

## A PLACE TO STAY

### Song: THE BOAT

The boat which will take you  
Take you far away  
I shall hear about you  
from the white seagulls

Adios,  
You who goes to unknown  
Please remember me  
Who shall be waiting for you

The days they will be  
Far away from you  
Without cold  
And my only worry will be  
When you return

Adios,  
You who goes to the unknown  
Please remember me  
Who shall be waiting for you.

Grandmother and child are waving to mother who waves back from the boat (other side of stage). Tableau freezes and Grandmother speaks to audience between verses.

Grandmother: I came from a small village in Cyprus, Korpaz, which is, if you look at the map. It's the finger part. The reason I came to England was because my father died and my mother had to work.

We were very poor it wasn't right for my mother to work so hard and earn such little money.

My cousin was already here so I wrote him to send me an invitation to come to England. When I came, I came to work and stay.

GEORGE: Three years ago was a happy man, working in the fields, planting food and looking after the animals, when along came Bacchus, Mr. England. (George moves into view doing farm work when he is interrupted at the end of Gran's sp.)

BACCHUS: Hey George man. You still here looking like cow and goat man. You even start to smell like goat, and look at your clothes. Them all tear up. Man, look at this suit me wearing. Look at this shoes.

GEORGE: Them look good. So business going good for you?

BACCHUS: Yeh man. And I can make things good for you if you let me help you. Look at man, you is a good business man. You worked yourself up from nothing. (Now you own land animals, but you can see what's happening to this country of ours. Nobody is safe. You could go to bed one night and wake up in the morning to find robbers steal your goats, all you cows, you chickens and everything.) Man, if it wasn't for my mother and father being as old as they are, I would have gone to England a long time ago.

GEORGE: Yeh, everybody been talking about England. The mother country. Saying how nice it is.

BACCHUS: Yeh man, you could sell up here and go to England. Look, let me show you something. (takes out photos). This is some friends of mine who help to go to England. Them working for London Transport, driving big bus and train.

GEORGE: Yes they look smart in their uniform.

BACCHUS: And they earn plenty money. They earn £20 each week. They send for their family. Everything so sweet for them. You should go. I'll help you to go.

GEORGE: I don't have the money to pay for my family to go to England. And I can't sell this place. Ever since I was a young boy, I wanted my own land and to be independent. I'm not selling this place of land.

BACCHUS: No man, you don't understand. All you got to do is borrow some money. I'll lend you money to go to England, and when you are there in a good job, you can pay me back and send for your family. Man, you can even get yourself aa white woman over there to look after you and feel you up. I know someone who would buy your furniture and things. No worry man, after you been in England five years, you come back home and live like a king. You should go to England, man.

MARTHA: (on boat to England) It's three years now since George left me to go to England. Two weeks on this ship seem like two years, I wept so much the blood nearly ran out of my eyes. Already I miss ma and the child. Still, I will be able to send for them as soon as George and me save up enough money. The Red Cross back home they give me good references so that I will be able to get a job as a nurse in England. (proudly) England need nurses so I am going to help the mother country. Oh George, I have missed you. I hope you remember me. I will be with you soon. I wonder what you are doing right now?

GEORGE: (to audience) What I see going on here was the quickest way to get you and your wife separated. The girls come round dressed up in all sorts

of short skirts, and Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, the men where I live take them and bring them home.

GEORGE: (to audience) So that made me send for my wife. That was trouble I was running away from. I get learnt in that in that kind of way. If you be unfaithful it's very bad. You must try to refrain. Quickest remedy, I decided I must send for her.

MARTHA: (on boat) I couldn't convince him not to come. I want so badly to go home, and him come too. Now I have to just pick myself up and carry on.

GEORGE: I came for a little while, but the time went so fast. And this country pull me down. It hasn't pulled me up at all. If I had three years good money here, I'd back like a king, like Bacchus say. But all I have is nothing. I don't even have a proper house to put my family into.

DHIR 1: When I came from India, I stayed with a friend while I looked for a place to stay.

GEORGIA 2: I had a lot of difficulties finding a house because landlords wouldn't let to people with children.

KEN 3: The landlady had said we wouldn't walk through the front door, we had to go through the back and no-one could visit there. We bought a big basin in which we had to wash because they weren't going to let us use the bathroom.

RAVI 4: I met a lady – she was very friendly to me – she agreed to rent a room to me.

GEORGIA 5: My husband lived in Stoke Newington and we all had to live in this one room in a house with eight other families. We had to queue up for everything from the toilet to cooking on the same cooker 5 of us in one room.

RAVI 6: 3 years after my husband came, I followed him we rented 2 rooms. There was no hot water in that house, and no heaters. The rooms are like prison cells and the walls of the houses are so thin that if one talks too loudly, the next door neighbours can hear everything.

DHIRI 7: I had the experience of living in one room which was like a box. It was 8' x 6'. You see little mice running all over the little room. I had to do everything in that one room. I fell off the bed more times that I care to remember.

KEN 8: I was going to leave my job because I couldn't find a house. A white guy who worked with me told me not to leave my job, and he found me a house.

RAVI 9: We had enough money to buy a house.  
We went to see an Estate Agent. He refused to show us any houses: said we were wasting his time. As God is my witness, he would not believe that we could afford to pay for a house.

GEORGIA 10: Where I lived, all the houses looked the same, I used to leave my milk bottles outside the door as markers so that when I came back I could find the house without difficulty. One day I left as usual for work with the milk bottles outside, but when I came back, I couldn't see a house with any milk bottles. I couldn't find my house and just wandered the streets.

RAVI: I came London from Kartarpur, India, to look after my son. He has had an accident working for London Transport and is unable to work. They paid him compensation, but his spirits are low and his wife that he was not making a proper recovery. So, we sold everything and decided to come and live here with our son to ease his burden.

MOTHER: (Holding bags drawing Father on with her) We'll ,make the boy well again. When he sees me, and I nurse him. (sobs) To think of him like that. I won't know what to say to him.

FATHER: You must put brave front on for him. If he sees you (coming from India) like this, he will not leave any hope for himself.

DAUGHTER: (to husband) They're coming. Be cheerful for you mother. (she tidies up, and herself, and says out front)

MOTHER: (Greeting takes place including son's observance to mother) (over son's tears) My poor baby. I hope whoever did this to you rots. You are shivering. (to daughter-in-law). Have you no more blankets?

DAUGHTER: (Bringing extra covers). I'll fetch some. You must be tired. I'll fetch some food.

FATHER: (To audience) They have no photographs of us on the wall, and no holy pictures. Nothing to make us feel at home. I feel quite lost here.

MOTHER: I'll make something special for you my boy. Soon you will be strong again. Tomorrow I'll start cooking and show your wife how to make you better.

SON: She is a good cook mother. Let her cook for you.

MOTHER: No-one at her age knows exactly how. I had to learn myself. Now I am the best cook in my village (to daughter) and I always cook for the weddings there. (to daughter) So you see... I can show you many things my dear.

DAUGHTER: (to audience) I feared this might happen, but so soon. Everything I do, will be slightly wrong. I can feel it coming.

FATHER: My poor boy. There is nothing we can do to help him. We should go home and let his wife nurse him, but will my wife listen to me?

MOTHER: No (to audience) My place is here beside him. (to daughter) We must brighten the room for him. Together we can make it a happy home.

DAUGHTER: (to audience) I will try. I must to be pleased she is here. But what will she do to my house? Why did we invite them? Will I ever talk in peace with my husband again.

SON: Be comforted my dear. I know my mother. She will settle down. She loves you really, and she can be very helpful with the children.

MOTHER: For me this will be a new life. And I can help her with the little ones and make sure they know our language. It's good to be here and to feel I have something useful to do. Bless them all and give me strength.

SON: Give me strength to get well and make my mother feel she came with reason.

DAUGHTER: Give me strength to live with this woman in peace.

FATHER: Give me strength to live in this place without showing my sorrow.

ALL: Give us strength to live together.

## **THE WEATHER REPORT**

1. When I came here  
It was winter  
I felt cold  
It snowed when I arrived  
and it continued  
slush and cold
2. It was spring when I arrived

and it snowed and snowed and snowed  
it was spring, so they said  
But I still still felt cold

3. It was May or maybe June  
British summer, we were told  
But we still needed heaters  
And we still felt cold

4. We had coal fires in August  
the sky was always black  
we saw no sun that summer  
But there was no going back

5. It was very cold at night  
and it was the middle of October  
days were short  
and we were getting older

6. I arrived in London  
on Christmas Eve  
I had never known such weather  
so cold, I couldn't believe

7. It was not very cold  
at least not for me  
and England is really  
a very nice place to be

Greek woman: 60 of us girls came over from Cyprus. We came under government contract, to work in Wales. In a fruit cannery factory.

After 6 months, how many of us do you think there were left?

14, why, I'll tell, they put us in a dormitory all 60 girls together, then to work.

(repeat). Like machines. One weekend we decided to leave, we packed our bags and took the train to London. I went straight to my brother's house. I haven't seen him for so long. It was decided I should go to work with my sister-in-law in a dress factory.

No papers, no question. Cash in hand. I did this work for 13 years, then, I was called to the immigration office.

## RAVI'S WORK SONG

I was a projectionist. How I loved to watch the films.

This work was hard but satisfying. And I was very well trained.

So when I came here. I went looking for a job at the local picture but the money was so little I couldn't have lived on it for long.

So, at the end of the day, and after all was said and done, I became a dressmaker.

BOSS: (Fuming furiously as e stands beside Helen who is blithely working and is shocked when he suddenly blurts out:) Well thank you very much.

HELEN: (in Greek) Is there something wrong?

BOSS: I have lost all last week's contract. How am I going to turn round to these people and say I don't have your work finished? (furiously to Helen) At the end of the week when you come to me expecting to be paid, where do you think I am going to find the money?

HELEN: Why is he shouting at me? On Friday he told me I was a good worker and now he's shouting at me. (to boss) Seven till seven, yes?

BOSS: There's no point in showing me your watch. You might as well go home for the day. I don't want to see you today. (gestures her off) You try and help these people, but they just spit in your face. What am I supposed to do?

HELEN: (leaving desk and stepping forward to parallel with boss at opposite (sl) to talk the audience) What's he saying? Is he telling me I've got the sack? I can't manage without this job. I wouldn't find another. What did I do? (She turns and drags friend along) This my friend Michel. He speak for me. (Greek bit between them as she drags him into office.) Please come.

BOSS: (to Michael while Helen listens, head bowed) I told her I wanted her to come in on Saturday so I could finish an important delivery. She says yes, and then she lets me down.

MICHAEL

And

HELEN: (Greek bit as he explains and she replies)

MICHAEL: (to boss) She says you only told her she was a very good worker.

BOSS: Oh I see. Now she's calling me a liar.

MICHAEL: No no, I don't think so. Did you explain to her what you wanted?

BOSS: I told her friend because she doesn't understand a word of what I say to her.

Helen and Michael's Greek dialogue

MICHAEL: Her friend didn't tell her what you wanted. Only you were pleased with her work.

BOSS: Her friend didn't tell her? I don't believe it. Why not?

Helen explains motives in Greek

MICHAEL: Her friend was probably jealous that she was being picked to earn extra money, and getting all the praise

BOSS: Now I understand. Tell her to go back to work and ask her friend to come and see me.

HELEN: (on hearing outcome) Thank you. Thank you. (scuttles off to work.)

BOSS: She was lucky that time.

Dhireis(?) Work Song and Monologue

I was born in 1914 with a silver spoon in my mouth  
I had a land, a factory and a Master of Science in Engineering.  
So when I came here I went looking for a job  
Something interesting, inspiring and challenging.  
And at the end of the day and after all was said and done I found a job as a machine hand.

Not for long... I shouldn't have hit him... So what if he called me a bastard... my temper... I did get carried away. (Realisation) Now, I'm left without a job "assaulting a foreman"... they say... "can't let it happen here".

Things here are not what I was led to believe. I'm insulted, sacked... I wonder what next! What a mess I got myself into. I can't even go home with what face can I go home... they will laugh... they will not believe a word I say... In India nobody would say such a thing to me... they would respect my status, my position.

Here I'm a nobody... No status... No pride! (as if found an answer) Pride is a luxury I can't afford. I must learn to be a nobody...

## Ken's Workshop

I used to work with heavy machinery.  
In my garage I would take apart a motor  
And then put it back together again.  
So when I came here I went looking for a job  
A job that would pay enough For I had to live and eat  
And at the end of the day And after all was said and done  
I had to work in a factory

## WAR

War Sirens

- a) Over-locker
- b) Presser
- c) Presser
- d) Machinist

Everyone takes up position of factory

Factory begins

All smiling

- a) Government Surplus Clothing
- b) Trousers and jackets
- c) Sewing a brown piece of paper
- d) Triangular in shape
- a) Covered in solution
- b) Melting the pads of my fingers
- c) Pads of my fingers bleeding

All stop shake hands

- a) 100 pieces for 2 shillings
- d) Buckets of liquid on either side
- A) For fingers to heal and seal (everyone make actions of dipping hands in buckets)

Back to Factory

- b) Tomorrow same thing again
- c) Government surplus clothing
- d) Melting the pads of my fingers
- a) Government surplus clothing
- b) Fingers would bleed
- c) Brown piece of paper
- d) Tomorrow same thing again
- a) Buckets on either
- b) Government surplus

- c) Pads bleed
- d) Brown
- a) Tomorrow
- b) Heal
- c) Solution
- d) Shape
- a) Seal
- b) Soak
- c) Tomorrow

By which time machine has broken all fingers in Bucket.

### INTERROGATION

After working in London for 13 years I was taken to an immigration office where I was asked for my papers.

What papers, I've given all my papers.

I came under a short term contract canning fruit in Wales.

I didn't want to go back, I wanted to stay and work that's why I left the contract.

My parents, what have my parents to do with this, my father's dead and my mother's an old woman.

You want my receipts, here, that will prove I didn't ask the government for anything. If I needed medicine and the doctor I paid for it. I asked for nothing from no-one.

My brother and friends are here, why should I want to go to America or Canada, I want to stay here and work.

I left my Postal Orders with the woman, with 12 days I received my visa allowing me to stay here and work as a legal citizen. But if I leave England for over 2 years my visa expires. But I have my visa, I am a legal citizen.

Blanket. Ravi sings Indian song, cut across by monologue as follows:

**RAVI:** I am from Narkat, India. I came to England with my two children to join my husband. When I received the papers to come here, I said goodbye to my friends and family . When we landed in London, it was very dark and cold. I had knitted a lots of jumpers for the children but still the cold was a shock for them. Everything seemed strange to me and all I wanted was to go home.

**HUSBAND:** At last my family have come to joint me here. I took them first to Gurdwara, the Temple, to give thanks for their safe arrival.

**RAVI:** I was very surprised to see our house. It was so small. And it was very cold. We used to huddle round the paraffin heater in one room.

HUSBAND: It is good to have them here and to go home to them in the evening after work and have my supper waiting for me. So long I have been managing on my own.

RAVI: In my country, our house was big with open space all around. (children rag) Here the children are all cooped up and feel uncomfortable. (She chats to them in Hindi and sings the song with them, while they clap along. They go off at each side singing Indian song as she says: ) As the children grew older they made friends in the school and settled down. (They change into English song which they address first to each other and then to invisible school friends) I felt they were forgetting language. (She calls and gets no response) They could hardly understand me when I spoke to them. (Kids click a bit late and say they'll come in soon, but don't) We were losing touch. (I used to feel very lonely and that was when I missed India the most.) (She calls husband and they discuss in Hindi the return trip, with his speaking some English. Hey call children, who, as they arrive (backs to audience) place garlands round parents' necks.) When we got to India we got VIP treatment. The village looked smaller, but I felt I belonged again. My children didn't like it at first. (kids turn front and lean back to side-front positions they came from) I think my daughter missed the most because she had so much England freedom there, going swimming (?), visiting friends.

GEORGE: How long are we staying?

RAVI: Here she spends most of the time with me and the other women. (removes garland as she says) We couldn't stay away too long, but I was glad we went home for a little while. It was struggle for us all, but now we understand each other better. (to daughter as they gather garlands) Would you like a cup of tea please? There you see, my daughter is teaching me English, I can talk with my neighbours a little now. English people have been very good to us and we have found Indian friends at the temple. But still I want...

Ravi moves forward a little while children shadow her with blanket. She sings and they hum as they move. Still quite far upstage, she begins to talk to us:

RAVI: When I arrived the place seemed very strange . All I wanted was to go back home.

FATHER: (moving forward and looking as tho' entering house with children who wrap blanket round her and shelter in it themselves) We lived in one room. (they sink to floor gathering together) It was so cold we used to huddle round the paraffin heater.

FATHER: It is so good to have them here, and to go home to them in the evening after work, and have my supper waiting for me. So long I have been managing on my own.

RAVI: (still looking at surroundings) In my country our house was big with open space all around. (notices children tugging at her and generally ragging) Here the children are all cooped up and they feel uncomfortable. (she chats to them in Hindi and gets them singing and clapping with her).

CHILDREN: (clapping and singing Indian song, they break away, leaving mother alone while they start singing English street song.)

RAVI: Calls to children in Hindi. They ignore her.

GIRLS: (to invisible friend) Coming. Wait for me.

BOY: Hey, let's have a look Fred...

RAVI: I used to feel very lonely and get depressed. Then I wanted most of all to go to India. (She calls over husband in Hindi. He goes over. They discuss Indian trip with bits of English, but mostly Hindi).

Ravi and husband call children and they come. They travel back up stage together, seeing sights as on tour and singing together.

GIRL: (learning back towards England)

RAVI: She is missing her friends from England.

GIRL: (to Ravi) How long are we staying?

RAVI: Here she spends most of her time with me and the other women.

Family move back up front singing together, girl very enthusiastic about being back. They communicate in Punjabi with parents now (or Hindi) and then in English, and atmosphere is much easier. Mother is more confident as she waves them off, and she is clearly busy anyway.

RAVI: Here we are back in London again. But I am glad we went home to India for a while. The children speak both languages so well now, and we understand each other much better. We couldn't stay away too long. We have a restaurant to run here and I am very busy as many people coming. 'Would you like a cup of tea? There, you see I am learning English and my children are helping me. We have a lot to do here. (She turns to go, and then turns back, as if with afterthought) But I still want to die in my own country. Should I die here, I tell my children that they must take me back home to India.

## **GROWING OLD**

I find it very hard to fill my days  
I read the paper

Sit in the park  
I look at the other elders and think  
Am I like them now

But if I could  
I would really like to change  
Live in a small village  
Where everybody is very close to each other  
We have a strong feeling  
For family  
For children

GEORGIA: Sometimes I get very tired

KEN-DHIR: Sometimes I go and see my grandchildren

RAVI: In the morning, I do my prayers and then eat breakfast

DHIR: I do shopping

KEN: Now everything is too expensive

DHIR: Finish my cooking – I eat at home

KEN: I sit at home

GEORGIA: Or go for a walk

KEN: Read a book

RAVI: I like to watch

DHIR: Just sit and watch

KEN-RAVI: Then in the evening I go home I pass my time like that

I love Hyde Park on a lovely summer day. I usually sit under a tree reading a book and watching people passing by. People with their children playing. This is a very pleasant sight and this reminds me of back home in Guyana when I was a child.

In Guyana at 5 o'clock in the morning the cocks are crowing and the hens are clucking. In the yard we had pigeon peas, ochra, boulangé, mangoes, star-apples, custard apples, sapodilla and papaya.

Grandmother enters

My grandmother was a very good cook. She could take nothing and make something out of it.

My favourite meal was Metagee.

GRAN: The main ingredients are vegetables. First you put the plantains at the bottom of the pot. Then the cassava. Then you have to be careful to add the sweet potatoes when the meal is nearly finished. Then you grate coconut and squeeze the milk through a linen cloth over the vegetables. When the plantains begin to burn you mix your duff and add it.

If you have it, steam some dried fish or meat, and add this to the meal.

We children used to fight for the bottom of the pot.

GRAN: Time for school.

#### HYMN – JESUS BIDS US SHINE

Jesus bids us shine  
with a pure, clear light  
Like a little candle  
Burning in the night  
In this world is darkness  
so let us shine  
you in your small corner  
and I in mine

Jesus bids us shine  
First of all for him  
Well he sees and knows it  
If our light grows dim  
He looks down from heaven  
To see us shine  
You in your small corner  
And I in mine.

#### SCHOOL

We sing God save the Queen from midway to the end.

We used to have to learn a lot about Britain in school. British history and geography. The education in Guyana was the same as in Britain. All the papers and exams came from Cambridge.

School bell rings and we sing hymn.

Evening used to be the best time. In New Amsterdam all the houses were built on stilts and after dinner we would sit on the little porch. With the beatles Chu-Chuing in the background. Children screaming, dogs barking or somebody at somebody.

You see I enjoy being in Hyde Park thinking about the good old days in Guyana, but sometimes I sit here and I think about the thing I dread most and that is loneliness.

I like to mix, I like to know people. I like to have all sorts of friends. Being a bachelor with no relatives, that is a worry but I am not afraid of growing old.

### NURSERY RHYME

Sticks and stones will break your bones  
But names will never hurt you.  
Please put a penny in the old man's hat.  
If you haven't got a penny then a pound will do.  
I haven't got a penny or pound for you.  
Please put a penny in the old man's hat.

We'll huff and we'll puff and we'll blow your house down.  
Paki, paki, paki, paki, paki, paki, paki, paki  
Pakis out Pakis out Pakis out out out

He fell over Officer, I went to help him. That's why I've got blood on my bottle.  
(Winks) Thanks Officer.

Scene opens with 2 elderly people, watching the T.V. is grandfather, grandmother is knitting with 2 grandchildren who are not seen in the scene.

GRANDFATHER: (excited with eyes glued to TV set is mumbling in the Gujarati)...  
See son, I told you it would be very educational to watch Big Daddy wrestle. We used to learn it at school... what? They don't teach you anymore? Then what do they teach you?

GRANDMOTHER: (to granddaughter) go, munni, get it it's in the fridge... (looking to where the grandson is) ... Munna beta you get some as well... Go!

GRANDFATHER: (seeing someone cheating on the screen) Oi stop pulling hair! "Gujerati....." (looks towards grandson and realises he's not there.) (Nudges grandmother). Look! Say something.

GRANDMOTHER: Oh! Oh! Look what you've done to my knitting? It's the third time; you've done this, this afternoon. (Locking towards granddaughter). They are fighting over there and he is raising his blood pressure, the doctor has warned him against this programme. But does he care to listen?

GRANDFATHER: (Ignoring what's being said). The referee should be sitting in front of a TV set, not standing there like a lemon... First public warning ... "Gujerati....." he should be disqualified out

of..... (at this point grandmother butts in a nudges him). (They both turn around to look towards where the grandchildren are).

GRANDMOTHER: What are you doing?

GRANDFATHER: What popping? (After a moment) So this is what they teach you in school nowadays instead of wrestling...

GRANDMOTHER: Has your mother seen you do all this? Why are you doing it here then? Come sit down... jumping like monkeys. What do you call it?

GRANDFATHER: Body popping...

GRANDMOTHER: (“Gujerati.....”) I’ll show you what dancing is... (To children and gets up to put a video on). See This is what dancing is... Look at the grace.

GRANDFATHER: This was the first film your gran and I saw together after marriage. I used to sing to her (Sings in Gujarati) and remember your brother saw me one day singing it to you.

GRANDMOTHER: (embarrassed) The kids are watching.

GRANDFATHER: Let them watch they will do it when they grow up as well. (suddenly realising what the time is) Is that what the time is? Quickly, give me remote. (changes channels on the TV ... Oh! No! Some more dirty business... (changes another channel) ... Oh! Why do they have so many channels! By the time you get to the channel you want the programme is finished. Ah! Starkey and Hutch...

GRANDMOTHER: It’s already started.

GRANDFATHER: No... No... it’s only the titles... (pause) look he’s going to ask for money... (“Gujerati.....”)

GRANDMOTHER: Shhh! I understand...

GRANDFATHER: (speaks Gujarati.....)

GRANDMOTHER: What did he say? Son of a gun.

GRANDFATHER: It’s a repeat anyway. I’ve seen it before. (he gets up at this point). Telly programmes are very well researched here. Down to every detail. Police always arrive on time. In Indian films police always arrive after everything is over. But, here they get on the spot beforehand and as soon as they even doubt you, they shoot straightaway very efficient and organised police force.

## DOMINOES

In the West Indies I would say they love dominoes. I don't know how I started. Nobody taught me to play the game. I just stand up and watch and learn. Over here you don't slam the dominoes that much, because not everybody likes the noise it makes. In the West Indies, when you play you knock it loud. When you make noise, that's the sweetness of the game. When you play the game quiet it's not the same. You have to concentrate on the game, because when you play you don't like to lose. You watch your partner play, you get to know what he has. You play what he plays and he plays what you play. I tell you this is a beautiful game.

HELEN: (Crossing stage in hurry, but troubled by leg pain, speaks to audience) Hallo, yes I'm right, and you? Good. Yes, it's lovely today, but it won't last. With this one day sunny, one day rainy it's no good for the old bones, they stiffen up. Listen, don't think me rude but I must go. You see my son is going to ring me. Yes, from Africa. We made an appointment by letter, so he is going to ring me at his aunty's house.

RAVI: (turning and welcoming her in) Hello, hello. Come in. Sit down.

HELEN: Has he rang yet? Did I miss him?

RAVI: No no, not yet.

HELEN: Good, good... You are knitting again for the grandchildren. It must be so good to have your family around nearby.

RAVI: Oh sometimes it gets too much for me you know: Nanna do this and can you do that. But yes, I love to see them. So how are you today. Feeling better?

HELEN: O.K., except the leg, always the leg... If I didn't have to leave my house for telephoning, things would be a lot easier.

RAVI: Helen, you know this telephone? Think of it is your telephone. You can use it any time you like.

HELEN: It's not that I am not grateful, but if I had my own telephone, my son could ring me any time he needed me. How many times do I have to write to the counci? They say that I am not ill, that I am all right. Are they waiting for me to drop dead before they do anything? I've been in this country so many years now. Why shouldn't they help me? (Phone

rings) Oh my goodness, it's Andreas. (She stands and Ravi picks up phone)

RAVI: No no, this is not pizza parlour (Pts hand over phone and speaks to Helen) Always they get the numbers muddled up, this wretched pizza place. (back down line) This is private house. Please get off the line. (replaces receiver and speaks to Helen) I tell you, it's more trouble than it's worth sometimes, the telephone. I'll make a cup of tea. (she turns)

HELEN: (to audience) I miss my son, especially when Easter or Christmas comes and I am on my own. Now if my son was here, I think myself the luckiest woman. I wouldn't care if I didn't have anything else, so long as I had him near me. (She is now hovering near phone, but when it rings, she jumps back and lets Ravi answer)

CALLER: This is intercontinental exchange. A call from Kampala.

RAVI: Yes, it's for you. It's Andreas.

HELEN: Hello Andreas

ANDREAS: (Moving down stage left) Hello mum. How are you?

HELEN: (On this is a very clear line) It sounds as if you're just next door.

ANDREAS: No, I'm a long way off Mum, In Africa.

HELEN: How are you?

ANDREAS: I'm well.

HELEN: Is it hot?

RAVI: Ask him why he hasn't written to me?

ANDREAS: Yes, it's hot.

RAVI: Ask him what time it is there.

HELEN: Andreas, Aunty Ravi wants to know what time it is there.

ANDREAS: It's six o'clock at night mum.

HELEN: He says it's six o'clock at night. How is Marie?

ANDREAS: (after pause) She is all right mum.

HELEN: What's wrong with her Andreas?

ANDREAS: Well, I'm not sure what to do about her mum. She keeps crying.

RAVI: Is there something wrong with Marie?

HELEN: She keeps crying.

OPERATOR: Your time is up. Thank you.

HELEN: Oh my God. When are you coming home Andreas?

ANDREAS: Well Mum, it looks as though it could be longer than we thought.

HELEN: How much longer?

ANDREAS: It could be another year mum. I'm sorry. (Brrr on line as they are cut)

RAVI: What did he say? What did he say?

HELEN: (looking blankly out front) He's not coming home for another year.

RAVI: (trying to cheer her) That's all right. A year goes by very quickly. It must mean he's doing very well. And what this about Marie? Is she going to have a baby?

HELEN: Well he didn't exactly say that.

RAVI: But he did say that she keeps crying. (Helen nods) Well that must mean she's going to have a baby.

HELEN: Do you think so?

RAVI: Yes, and something else I think. I think we should have a little brandy to celebrate.

HELEN: No, no, don't bother yourself.

RAVI: It's no bother.

HELEN: No please, not for me.

RAVI: Yes, just a little one.

HELEN: Well, in that case, no water.

Indian actor sings:

Hari tu maaru gaadu kyan lai kaina janu... (Repeat)

Kai na jaanu re...

Hai Dharam karam na jodua badadiya  
Dheerajni lagaam tanu kai na jaanu  
Hari maaru gadu kyan lai jaai kai na jaanu  
Sukh ne dukh na paina upar gaadu chalyu jaai... (Repeat)  
Kadi ugai aasha no suraj kadi andhaaru thai  
Hai maari mujhne khanar naathi re  
Maari mujhne khanar nathi re kya maaru  
Rahewanu re kai na jaanu  
Hari maru gaadu kya lai jaai kai na jaanu  
Papan patare sapna sanghrya manni sakad waasi... (Repeat)  
Dagar Dagariya aawe nagariya na awe maru kaashi  
Kyare veran raat vitene kyare waare waanu re kai na jaanu  
Hari maru gaadu  
Kayaan jawanu kye mare rahe wanu (Repeat)  
Agam nigamo khel agochar manma munjhawaanu  
Hai hartu fartu Sharir to chhe pinjariye to puraanu kai na jaanu  
Hari maaru gaadu kyan lai jaai

(Hello! You must make time one Saturday and come with us to see us pray)

I was this tall, I started singing, to win competitions at school.

When I moved away from my family to Kenya this skill really came in handy. Myself and a few friends formed a Prajapati mandal.

We were invited to temples and people's home to pray.

Even while the Second World War was on, but when the sirens were sounded we all ran and hid ourselves.

In 1971 I came here – which was really a parcelling job by the British High Commission, as the Kenyan government was expelling some out. I'd rather not go into that.

I don't regret it, though, because my life here is very much like it was in Kenya.

To escape loneliness I decided to get together with a few other friends from another "mandal" here.

Someone phones us and we phone each other, to see if its convenient and then arrange to get picket up with our instruments.

I'll tell you about last Saturday, we went to Luton, we performed until 4 o'clock in the morning. We do this free, for us it's passing time and keeping in touch. For the people who invite us it's entertainment and to youngsters, education about culture. I'll sing some more to you.

### **BARRIERS**

I don't want to be separated from my own people in my old age. I want some others to be there. So we can speak of old times. We may even sing some of our old songs. We may remember the days that were spent at home, the moon shine nights we sat under a tree or in a big yard and sang together.

We all have loneliness, but thinking of old people from my country, this loneliness is new for us. Back home we would always remember that Granny Margaret lives next door and we children would go over and see how she is getting on, and she welcomed us. Old people welcome a visitor. But there, nobody wants to know, everybody is too busy looking after their own business. And the elderly then remain on their own, until it forms part of their life.

There's barriers between old and young and there's barriers between neighbours and neighbours, and there's barriers between old and old.

If we break down our own barriers maybe we can help somebody else. We have to have a future of using whatever we've got as long as we are here.

### **A PLACE TO STAY – END SONG**

You arrive with a one way ticket  
You don't know how long you'll stay  
Never think of this place as home  
Because you're going home someday

And the years pass like shadows  
You forget how many you say  
But still isn't home here  
It's just a place to stay

And you have your friends, your family  
You have your work that's true  
But the dreams that brought you far from home

Have all but flown from you

So it's here that we find ourselves  
It's here that we'll pass away  
But it still won't be home to us  
It's just a place to stay