 2: I touch your feet, maharaj!

GURU: Bless you.

DISCIPLE 3: I touch your feet, Guru-jii!

GURU: Bless you, my son. Bless you.

[*They join the others in singing the hymn*] 225

All you have to do is just
 Give the guru his due
 That's all you have to do, just
 Give the guru his due.

Is it salvation you want? Just

230

Give the guru his due

All learning is a sham, till you

Give the guru his due

Nothing will work for you, till you

Give the guru his due

235

Watch good things happen to you, once you

Give the guru his due

So why don't you just follow the rules, and

Give the guru,

And in return he'll be quick to bless you if you—

240

Cash down!—give the guru his due.

CHARANDAS comes darting in and flings himself at the GURU's feet, head down. The HAVALDAR runs in after him, jumps over his prostrate body, and looking in the other directions, says:

HAVALDAR: Sadhu maharaj! Did you see a thief run past?

245

GURU: Oh, son, would a thief come here? And even if one did, would he remain a thief for long? Just as ditch water gets purified when it mingles with the Ganga, in a holy man's school, thieves, loafers, drunkards, gamblers, rogues, ruffians, all get purified. There's no thief

here, my son. Go look somewhere else.

250

The HAVALDAR turns to leave, but stops short when he overhears some GAMBLERS squabbling.

HAVALDAR:

Just look at these wasters gambling openly in the middle of the road! Such a waste of money! You'd ruin your homes for the sake of gambling, would you? You'd starve your children, would you? You ought to be ashamed of yourselves! [He quickly pockets the money lying on the ground.] Hey, who is this fellow sitting up there?

255

GAMBLER 1:

Are you asking about him? He's sadhu maharaj.

HAVALDAR:

When did he arrive?

GAMBLER 2:

A week ago. He's our guru.

260

HAVALDAR:

Your guru! Looks like the king of thieves to me.

GAMBLER 3:

Who said that? Did you call me the king of thieves?

Did you say that?

GAMBLER 2:

Arrey, no one called you anything! Calm down.

GAMBLER 3:

You just dare to!

265

GAMBLER 1:

Hey, keep quiet. It's the havaldar you're talking to.

GAMBLER 3:

I'll beat him to pulp!

GAMBLER 2:

This idiot will get us all into trouble.

HAVALDAR:

I'll show you what's what! I'll give you something to remember!

The HAVALDAR starts beating up GAMBLER 3, whose friends, under the pretext of separating the two, bring down the HAVALDAR.

270

All four fall in a heap, with the HAVALDAR at the bottom. Terrified, he crawls to the GURU and throws himself at his feet, prostrate in a pose which echoes CHARANDAS, who is still stretched out before the GURU. CHARANDAS enacts a charade of first checking to see where the other three are—they have meanwhile slipped into the crowd of followers—then tapping the HAVALDAR on the shoulder and gesturing to indicate that his tormentors have gone. The HAVALDAR picks himself up, retrieves his cap, salutes CHARANDAS and slinks away.

275

CHARANDAS: Gurudev!

280

GURU:

Bless you, my son!

CHARANDAS:

Wah, gurudev! You saved my skin.

GURU:

Not me, my son. It was the lord above who saved you. Who are you, beta? Where do you come from? What's your name?

285

CHARANDAS:

I'm Charandas, maharaj.

GURU:

What do you do?

CHARANDAS:

Don't ask me that, guru-ji.

GURU:

What's the matter?

CHARANDAS:

I'm ashamed to say it, gurudev.

290

GURU:

Ashamed to tell me what you do? Ah, I understand, beta. Lying to your guru is like hiding a pregnancy from the midwife. The havaldar is after you, isn't he? And you're here to save your skin.

CHARANDAS:

You've got it, guru-ji. What can I say?

GURU:

If you want to be my disciple you'll have to give up stealing, my son.

295

CHARANDAS:

Then how will I survive—what will I eat?

GURU:

Do you mean to say everyone in this world lives by thievery? Get a job. Live honestly. Earn some respect. Is robbery the only way to make a living? Come on, speak up. You want me to be your guru, don't you? Then make a vow. Not a thousand vows—just one. Just give up one thing.

300

CHARANDAS:	Why just one, gurudev. I'll renounce four things!	
GURU:	What four things?	
CHARANDAS:	My first vow, guru-ji!	
GURU:	Go on, I'm listening.	305
CHARANDAS:	I'll never eat off a golden plate.	
GURU:	Well said!	
CHARANDAS:	My second vow, guru-ji!	
GURU:	I'm listening, I'm listening, carry on.	
CHARANDAS:	I'll never mount an elephant and lead a procession.	310
GURU:	Very good, very good.	
CHARANDAS:	My third vow, guru-ji!	
GURU:	Yes, yes, go ahead.	
CHARANDAS:	If a queen says, 'Marry me, marry me!' I'll refuse to oblige her. No matter how young, how pretty. I won't ever marry a queen, guru-ji.	
GURU:	Excellent, excellent!	315
CHARANDAS:	My fourth vow, guru-ji!	
GURU:	This'll be the big one. I'm all ears.	
CHARANDAS:	If all the people of a country get together and beg, 'Charandas! Be our king, take the throne,' I'll say, 'No, I won't be your king.'	320
GURU	[laughs]: Beta, I've heard all your vows. You won't eat off a golden plate. It seems you're sick of golden plates, having eaten off them since you were a child. And today you've taken a vow before your guru to renounce eating off golden plates. Great! Secondly—you'll never ride an elephant in procession. Because you're such a great leader, and you've done it so often, that you've grown tired of it. So you vow to your guru to renounce this honour. All right. The queen of the land is panting for your manly good looks, isn't she? After today, you forswear marriage with a queen, even if she should beg you. You saintly, unworldly man! And as for your fourth vow, you'll never accept the kingship of a country. The entire population is clamouring for you, right? Take the throne, Charandas! Only you can rule us well! But you refuse to oblige. There's no greed in you, beta. You're content with your lot. Good for you! Charandas—	325
CHARANDAS:	Gurudev.	330
GURU:	I had heard that when a man sleeps, he dreams. But you're dreaming with your eyes wide open, beta! You're nothing but a thief—none of these unlikely things is going to happen to you. Why insist on dreaming such dreams?	
CHARANDAS:	Guru-ji, it's just a matter of chance—just in case, some day ... one never knows.	340
GURU:	And a thief is always on the lookout for the perfect chance, isn't he? Look, beta, you've forsworn four things of your own choice, now take a vow that I ask of you.	
CHARANDAS:	What's that, guru-ji?	345
GURU:	Give up telling lies.	
CHARANDAS:	Now you've fixed me good and proper, guru-ji! You know very well I can't steal without telling lies.	
GURU:	Yes, that's why I'm insisting, my son. The cure for all ills—stop telling lies. And the crime of theft will stop automatically.	350
CHARANDAS:	Gurudev! You can't separate sunshine from the sun, can you? You can't separate a nail from the flesh, can you? Then how can you separate thieving and lying—they go together, guru-ji.	
GURU:	Then get out of here, find another place to hide. I've no time for you.	
CHARANDAS:	I fall at your feet, gurudev!	
GURU:	Sorry—I can't help you.	355
CHARANDAS:	Guru-ji! [Sees the HAVALDAR approaching and hides behind the	

GURU:	GURU. <i>The HAVALDAR looks around, doesn't see him, and departs.]</i>	
CHARANDAS:	All right, guru-ji, I swear—I'll give up lying from today. That's a vow. Is that a firm vow? Or did it firm up because you saw the havaldar?	360
	Guru-ji, I swear in front of everyone gathered here from now on I'll never tell a lie. That's a solemn vow. I stand by it.	
GURU:	Well done! Bless you, my son. May you live long. Now, beta, let's come to brass tacks. What're you thinking of for your guru?	
CHARANDAS:	I'm thinking, guru-ji, to each his own. You're flourishing in your own way—	365
GURU:	What do you mean?	
CHARANDAS:	Well, I steal at night, in the dark, stealthily, entering homes through holes in the wall—while you sit here in broad daylight, openly, with a crowd of people around you. And you make much more than I do.	
	Shut up!	370
CHARANDAS:	You're the one who told me not to lie, guru-ji.	
GURU:	Well, congratulations, oh truthful one! Arrey, beta, I was asking about something else. I want to know what you've thought of by way of guru dakshina.	
CHARANDAS:	Oh, that. <i>[Placing his cloth bundle before the GURU]</i> Here, take it all, guru-ji.	375
GURU:	Such a fat bundle! Baap re! You're very generous, my son! What have we here ... yah ha ha! A sari for guru-ji, a skirt for guru-ji! Even a pair of pants and a necktie! Arrey, beta, what use is all this to, me? All your guru needs is a loincloth.	
CHARANDAS:	Guru-ji, all you see is the clothes. Reach inside and see what you find—here, a golden platter.	
GURU:	Ah, now I get it! This is the golden platter you've been eating off which you've sworn today to renounce! So now you're giving it to me as dakshina—but wait a minute, does this platter belong to you?	380
CHARANDAS:	Guru-ji, what can I say? You know it all. Just put it away before the havaldar catches sight of it.	
GURU:	Ah, I understand you—I put the platter away so when the havaldar comes he can put me away!	
CHARANDAS:	No problem. Plenty to eat and drink where you'll be going.	390
GURU:	Ah, you're doing me a favour, are you?	
CHARANDAS:	Guru-ji, everyone who goes to jail comes out strong and healthy.	
GURU:	Oh, I see, you think I need fattening up! Forget it son—just give me cash.	
CHARANDAS:	All right, guru-ji. I have two rupees seventy-five paise on me. Two rupees from the havaldar, and seventy-five paise from the sattuwala. Here, take it.	395
GURU:	Arrey—only seventy-five paise! You just said you had two rupees seventy-five paise.	
CHARANDAS:	That was after putting the two together, guru-ji.	400
GURU:	So give me the two together, beta.	
CHARANDAS:	No, guru-ji, things are so expensive nowadays, two rupees won't even buy a meal.	
GURU:	Are things expensive for you alone?	405
CHARANDAS:	You have so many followers, guru-ji. If each of them forks out seventy-five paise you'll collect a fortune.	
GURU:	But they'll be buying their own salvation, not yours.	
CHARANDAS:	Guru-ji, the havaldar's coming! Give me your blessings before he lands up.	410

Noticing his approach, CHARANDAS hides behind the GURU, on his hands and knees. The GURU sits astride his back. The HAVALDAR

looks around, and, appearing not to find CHARANDAS, perches on the platform right in front of the GURU. After keeping a silent vigil for a few seconds, he speaks.

415

- HAVALDAR:
CHARANDAS
HAVALDAR:
CHARANDAS:
HAVALDAR:
CHARANDAS:
HAVALDAR:
CHARANDAS:
HAVALDAR:
CHARANDAS:
HAVALDAR:
- So, from now on you'll never eat off a golden platter, right?
Never!
And from now on you'll never ride on elephant back, right?
Never!
And you'll never ever marry a queen, right? 420
Never!
And from now on you'll always tell the truth, right?
Always.
Liar! [He grabs at CHARANDAS, misses and catches the GURU instead. CHARANDAS escapes. Looking at the GURU] Swine! [Exits.]

425

The GURU quickly collects his things and gets up. The crowd begins to move out after him, singing the refrain 'The Baba Roams the Forest Alone'. CHARANDAS runs back on stage, followed by the HAVALDAR. CHARANDAS hides and the HAVALDAR begins to search the faces of the crowd as they file out. CHARANDAS slips behind him, and mimics his movements. Finally the HAVALDAR turns and comes face to face with CHARANDAS who salutes him. The HAVALDAR salutes him back and turns away, then realizes that this is the very man he is looking for and whips around, sees no one and runs off stage in search of CHARANDAS. CHARANDAS, meanwhile, had slipped behind him; he now looks after the HAVALDAR and saunters off casually.

430

435

SCENE THREE (OMITTED)

SCENE FOUR

The village square. SATTUWALA brings in a sack of rice, sits on the platform, accompanied by CHARANDAS, and they both start busily doling out rice from the sacks lying beside them. A long line of VILLAGERS—young, old, male, female—enters from one end. They receive a share, and leave from the other side. The CHORUS sings.

440

Oh listen, brothers and sisters, to what we have to say.
Charandas is not a thief, not a thief, no way!
Palaces and mansions, he'll break into and steal,
The poor man's hut is safe from him, he gives us a good deal. 445

So listen, brothers and sisters, to what we have to say,
Charandas is not a thief, not a thief, no way!

The LANDLORD joins the queue, and comes up to CHARANDAS unnoticed. He is offered a share. He grabs CHARANDAS by the throat.

450

- LANDLORD:
CHARANDAS:
LANDLORD:
CHARANDAS:
LANDLORD:
CHARANDAS:
- Hey you—So you call yourself Charandas the thief!
You're the thief, not I! The way you treat your tenants.
You dare call me a thief!
Yes—thief! Thief!
Police! Police!
Thief, thief! [The HAVALDAR runs in] Catch him!

455

The HAVALDAR catches the LANDLORD. CHARANDAS and the PEASANT stroll out unobserved.

HAVALDAR:	Just begging for a thrashing, aren't you? I'll break your hands and feet! Got you at last, you bastard!	460
LANDLORD:	Arrey, can't you see who I am? I'm the landlord! The thief's gone!	
HAVALDAR:	Oh God, did I make a mistake again? Forgive me, master! [Turns to look for CHARANDAS] You just wait and see, malik, what I do to him when I catch him—I'll fix him! He's always running away. Doesn't slow down for a moment, does he?	465
LANDLORD:	Then go after him, don't just stand there!	

The HAVALDAR notices the same passer-by he had seen earlier. The man freezes, then runs out. The HAVALDAR runs after him.

SCENE FIVE

A temple ceremony has just finished.	470
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The PRIEST takes around a platter to collect offerings. Men and women place a few paise on the plate, get blessed by the PRIEST and depart. The last to leave is the HAVALDAR. CHARANDAS hides right behind him. The HAVALDAR finally steps out of the temple and crouches in a corner outside, waiting. CHARANDAS puts a basketful of jewellery and gems on the plate.	475
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PRIEST:	That's a fortune! Are you giving it all?	
CHARANDAS:	Yes, maharaj.	
PRIEST:	Glory be to God! What a large-hearted soul! What's your name, beta?	
CHARANDAS:	Charandas.	480
PRIEST:	What do you do?	
CHARANDAS:	I steal. I'm a thief.	
PRIEST:	You've made such a generous donation, how can you be a thief? I don't believe you. You're kidding! You shouldn't fool around with holy men. How come you're here today, my son?	
CHARANDAS:	I've come to ask for more wealth, maharaj.	485
PRIEST:	Ask for wealth, did you say?	
CHARANDAS:	Yes.	
PRIEST:	You've just given so much to God—he'll give you twice as much. How long do you plan to stay, beta?	
CHARANDAS:	I'll leave once God fulfils my request, maharaj.	490
PRIEST:	My son, God won't let down a generous soul like you. Stay here tonight, get some rest, refresh yourself, and leave tomorrow after you've eaten some prasad.	
CHARANDAS:	Don't hold me back, maharaj.	495
PRIEST:	Why not?	
CHARANDAS:	It'll be your loss.	
PRIEST:	Arrey beta, this is the house of God. Think of what benefits you, and leave God's losses alone. He'll make up for them. Here—take some prasad, and go to sleep.	
CHARANDAS:	As you say, maharaj.	500
PRIEST:	Good, good, sleep peacefully.	

[CHARANDAS lies down. The PRIEST tidies up, lies down beside him while chanting his mantra and falls asleep. Once the PRIEST begins to snore, CHARANDAS gets up slowly and stealthily, and clears the

505

temple of everything valuable, including the jewellery he had donated. As he is leaving, he stops, turns, notices a precious jewel embedded in a niche and plucks it out.

CHARANDAS [touching the sleeping PRIEST's feet in reverence]: Sleep well, maharaj. I'm off, all right? [He leaves.] 510
PRIEST: I'm sleeping well, beta. Go to sleep.

[As CHARANDAS leaves the temple, the HAVALDAR, sleeping, stretches and yawns hugely. CHARANDAS delicately jumps over his prostrate body and exits. Groping for CHARANDAS, the PRIEST mumbles.] 515

Beta, where are you? [Half-rouses] Probably gone for a pee ... [yawns and falls back to sleep. Wakes up again and sees that CHARANDAS is still not there] Still not back? [Suddenly notices the theft] Arrey, everything's gone! Everything! [Notices that the idol is missing] Even you, my lord, have left me! Thief! Thief! Thief! 520

He runs out, shouting. A crowd enters. The HAVALDAR, by now wide awake, discovers the theft.

HAVALDAR: But I was right here! [Runs out.]

The CHORUS sings. Throughout the song, CHARANDAS keeps coming in with stolen goods. Each time the HAVALDAR chases him but CHARANDAS gives him the slip. The first time, he freezes like a statue, fooling the HAVALDAR. The second time, he chuckles his bundle at the HAVALDAR who involuntarily chuckles it back—and then CHARANDAS runs off with it. The third time the HAVALDAR makes a grab for him, but he ducks; then the HAVALDAR grabs at him again and he jumps. Each time the HAVALDAR misses. The fourth time he pretends to be a crippled beggar and fools the HAVALDAR yet again. With this, the song ends, and there is an intermission. 525

Oh, what can we say, friends, he is everywhere,
In nooks and in crannies, he's here and he's there.
So, friends and neighbours—quick, look over there,
Here comes the thief, out of thin air! 535

He robs and he steals in broad daylight,
Make sure your belongings are stowed out of sight,
In the village we'll shout as loud as we dare,
Here comes the thief, out of thin air! 540

It's fun to deceive, to cheat and to lie,
The cheats and the liars are doing just fine,
Oh friends, your belongings aren't safe, best beware
For here comes the thief, out of thin air! 545

ACT TWO: SCENE ONE

The royal treasury. Music plays as four SOLDIERS briskly enter carrying a treasure chest, preceded by the MUNIM, the custodian of the treasury. The SOLDIERS place the chest on stage left and take positions—two on the left, and two on the right. The MUNIM sits on the platform in the centre and begins to go through his books. The GURU enters and the CHORUS sings in accompaniment.

550

Offer a judge a Persian rug
 Offer a clerk some cash,
 Offer a peasant a cup to tea,
 Need we say any more?
 With money it's done in a jiffy,
 That we know for sure.

555

CHARANDAS: I fall at your feet, guru-ji.
 GURU: Bless you, son.
 CHARANDAS: I hope you haven't forgotten me, maharaj.
 GURU: Arrey, beta, who can forget you? Your name echoes in people's hearts! Of all my disciples, you alone, Charandas, have brought glory to my name.

560

CHARANDAS: Yes, gurudev, I've stuck to my vow never to tell a lie.
 GURU: As you have stuck to stealing! Only you could manage such a miracle.
 CHARANDAS: Actually, guru-ji, I don't really steal any more either. Thanks to you I've gathered such a lot of wealth! There's only one bit of thievery left for me to do. Once that's done, I'll give up stealing altogether.

565

GURU: What's that one last bit of thievery, beta, that you have to do?
 CHARANDAS: Look over there, guru-ji.
 GURU: You plan to rob the royal coffers! You'll never get away with it. Her royal highness the queen won't rest till you're caught and punished.
 CHARANDAS: Arrey, you say you've collected a lot of wealth—why don't you just devote your days to looking after my welfare? It's much safer.

570

CHARANDAS: Guru-ji, from this day on you can relax. Now that we've found each other again, you have nothing to worry about. I'll never leave you. You stay with me and I'll look after you day and night. I'll just quickly rob the royal treasure and be back right away.

575

GURU: Beta, don't do it, or you'll never be back. There's a new minister due.
 CHARANDAS: Let him come, maharaj. I have just one desire left—to rob the royal treasury. If I can't do that, then I'm not Charandas Chor, I'll change my name. What's that you said, guru-ji? There's a new minister expected?

580

GURU: Yes. There's strict security all over town.
 CHARANDAS: What's the purpose of his visit?
 GURU: He's here to do a stock taking of the royal treasury. The whole town knows about it.

585

CHARANDAS: Ah ha! I've just had an idea.
 GURU: What?
 CHARANDAS: I'll be back in a moment [turns to leave].
 GURU: [following him]: Arrey, listen to me, Charandas—

590

CHARANDAS: Don't worry, guru-ji. Just go to my house. Ask anyone. Everyone knows my place, they'll direct you.

GURU: Listen—
 CHARANDAS: You just stay there, I'll be along in a jiffy.
 GURU: Just look there—see who's coming.
 CHARANDAS: Is that the new minister?
 GURU: It looks like it, Charandas.

595

CHARANDAS:	Guru-ji, you stop the minister—	
GURU:	Why?	
CHARANDAS:	And then keep him chatting.	600
GURU:	Good gracious! Chat to a minister? How can I do that?	
CHARANDAS:	You can do that, guru-ji, and meanwhile I'll do the job and be back.	
GURU:	I can't do it.	
CHARANDAS:	Guru-ji, this is the only request I've ever made of you. I beg you!	
GURU:	No, no, absolutely not. Out of the question.	605
CHARANDAS:	Guru-ji, this is my very last robbery. Just help me out this once. I touch your feet, guru-ji.	
GURU:	Arrey, Charandas, you'll put me behind bars along with yourself!	
CHARANDAS:	If that happens, guru-ji, I'll get you out!	
GURU:	But you'll get me in first!	610
CHARANDAS:	Look, he's come. Now it's in your hands, guru-ji!	
GURU:	Arrey! You'll be my ruination! Why did I even meet you, you rogue!	
	Charandas, do one thing before you go—get me a heap of garlands.	
CHARANDAS:	Oof! I've got things to do, guru-ji! Why don't you get them yourself?	
	[Noticing the HAVALDAR who has entered and is standing in a corner]	615
	Hang on, let me send the havaldar.	
GURU:	Why d'you want to send the havaldar?	
CHARANDAS:	Why so scared, guru-ji?	
GURU:	He's a government servant, isn't he? Shouldn't I be scared of him?	
CHARANDAS:	But he's a pal, guru-ji.	620
GURU:	A pal?	
CHARANDAS:	Yes, a real buddy of mine. I'll send the garlands through him.	
 CHARANDAS steps forward till he can be seen by the HAVALDAR. They look at each other. CHARANDAS whispers to him. The HAVALDAR perks up and smiles. CHARANDAS hands over a wad of notes. The HAVALDAR walks out jauntily with the money. The MINISTER enters upstage left. CHARANDAS freezes. The MINISTER passes him by. The GURU accosts him, and CHARANDAS makes his escape.		
		625
GURU:	Esteemed Minister, may God bless you! May you live for ever!	630
MINISTER:	This is no place to beg for alms, maharaj. Come to the house and you'll get something.	
GURU:	Begging? Not at all! I've been waiting for you!	
MINISTER:	Waiting for me?	
GURU:	Yes, to ask you to an inauguration.	635
MINISTER:	Inauguration? What inauguration?	
GURU:	There are so many concerns and organizations, all waiting for your arrival. When will the new minister come? When will he inaugurate our venture? They've all sent you garlands.	
MINISTER:	Garlands? Where? Where're the garlands?	640
GURU:	You got here earlier than expected, maharaj. They're on their way, they'll be here any moment. Just wait a bit, I'll check—there, see, they've arrived! Bring them here, havaldar, bring them here!	

[The HAVALDAR comes on upstage left, with flower garlands on his baton. The GURU keeps garlanding the MINISTER.]

645

This is from Chhattisgarh, Delhi, India, London, the whole world.

By now the MINISTER is covered with so many garlands that he can't see.

MINISTER:	But I can't see a thing! My eyes are totally covered!	
GURU:	Don't worry, maharaj, I'll be your eyes.	650
<i>[The GURU takes him by the hand and begins to guide him as if he was a blind man. The HAVALDAR hands the MINISTER a pair of scissors. One by one the GURU announces a long series of inaugurations. The HAVALDAR holds up the ribbon, and the MINISTER cuts it.]</i>		
MINISTER:	Here you are, maharaj, a cycle shop. Please inaugurate it. [They go through the charade] This is a ration shop. [Repeat] And this is a shoe shop. A cloth shop. A paan shop.	655
GURU:	And this? What's this?	
MINISTER:	The government has made the first public latrine in the city. Please inaugurate it. And this is ... this is ... I don't know what this is, but please inaugurate it all the same.	660
GURU:	Is it over? Have we finished?	
MINISTER:	Not yet, minister-ji. We still have a few market places left to visit. People are waiting eagerly for you. Come, come with me. There's a lot to inaugurate yet.	665
<i>He leads the MINISTER off. The HAVALDAR follows. CHARANDAS comes on from the other side, posing as a minister of the Treasury. He freezes till they pass. Then he confronts the SENTRY and the MUNIM authoritatively.</i>		
CHARANDAS:	Why haven't you shaved today?	670
MUNIM:	Minister-ji, minister-ji [keeps bowing, ushers CHARANDAS in].	
CHARANDAS:	Where's the key?	
MUNIM:	Here it is, maharaj.	
CHARANDAS:	Where's the treasure chest?	
MUNIM:	There it is, maharaj.	675
CHARANDAS:	Get back to your work. [The MUNIM returns to his place. CHARANDAS goes up to the chest. He unlocks the chest.] Ah ha! Diamonds! Precious stones! Silver! Gold bricks! But I don't want any of it. Wait—I'll take these gold coins, though. They have the queen's insignia on them. One, two, three, four, five—that's enough. What's the point of more? Five mohurs are more than enough for her to know that she was robbed.	680
<i>He throws the keys back to the MUNIM and departs. He finds himself face to face with the real MINISTER at the gate. He salutes the MINISTER by folding his hands silently. The MINISTER reciprocates. CHARANDAS begins to walk out. The MINISTER, who has been struck by his clothes, turns around for another look. CHARANDAS salutes him again and runs out. The MINISTER tries to enter but finds his way barred by the SENTRIES who cross spears to prevent his entry.</i>		
MINISTER:	What impudence! How dare you!	685
SENTRY:	Where d'you think you're going?	
MINISTER:	Don't you know who I am?	
MUNIM:	Stop him, stop him! Don't let him go!	
MINISTER:	What's happened to all of you? Can't you see who I am? I'm the new minister. I'm here to check the royal coffers.	695
MUNIM:	Like hell you're the minister! Scoundrel, loafer, con man! Keep turning up in new disguises! Minister-ji has come, checked everything, and	

MINISTER:	left. Get lost. Try making a fool of someone else. The minister's come and gone?! Idiot! That must have been some thief! I'm the real minister.	700
MUNIM:	That must have been a thief! You are the real minister! Arrey, please forgive me, minister-ji. Please forgive me! I didn't recognize you. And now that I think of it, that man wasn't wearing any shoes! A terrible blunder, please pardon me!	705
MINISTER:	Go check the coffers. There's bound to have been a robbery. [He sits in the MUNIM's place while the MUNIM goes to check.]	
MUNIM	[<i>checking the contents</i>]: This is intact ... this is fine ... And these gold bricks—are they genuine or has he changed them—no, they're okay. These gold mohurs—one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight—five mohurs are missing. One, two, three, four, only five mohurs missing! Now who's going to believe that someone stole only five gold coins? That's no theft at all! I think I'd do well to keep five myself and claim that ten were stolen. [<i>Pockets five coins and shouts</i>] Minister-sahib! Minister-sahib! Ten gold coins have been stolen!	710
MINISTER:	Ten gold coins stolen! In your presence! How will I explain this to the queen? It's all your fault.	715
MUNIM:	I didn't know, minister-sahib. [To the SENTRIES] Come on, let's go.	
<i>They start to walk off, with the MINISTER leading, followed by the cowering MUNIM and the SENTRIES.</i>		720
MINISTER:	Can't you tell the difference between a thief and a minister?	
MUNIM:	He was dressed just like you, minister-sahib—kurta, dhoti, cap and all.	
MINISTER:	Does anyone who dresses like a minister become a minister?	725
MUNIM:	He didn't have any shoes, though ...	
MINISTER:	Well, you'll rot in jail for this. The queen's really going to give us hell—and you're coming with me to court, to get your share!	

They exit.

SCENE TWO

The royal court. The QUEEN enters in a rage, accompanied by two bodyguards, followed by the MINISTER, the MUNIM and the RAJ PUROHIT. The QUEEN is on the platform, with the guards who take position on the platform. The others are on the stage.

730

- QUEEN: What? Theft in the royal treasury?
 MINISTER: Yes, rani-sahib.
 QUEEN: When?
 MINISTER: Just now.
 QUEEN: In broad daylight?
 MINISTER: Yes, rani-sahib.
 QUEEN: Armed robbery?
 MINISTER: I guess you could call it that.
 MUNIM: It's not my fault, rani-sahib. I thought it was the new minister.
 QUEEN: How much was stolen?
 MUNIM: Ten mohurs.
 QUEEN: That's all?
 MINISTER: The thief is called Charandas, rani-sahib.
 QUEEN: If you know who the thief is, why don't you catch him?
 MINISTER: He's run off, rani-sahib.
 QUEEN: So what did you expect? That he would hang around waiting for you to catch him? Or perhaps he's here, inside the palace?
 PUROHIT: Rani-sahib, Charandas is a renowned thief. It's not easy to catch him.
 QUEEN: Easy or not, purohit-ji, catch him we must. How can we let him go scot-free?
 PUROHIT: There is a way of getting him to give himself up.
 QUEEN: What's that?
 PUROHIT: Charandas has sworn to his guru that he'll never tell a lie, and he takes great pride in keeping his word. My suggestion is that you make a public proclamation announcing that if Charandas is truly as truthful as he claims, he should present himself at your court and confess his crime. He's sure to respond.
 QUEEN: [descending from the platform]: That's a good idea. Purohit-ji is right.
 [To the MINISTER] Send out the messengers and tell them to spread the news that the queen has summoned Charandas to her court.
 MINISTER: As you command, rani-sahib.

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The QUEEN exits, followed by the PUROHIT. The MINISTER, MUNIM and SOLDIERS exit in the other direction. Two MESSENGERS circle the stage, singing to the beat of drums, followed by two SOLDIERS.

The rani-sahib wants it known,
 Known both far and wide,
 A thief broke into her treasury and stole,
 Ten mohurs from inside.
 Charandas, you truthful thief,
 Don't you try and hide,
 Since you are a truthful man,
 Remember your pride.
 Confess your crime in the court,
 At the rani's side.
 There's nothing greater than the truth,
 The truth, tested and tried,
 An honest man, even though he fails,
 Can never be decried.
 The rani-sahib wants this known,
 Known both far and wide.

770

775

780

SCENE THREE

The palace. CHARANDAS enters the court with his GURU, preceded by the PUROHIT who conducts them in. The QUEEN, the MINISTER and the MUNIM come in from the other side.

785

- QUEEN [to the GURU]: I touch your feet, maharaj.
 GURU: Bless you! May you live long.
 QUEEN [calls to her MAID]: Dasi! [The MAID enters.]
 MAID: Yes, rani-dai?
 QUEEN: Bring alms for maharaj. 790
 MAID: Yes, rani-dai.
 PUROHIT [noticing that CHARANDAS is looking away]: Pay your respects. What are you gaping at?
 CHARANDAS [to the QUEEN]: I touch your feet.
 QUEEN: So your name's Charandas. 795
 PUROHIT: Charandas the Thief, right?
 CHARANDAS: Right, maharaj. Charandas the Thief.
 QUEEN: A thief, and so proud!
 CHARANDAS: I do a good job. Why shouldn't I be proud?
 QUEEN: So stealing is a good job, is it? 800
 CHARANDAS: Good or bad, everyone steals, rani-sahib.
 QUEEN: What do you mean?
 CHARANDAS: Others steal on the sly, while I do it in broad daylight, with great fanfare. That's the only difference.
 QUEEN: And you never tell a lie? 805
 CHARANDAS: If I manage to do my job without lying, why should I lie, rani-sahib?
 QUEEN: Thieving and truthfulness—what an unheard-of combination! But tell me—you broke into the royal coffers, which were brimming over with riches, but you took only ten gold coins. What made you stop at that?
 CHARANDAS: Not ten, rani-sahib, I took only five gold mohurs. 810
 MUNIM: Arrey wah! [The PUROHIT glances at him sharply.]
 CHARANDAS: I did it because I wanted to bring myself to your notice. Everyone knows of me—I wanted you to hear of me too. So I stole only five mohurs, just enough to get noticed.
 QUEEN: Minister, how many mohurs were stolen? 815
 MUNIM: Ten gold coins were stolen, rani-sahib. How can a thief ever be trusted to tell the truth?
 QUEEN: Well, minister-ji?
 MINISTER: The munim counted them, rani-sahib.
 GURU: Rani-sahib, Charandas is my disciple. He vowed to me that he'd never tell a lie. He's a thief, to be sure, but he's not a liar. 820
 QUEEN: Minister-ji, I demand to know who the liar is—Charandas or the munim!
 MUNIM: I'm telling you, rani-sahib, ten mohurs are missing from the coffers!
 CHARANDAS: He's probably telling the truth as well.
 QUEEN: Meaning?
 CHARANDAS: Ten mohurs may be missing from the coffers, but I took five, that's all I know. Munim knows best about the remaining coins. 825
 QUEEN: Minister!
 MINISTER: Rani-sahib!
 QUEEN: Who stole the other five mohurs? 830
 MUNIM: I just told you, rani-sahib.

The queen looks at the PUROHIT who is deep in thought.

- PUROHIT [after a moment's thought]: Minister, search the munim.

The MUNIM wails, runs to the QUEEN and falls at her feet.

MUNIM	[pleading]: Rani-sahib!	835
QUEEN:	Well?	
MUNIM:	Please have mercy on me, I made a grave mistake. Forgive me!	
QUEEN:	Where are those five gold coins?	
MUNIM	[removing them from his pocket]: Here they are. Pardon me, rani-sahib! One, two, three, four, five [handing them over].	840
QUEEN:	Get out of my sight! Don't let me set eyes on you again. Liar!	
CHARANDAS:	[to the MUNIM]: Thief! [The MUNIM leaves.]	
QUEEN:	Tell me this, Charandas—you vowed to give up lying but not to give up stealing. Why not?	
CHARANDAS:	But it's my dharma! How can I give up my dharma?	845
QUEEN:	And it must be fun, too.	
CHARANDAS:	Great fun!	
QUEEN:	Very well, go, I pardon you. And you can keep these five mohurs as well, as a reward.	
CHARANDAS:	But I didn't earn them. The coins I earned are in my pocket. I live off my own hard-earned wealth. I have no need for the extra five coins.	850
	By the grace of God I have more than enough.	
QUEEN:	Charandas, you may be honest but you're far too rude.	
CHARANDAS:	I can't tell the difference between being honest and being rude, rani-sahib.	855
QUEEN:	Yes, yes, I can see there's a lot you don't know.	
CHARANDAS:	That's right. [The PUROHIT gestures to him to keep quiet]	
QUEEN:	All right, then I give these five coins to the maharaj for teaching Charandas never to lie [hands them to the GURU].	
GURU	[taking the coins]: Bless you, rani-sahib!	860
QUEEN:	And I bequeath the five mohurs stolen by Charandas to him as a gift.	
CHARANDAS:	But that's my hard-earned money, rani-sahib. You can't gift them to me, I've already taken them. They're mine. Simple. [He leaves.]	
GURU:	God bless the queen! God bless the queen! [He follows CHARANDAS out.]	865
MINISTER:	Just say the word, your highness, and I'll have him arrested. [The QUEEN laughs.]	
PUROHIT:	No, let him go. We should honour an honest man like him, send a procession to honour him, carry him in state through the town.	
QUEEN:	Quite right! Purohit-ji is right. Take a procession of horses and elephants and request Charandas to lead it on elephant-back. Parade him through the town, then bring him back here to the court. I wish to award him state honours for his honesty. Why are you standing there? Get moving!	870
MINISTER:	As you command, rani-sahib.	875

He leaves. The QUEEN moves onto the platform and exits followed by the PUROHIT and two SOLDIERS.

SCENE FOUR

A procession enters, with a group of singers and dancers in front, who are singing and dancing.

Oh, Charandas, don't try to rob Death of his due,
Your name and your fame will be taken from you.

880

The liar, try as he might, can never give up lying,
Nor the gambler gambling though he may be trying,
Oh, Charandas, don't try to cheat Death of his due.

The MINISTER enters, goes off and returns with CHARANDAS.

885

CHARANDAS:

Wah! What a grand procession! So many people, soldiers, horses.
Arrey baap re! Even an elephant! Just look at it, all covered with gold!
Yes, Charandas, and all this is just for you. The queen has ordered it.
You mean the queen's sent this elephant specially for me?

MINISTER:

Yes, she has ordered that we invite you to lead this procession on
elephant-back all the way to her court, where she wishes to award
you state honours.

890

CHARANDAS:

Great! My guru and I will both ride in state! [Suddenly he recalls his
vow] Oh—but I can't, minister-ji. I can't ride elephant back. Please
take this procession away.

895

MINISTER:

Why? What's the matter now?

CHARANDAS:

I've just remembered something.

MINISTER:

What?

CHARANDAS:

I vowed to my guru that I'd never lead a procession on elephant-back.
Look here, Charandas, a moment ago you were more than willing!
What is this nonsensical vow! Think of how upset the queen will be.
How will I explain it to her?

900

MINISTER:

That's up to you, minister-ji. I can't come.

CHARANDAS:

The queen won't like this one bit, Charandas. Come along. Please.

905

MINISTER

No, I can't.

CHARANDAS

[shouts]: You must.

MINISTER

[shouts]: I won't. [He leaves.]

CHARANDAS

[thinks for a moment, then announces]: All you people may go home!
Soldiers, come with me. Did you hear me? Come with me.

MINISTER

*The procession breaks up. The MINISTER and the SOLDIERS follow
CHARANDAS off.*

910

SCENE FIVE

The palace bedroom. The MAID enters, prepares the bed, places a fan beside it and leaves. The QUEEN enters, lies down, fans herself.

MINISTER	[enters, bows with folded hands]: Rani-ma.	
QUEEN:	Well?	915
MINISTER:	Charandas refused to come, rani-sahib. He refused to lead the procession.	
QUEEN:	Refused?	
MINISTER:	Yes, rani-sahib	920
QUEEN:	But why?	
MINISTER:	He said he had vowed to his guru never to lead a procession on elephant-back.	
QUEEN:	The audacity! To spurn the royal command!	
MINISTER:	So I just brought him along by force, rani-sahib.	
QUEEN:	You've brought him? Where is he?	925
MINISTER:	Bring him in!	
<i>SOLDIERS lead in CHARANDAS tied with rope. His GURU is with him.</i>		
QUEEN:	What have you done, minister-ji? By whose orders have you done this? I said I wished to honour him for his honesty and you've dragged him here like an animal!	930
MINISTER:	Your highness, I thought—a common thief flouts the queen's orders, if I don't take action against him, how will I explain things to the queen? So I ordered him bound and brought here by force.	
QUEEN:	Whose orders prevail here? Mine? Or the minister's?	935
MINISTER:	I didn't know, your highness. I'm a new minister.	
QUEEN:	Listen carefully, then, and don't you ever forget it! Not a leaf stirs in this kingdom without my orders. Untie him at once!	
MINISTER:	Untie him. [The SOLDIERS set CHARANDAS free.]	
QUEEN:	Dasi, serve the food! I ask your pardon, Charandas. Here, have something to eat. [The MAID and two SOLDIERS bring in dishes of food. The main dish is placed on the platform.] Come, this feast is in your honour, you must eat.	940
<i>CHARANDAS comes up to the platform, glances at the MINISTER who turns away, then reaches greedily for food. He sees the GURU staring at him just as he is about to put the first morsel into his mouth. He drops it.</i>		
QUEEN:	What's the matter, Charandas? Help yourself! Why have you stopped?	945
CHARANDAS:	It's nothing, rani-sahib.	
QUEEN:	Do you suspect something? Shall I eat first, to reassure you?	950
CHARANDAS:	No, no.	
QUEEN:	Then what is it?	
CHARANDAS:	I won't eat this, rani-sahib.	
QUEEN:	Don't you like the food?	
CHARANDAS:	It's not that.	955
QUEEN:	Is it against your principles to dine at the queen's table? Answer me!	
GURU:	Rani, he's vowed never to eat off a golden platter.	
QUEEN:	Yet another vow! Look, forget your vow, and obey my command instead. [Pause] Eat something! Charandas. [Pauses, then shouts]	
	I order you to eat. What? You won't? Tell me straight, will you eat	960

or not? [CHARANDAS pushes away the plate in anger] Minister-ji, Charandas has insulted the state. Put him behind bars.

MINISTER: Arrest him!

The SOLDIERS catch hold of him and carry him off. CHARANDAS calls out.

965

CHARANDAS: Gurudev!

GURU: Bless you, my son! Bless you.

The GURU and the MINISTER leave. The QUEEN paces up and down, talking to herself.

QUEEN: How could I? What have I done? [Calls out to her MAID] Dasi! 970

MAID: Rani-ma.

QUEEN: Call him back.

MAID: Whom, rani-ma?

QUEEN: Charandas. Here, take the keys. [She hands over the keys.]

MAID: Yes, rani-ma. 975

QUEEN: Be careful. Don't let anyone see you. Use the back door.

MAID: Yes, rani-ma.

She exits. The QUEEN continues to pace up and down. The MAID returns and bows.

QUEEN: Well? 980

MAID: He's here, rani-dai, in the outside room.

QUEEN: Did anyone see you?

MAID: Not a soul. We came through the back door. Here are the keys, rani-ma [*hands them over*].

QUEEN: Good. Listen— 985

MAID: Yes, rani-sahib?

QUEEN: Will he agree?

MAID: What a thing to say, your highness! Of course he'll agree! Why shouldn't he? All you have to do is ask. He's sure to agree.

QUEEN: He hasn't agreed to a single thing I've asked of him so far. 990

MAID: He only refused you before because you asked in front of other people. Alone he would have agreed to anything you asked. Is there a man alive who can refuse such a request? If you ask him in private, he'll never say no, I'm sure of it.

QUEEN: My heart is pounding. 995

MAID: Go on, call him in. Shall I go?

QUEEN: What will you say?

MAID: I'll say—rani-ma has called you ...

QUEEN: When you brought him out of jail, what did you say?

MAID: I said rani-ma had summoned him. 1000

QUEEN: And what did he say?

MAID: The poor chap said nothing.

QUEEN: He said nothing?

MAID: He kept asking, is the queen going to kill me?

QUEEN: Then what did you say? 1005

MAID: I said, kill you? On the contrary, it's you who's killed the queen—she's dying for you! You've stolen her heart.

QUEEN: Go, bring him in. But, listen, do it nicely. Don't scare him.

MAID: Yes, your highness.

QUEEN: And listen—you wait outside. Go, now. [She exits. The QUEEN 1010

moves about restlessly. In a moment CHARANDAS enters.] Come in, Charandas.

- QUEEN: Charandas, please forgive me.
 CHARANDAS: Don't talk like this, rani-ma.
 QUEEN: Don't call me ma! My name is Kalavati ... 1015
 CHARANDAS: I touch your feet and beg forgiveness. Please forgive me!
 QUEEN: No, no, don't touch my feet!
 CHARANDAS: What to do? I'm nothing but a thief, used to rough and abusive talk all my life. I have no idea how to talk to a queen. Excuse my poor manners, rani-ma! 1020
- QUEEN: Charandas, there isn't another man like you in the entire kingdom. I have a great respect for you, but it's hard for me to talk of it openly ... Now you tell me—if I hadn't had you locked up, how would I have managed a moment alone with you? You would have gone away. It was the only way I could think of to stop you from leaving! 1025
[checking that no one's about] My life is empty without you, Charandas! I want to marry you. [CHARANDAS pulls away] Look, don't say no. You've refused me everything I've asked of you so far. Please agree to this one request. The kingdom needs a king like you. [CHARANDAS moves away] What do you say? Think well before you answer. Don't refuse me, Charandas.
- CHARANDAS: Rani-ma ...
 QUEEN: Haven't I already told you not to call me that!
 CHARANDAS: Rani-sahib, I can't agree to this. Please excuse me.
 QUEEN: Why? Don't you like me? 1035
 CHARANDAS: Don't say such things, rani-sahib! You're so beautiful, and I'm a man after all, not a saint!
- QUEEN: To me you're a god. I'll worship you, adore you, serve you. No other man has ever touched my mind and heart the way you have. Ever since I set eyes on you, I can't sleep, I can't eat or drink a thing! Charandas, take pity on me! Don't refuse me. 1040
- CHARANDAS: I can't forget the vow I made to my guru, rani.
 QUEEN: What? Yet another vow? Don't tell me that you took a vow never to marry a queen, never to sit on a throne or rule a kingdom!
 CHARANDAS: Yes. What can I say? I was playing the fool. It was just a joke. I vowed never to do four things—and such is fate that one by one each of those things has been offered to me! How was I to know that a queen like you would really want to marry me? Now you tell me, what can I do? 1045
- QUEEN: Since you took these vows as a joke, forget about them. Ask your guru to pardon you. Do penance, if necessary. We can hold an atonement ceremony and gather all the ascetics and holy men and fulfil all the rituals necessary to absolve you. We'll shower your guru with alms and ask his forgiveness. Then we'll get married. All right? 1050
- CHARANDAS: Now I've had it! Sorry, rani-sahib, I can't break my vow. I just can't. 1055
[quivering with anger]: Vow! Vow! Vow! Damn your vows! Charandas, I'm warning you for the last time! Think it over carefully. Will you change your mind? [CHARANDAS turns away. The QUEEN moves about restlessly, then suddenly falls at his feet.] All right, Charandas, I accept your four vows, but you must listen to me. I'll never bring up the subject of marriage again, but you must agree to one request. Will you say yes?
 QUEEN: What's the request?
 CHARANDAS: Never reveal what has passed between us to anyone, otherwise I will be ruined! Promise me this. 1060
- CHARANDAS: Rani!

QUEEN:	What is it?	
CHARANDAS:	You're forgetting something.	
QUEEN:	What?	
CHARANDAS:	I've taken a vow always to tell the truth.	1070
QUEEN:	Vowed to tell the truth! Vowed to tell the truth! You can do that only if you live to tell the truth!	
CHARANDAS:	Rani-ma!	
QUEEN	[rushes to the platform]: Dead men tell no tales! Have you lost your desire to live, Charandas?	1075
CHARANDAS:	Whether I live or die, I won't go back on my word to my guru. I can't break my vow. I beg you, rani-sahib, forgive me! Don't have me killed! Don't commit the sin of murder!	
QUEEN	[shrieks]: Thief! Impertinent rogue!	
CHARANDAS:	Rani! Rani-sahib!	1080
QUEEN	[shouts]: Guards! [ATTENDANTS and GUARDS come running in, followed by the PUROHIT, MINISTER and MAID, all from different directions.] Who allowed this thief to escape? Who set him free? How did he get into my room? Where were all of you? The cheek of this lout! Charandas was actually suggesting that I marry him!	
CHARANDAS:	Rani-sahib!	1085
QUEEN:	The gall of the man! And a common thief at that!	
CHARANDAS:	Rani-sahib!	
QUEEN:	What are you all gaping at? Such a rogue should be slaughtered, sliced into pieces, hung, drawn and quartered!	1090

To slow drumbeats, the SENTRYS advance towards CHARANDAS with stylized movements, with their weapons drawn. They close in on him. They attack and fell him. The drumbeats cease. The QUEEN crouches in distress. The PUROHIT, looks on appalled. The QUEEN slowly rises, starts to walk off, turns for a last look, then breaks down and rushes out in tears. Moment of stillness. The company gather for the final song.

An ordinary thief is now a famous man,
And how did he do it?
By telling the truth. 1100

His heroic exploits, dear friends, are now immortalized,
And how did he achieve this?
By telling the truth.
Thieving was his destiny, he was both rich and poor,
He lived a strange, unusual life
By telling the truth. 1105

Jokingly he made a vow never to tell a lie,
Even though he had to die
For telling the truth.

Charandas the Thief he was, he was an honest thief,
Charandas the honest thief,
Who always told the truth. 1110

An ordinary thief, dear friends, who's now a famous man,
And how did he achieve this?
By telling the truth! 1115

On the last refrain, the entire cast comes on stage. When the song ends, the stage is full.

GLOSSARY

<i>baap re!</i>	—	expression of surprise
<i>baba</i>	—	wise old man
<i>bhabhi</i>	—	elder brother's wife
<i>bhaiya</i>	—	elder brother or male friend
<i>dakshina</i>	—	donation to a guru for providing teaching
<i>dasi</i>	—	female servant
<i>dharma</i>	—	vocation, calling
<i>dhobi</i>	—	washerman or washerwoman
<i>didi</i>	—	elder sister
<i>havaldar</i>	—	sergeant
<i>mohur</i>	—	gold coin
<i>purohit</i>	—	Queen's priest
<i>sadhu</i>	—	holy person
<i>sattu</i>	—	flour

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