

JANGI RAM KI HAVELI – JANGI RAM’S MANSION

SCENE - 1

(As the curtain rises four characters are seen sitting around, mourning and crying. A Clown enters, looks at them and asks a question.)

Clown : What happened?

(All become silent for a moment, look at him and again start crying.)

Clown : O kind souls, what happened?

All : Jangi Ram has died.

Clown : Who was Jangi Ram?

All : The one who was the owner of this mansion.

Clown : *(Glances at the run down mansion nearby)* Is this a mansion, this mansion, this mansion? The one that has twenty three rooms...roof of eighteen of which is leaking, doors are broken, windows non-existent, no light, with sludge floors, dilapidated walls falling apart, infested with mosquitoes...all around you can feel sickness, sludge and helplessness!

All : Yes, there is sludge...there is helplessness....there are mosquitoes...there is sickness.

Clown : But why are you crying if the owner of this mansion has died?

One : Because we don't know anything but cry.

Two : When Jangi Ram alive...we would cry.

Three : Jangi Ram has died...we are crying.

Four : Crying is our habit.

One : Crying is our work.

Two : Crying is our profession.

Three : Crying is in our nature.

Four : Crying is our fate.

Clown : You are crying because you are good for nothing.

One : Yes, we are good for nothing.

Two : Because we are not good at anything.

Three : When we are down, we cry.

Four : When we are up, we cry.

(Start crying just like before.)

Clown : Silent...*(All become silent)* Just think why you are crying?

One : We are crying because we are residents of this mansion.

Two : It's culture and tradition are very old.

Three : Many sages and monks have come here.

Four : Many prophets and avtaars were born here.

One : We are told don't do anything.

Rest : Just keep crying.

Two : Wear a loin cloth, keep crying.

Three : Wear an underwear, keep crying.

Four : Remain naked, keep crying.

One : Crying is our devotion.

Two : Crying is our strength potion.
Three : Crying is revolution.
Four : Crying is our meditation.
One : Crying is planned action.
Two : Crying is our emancipation.
Three : Crying is relaxation.
Four : Crying is salvation.

(All start crying.)

Clown : Silent...*(All become silent)* If Jangi Ram has died then give his place to someone else.
All : But who should we give it to?
Clown : Why, did he not have any son?
One : He did not get married.
Two : He could not get married.
Clown : Was he from a low caste?
Three : No.
Clown : Was he *(sati??)*?
Four : No.
Clown : Was he a hermit?
One : No.
Clown : So why could he not get married?
Three : I will tell you.
Clown : You?
Three : Yes...he was neither a hermit, nor a sage, neither from a low caste, nor a ...*(sati??)*...
Clown : So why could he not get married?
Three : Since he was impotent.
Clown : Now I understand...oh well I understand, that's why he was the leader of this mansion, he was head chief, guide and caretaker.
All : And that Jangi Ram is now dead....

(All start crying.)

Clown : Silent...*(All become silent)* Now that Jangi Ram has died you all have become heirs of this mansion.
All : We?
Clown : Yes, you all.
All : This mansion!
Clown : Your mansion.
All : Hail the mansion!
Three : Not like this.
Rest : Then?
Three : Silver coin white with all its value.
All : Hail Mahatma Gandhi, me and you.
Three : No, I forgot.
Rest : Then?
Three : Silver white with no value.
Rest : Hail the mansion, me and you.

(They repeat the slogan.)

- Clown : O you hail this mansion... The one that has twenty three rooms...roof of eighteen of which is leaking, doors are broken, windows non-existent, no light, with sludge floors, dilapidated walls falling apart, infested with mosquitoes...all around you can feel sickness, sludge and helplessness!
- All : But the mansion is ours!
- One : If people can say 'Bharat Mata ki jai'¹ where -
- Two : 400 million people are constantly struggling against hunger.
- Three : 40 million people are unemployed.
- Four : 25 million sleep on the streets.
- One : 450 million are illiterate.
- Two : 10 million do not have drinking water.
- Three : 50 million do not have hospital facilities.
- Four : No treatment, no medicines.
- One : If people can still chant 'Bharat Mata ki jai'.
- Two : Why can't we hail our mansion?
- Three : Silver white with no value.
- Rest : Hail the mansion, me and you.
- Clown : But who will be the leader of your mansion?
- One : Now this mansion belongs to us, we are a democracy and we will elect our own leader.
- Two : Yes, there will be a leader's selection.
- Rest : Mansion will witness a revolution.
- Clown : *(Imitating)* There will be a leader's selection, mansion will witness a revolution...crying people will make a selection, create a hopeless situation, will cause mansion's ruination, will lead a bogus revolution.

(An election procession enters.)

- One : Mansion's leader, our lady.
- Rest : The one who will remove poverty.
- One : Vote for the lady.
- Rest : Get rid of poverty.
- Two : Mansion's leader, Singh farmer.
- Rest : Our life, our honour.
- Two : Vote for the farmer.
- Rest : Eat all you can, my brother.
- Three : Voice of the oppressed and powerless.
- Rest : Our leader sage Ram, O bless.
- Three : Vote for Ram, make him a success.
- Rest : Drink to your heart's content, nay excess.
- Four : A voice from every corner.
- Rest : Nation's leader, Murari brother.
- Four : Makes dreams come true.
- Rest : Brings prohibition, no alcohol hitherto.
- Four : Vote for Murari brother.
- Rest : With sickness no one will suffer.

(Amidst slogans, all exit.)

¹ 'Bharat Mata ki Jai' is an Indian slogan hailing mother India.

Clown : One candidate old Chaudhary.
Second one a cunning lady.
Third one is a Bihari².
Fourth is slave Murari.
Whom to select now, tell me?
Hear you pauper, hear you commoner
Hear you king, hear you Singh
If you need a job
Choose old Chaudhary, no prob
If you want to remove poverty
The solution is with the lady
If you suffer from a secret disease
Bihari would cure it with ease
If none of these are your problem
Murari will give you a urine solution
Everyone has taken you for a ride
Whom to select now, you decide.

(Drums roll.)

Procession : O victory, to the moneyed & people with resources.
O loss, to the moneyless & people with no resources.

(The procession exits.)

Clown : Mansion's leader has had a selection,
Money has played a role to perfection,
We have witnessed a bogus revolution.

(Slowly fades out.)

SCENE – 2

(It's the same place as before. The Chief enters along with four supporters. They are wearing big turbans on their head and they come and sit with pride. The Chief is seated a bit higher than others. All have a big paunch.)

Clown : A Chief has been elected
Four ministers then he selected
This way he got his flock augmented
There is no groom there is no bride
Mansion's luck saw a downside
A Chief has been elected
Mansion's luck saw a downside.

(The clown freezes to become a statue where he was standing. The Chief and his ministers start talking).

² Bihari – person belonging to the state Bihar, one of the states in India.

Chief : Do you know we had made a promise during elections to remove sludge and dirt.
 One : Yes I know.
 Chief : So what have you thought about the sludge?
 Two : There is only one solution to it and that is to make a drain pipe to flush out the mansion's water.
 Chief : So let's do it.
 Three : But the question is from where the drain pipe would be taken out?
 Chief : It should go from a logical place.
 Four : There is only one way out.
 Chief : Which one?
 One : In front of Nihala uncle's door.
 Nihala : (*Enters, cursing*) I will kill anyone who takes out a drain pipe in front of my door. I will see all of you sons of a bitch...assholes, they think they can take a drain pipe in front of my door.
 One : Uncle, be in your senses....the Chief is sitting here.
 Nihala : I don't care!
 One : The drain pipe will have to be taken in front of your door because the slope is that side only.
 Nihala : Oh yes, houses of poor people is usually at lower levels!
 Chief : What do you mean?
 Nihala : Sir, according to a survey done by his department it was determined that the slope is towards Seth³ Dayal, but I saw him taking a bribe from him.
 Chief : How much bribe did he take?
 Nihala : I do not know that, they hid their hands under their shirts.
 One : This is a lie.
 Nihala : Did you not hide your hands under your shirt?
 One : I did.
 Chief : Why?
 One : This is a secret and it is in the interest of the mansion that it is not revealed.
 Nihala : There is no mansion's interest at stake.
 One : There is.
 Chief : Old man, my hands are tied when there is mansion's interest at stake. If you are keen to find out and make it public what they hid under their shirts then we can institute an inquiry commission for it.
 Nihala : I don't need this commission.
 Chief : So let's carry forward the discussion.
 One : We used an instrument to determine that Nihala uncle's place is lower on the slope.
 Nihala : I have not forgotten your instrument.
 One : This is a scientific instrument.
 Nihala : No, this is an instrument which understands the language of money. Sir, your minister is a thief, I know them for many generations now.
 Chief : How come?
 Nihala : In 1949 he was caught stealing shoes from the gurudwara⁴.
 Rest : This means he is a shoe thief?
 Nihala : In 1956 he was caught stealing a hen.
 Rest : This means he is a hen thief?
 Nihala : In recent years every year he has been caught either stealing or doing a fraud.
 Two : Sir, this is not a serious matter.

³ Seth – rich man

⁴ Gurudwara – Sikh temple

Chief : Who?
 Three : Our constitution does not prohibit a shoe thief to become a minister.
 Four : Our constitution is also silent on hen thieves.
 Two : Our constitution is silent on any kind of thieves.
 Chief : Old man, your allegation may be true but I am bound by the constitution. My decision is to take the drain pipe from in front of your door.
 Nihala : I have taken a stay from the court.
 One : We will appeal in the Session Court.
 Nihala : I will appeal to the High Court.
 One : We will go to the Supreme Court.
 Chief : So the decision is made that until the courts give their verdict we will not build the drain pipe.
 Two : Sir, what will happen to the sludge?
 Chief : The sludge will remain here.
 Three : What will happen to the mosquitoes that breed in this sludge?
 Chief : That will also remain here.
 Four : We fear that disease will spread.
 Chief : Our ancestors have fought against this disease.
 One : This is correct, we are experienced in this fight.
 Two : Yes, our history is old.
 Three : Yes, our culture is old.
 Four : Many sages and monks have visited our mansion.
 Chief : Yes, many prophets and avtaars come here.
 One : We can face any storm, any gale, any disease.
 Two : We have been blessed by the Gods.
 Three : There is some force behind us which saves us from being wiped out.
 One : For centuries the world has been our enemy.
 Four : Hail the mansion, me and you.

(They exit while repeating this slogan.)

Clown : The mansion's chariot is old
 The wheel will remain so, lo and behold
 The sludge that it is stuck up till now
 Will remain in the same sludge even now
 The mansion has a tradition for long
 Nothing changed in the past
 Nothing will change even now
 Born in scarcity
 Will now die in scarcity.

SCENE – 3

(It's the same place as before. It's morning in the mansion. One side people are lined up to go to the toilet. On the other side there is a queue of pots and pales. Three people are sitting on the bandstand brushing their teeth. The scene is played out with background music for some time and then the music stops.)

One : *(Addressing Two)* Could you find a job?
 Two : No, nowhere, I attended many interviews but did not succeed.
 Three : You are looking for success without any recommendation?

One : What say, did you get oil?
 Three : No, I stood for two hours in the queue and came back. You were standing in the queue for ghee, did you get it?
 One : No.
 Three : If you did not get ghee, how the hell I would have got oil?
 One : Everything is in short supply.
 Two : Short supply as never seen before!
 One : It has crossed all limits.
 Two : Now something should happen...for how long can matters continue like this?
 Three : Things are moving, but this is hardly like moving!
 One : Death is better than living like this.
 Three : Brother, why don't you die...it's not difficult dying?
 Two : Consideration for my children comes in...they will struggle after me.
 One : So what are you providing for them right now?

(Laughter, music and the newspaper man enters.)

Newspaperman: Today's newspaper, today's headline
 Thousands of news, minor and major
 Earthquake and floods, fury of nature
 Aeroplane crashed
 Train derailed
 Bus falls, brakes failed
 Dalit girl raped
 Sugar expensive, honour curtailed
 But everything is going on fine
 Peace, law and order are in line
 Minister's statement has his opine
 Today's newspaper, today's headline
 Spacecraft launch a success, was based on good design
 Science's success is in full shine
 Congratulatory message calls for wine and dine
 A big victory oh so divine
 Minister's statement has his opine
 Today's newspaper, today's headline
 Thousands of news, many a storyline.

(All three are brushing their teeth and reading the newspaper, with music in the background. The music stops now.)

One : Oh my, our scientists have done a great thing.
 Two : They have installed a satellite in the space.
 Three : Just read, did they do anything great on land also?
 One & Two : Hold on, we are reading.
 One : Do you know that our ancestors were the first to launch the first spacecraft.
 Two : Our forefathers were the first to fire missiles in space.
 One : Their spacecrafts are still hovering in the space.
 Two : And their future generations are languishing on this earth...those very ancestors were the people who entangled in the intricacies of the caste system.
 One : We discovered astronomy.
 Two : We taught mathematics to the world.

One : We gave philosophy to the world.
 Two : We only started knowledge and science.
 Three : And the world has reached the moon, we are still languishing here.
 One : Big deal if we still languish here...our ancestors were great.
 Two : This is no mean feat!
 One : When the world was still creating fire using stones, our ancestors were eating food
 in utensils!
 Two : When the world was still roaming around naked in the jungles, our ancestors
 discovered the loincloth!
 One : Loincloth was the foundation on which the world's culture moved ahead.
 Two : If not for the loincloth humans would have still remained animals.
 Three : The world moved well beyond that, our loincloth remain as is.
 One : Our ancestors' first loincloth was made of iron, which means that we discovered
 iron.
 Two : That loincloth was heavy, subsequently we made it from copper.
 One : We invented all kinds of metals which can be proved by the various loincloths
 carefully kept in our museums.
 Two : Then the loincloth was made with cloth, which implies that we discovered cloth
 also.
 Three : And now the loincloth is made of wax.
 One : That's why there is so malpractices in this nation.
 Two : There is corruption.
 Three : Just pickles and pickles...no food for this generation.
 One : Our Chief will give us food.
 Two : He is our elected Chief.
 Three : Here he comes, let's tell him.

(Four Chiefs enter. They have closed their ears with their fingers.)

One : Honourable Chief, flour is not available.
 Two : Honourable Chief, oil is not available.
 One : Honourable Chief, ghee is not available.
 Two : Honourable Chief, sugar is not available.
 One : Honourable Chief, cloth is not available.
 Two : Honourable Chief, housing is not available.
 Three : Big deal, God's name is available.
 One : Honourable Chief, at least say something.
 Two : Pay attention to what we are saying.
 One : Open your mouth, don't be annoying.
 Two : At least say something.
 Three : Whatever was to speak has been spoken
 Whatever was to say has been said, don't be mistaken
 After five years they will speak again
 Weigh truths and lies and see what's the gain
 Will open their mouth, till then don't complain.

*(The four Chiefs remain standing with their fingers in their ears. The rest of the
 people become statues in a pose of saying something to them. The clown enters the
 stage.)*

Clown : Empty barrels, empty drums

Empty stomachs, empty bowls
Flour is not available nor is rice
Vanished into thin air or a crevice
I say tell the truth and be nice
Everything reached the black market
Rich people roly poly and heavier their pocket
Gobbled the flour, gobbled the rice
Crying people, screaming people paid the price
Became nuts, oh it's not so nice
The rulers with fingers in their ear
Unstirred and unperturbed, oh dear
Nowhere to go, no one to hear
No choice for people, everything to bear
Why not grab the rulers by the throat
People on the brink how do they stay afloat
Tear apart the rich and their belly bloat
Recover the food, the world please note
People on the brink have to stay afloat.

(Music starts. Everyone comes out of the statue mode. The Chief runs in front and is chased by One and Two. And then they exit. The sound of whistles, stampede and then there is gun fire...a few wounded people run thru the stage. There is a chaos all around. There is din and clamour, flickering lights...more noise and then there is silence.)

Clown : The thief Chief runs around
Hungry people determined to hound
Pot bellies runs around
Empty bellies determined to hound
Gatekeepers of the happy mansion
Police force with their pension
Fire the bullets, fire the gun
Blood bath in the mansion
The thief Chief runs around
Hungry people determined to hound.

(Fadeout. The stage becomes empty.)

SCENE – 4

(It's the same place as before. The four Chiefs are lying around sleeping, with their heads resting on each other's belly. On the other side there are four people sitting, mourning. In a musical rhythm crying and snoring can be heard. This music continues for some time and then it stops....there is total silence.)

One : Such a misfortune has not hit us before.
Two : Every home has an illness.
Three : Two people have died in house number four.
Four : The whole family is wiped out in number seven.
Clown : People are screaming...crying, mourning...but the rulers are sleeping like a log.
(Sound of snoring.)

One : Let's wake up the Chief.
Rest : Let's tell him the troubles we are facing.

(All four go near the Chief.)

One : Chief...*(No impact, in fact more snoring.)*
Two : Sir Chief...*(Snoring)*
Three : Sir of Sir Chief...*(Snoring)*
Four : Sir of Sirs of Sir Chief...*(Snoring)*
Clown : They will not get up this way.
Rest : *(Pointing)* Then how will he get up?
Clown : I will tell you.

(He whispers something in their ears. They nod as if they have understood everything. All four go near the Chief.)

All : *(In a loud voice)* O Chiefs, sons of bitches, get up.

(All get up in a panic.)

One : Chief, disease has spread all around.
Chief : Disease keeps on spreading all the time.
Two : Chief, people are dying.
Chief : People keep on dying all the time.
Other Chiefs : Yes, yes people keep on dying all the time.
Three : Chief, people are crying.
Chief : People keep on crying all the time.
Other Chiefs : Yes, yes people keep on crying all the time.
Four : Chief, there is outcry in the mansion.
Chief : There is outcry all the time.
Other Chiefs : Yes, yes there is outcry all the time.
All : But at least ask why there is an outcry.
Chief : Why is it so?
All : Why there is spread of disease.
Clown : I will tell you the root cause of the disease.

(The Clown is carrying a mouse.)

Four Chiefs : It's a mouse...but where did you get it from?
Clown : It's hole is in the floor of the mansion.
All : We will dig up the floor of the mansion.
Four Chiefs : No, no...that will be against the law.
Clown : It's hole is in the roof of the mansion.
All : We will rip apart the roof.
Four Chiefs : *(Nervously)* No, no.
Clown : There is only one way to get rid of the disease.
All : Collapse the weak and crippled walls, in a breeze.
Chief : No...no.
One Chief : One of the bricks of the mansion was put during the time when Mahatma Buddha attained nirvana⁵.

⁵ Nirvana – attained enlightenment

Third Chief : When Sudama met Lord Krishna⁶.
One : But there is disease in the foundation of the mansion.
Two : It's jinxed.
Three : There is poverty.
Four : Now the mansion has become old.
All Chiefs : But this is a souvenir of our ancestors.
Chief : One brick belongs to Mahatma Buddha era.
One Chief : One brick belongs to the Mughal era.
Third Chief : One brick belongs to the Guru Nanak era.
Clown : But now every brick has bacteria of disease in it.
All : What use are these bricks for us....when people are dying around.
Clown : There is only one way to get rid of the disease.
All : Collapse the weak and crippled walls, in a breeze.

(Music plays and people run helter skelter. They pick up spades, hoes, shovels and forks.)

Chief : If you demolish the mansion, where will you live?
One : The hand that can destruct.
Rest : A new one they can construct.

(They raise their arms, the Chiefs falls down one by one, distraught. One by one they freeze. People have picked up arms and the Chiefs are lying on the floor.)

⁶ Sudama was a childhood friend of Hindu deity Krishna, the story of whose visit to Dwaraka to meet Krishna is mentioned in the Bhagavata Purana. The reference here is to the ancient times.