

## Detailed Act-wise Analysis

### Act I

The Scene opens in an empty hall. The lights switched on. The hall has two doors—one for entrance and another for departure. There is a platform fixed to the wall. There are two wooden chairs, an old box, a stool and many other things collected haphazardly. Some old decayed portraits of national leaders. A picture of the God Ganesh hung on the door.

A man enters opening the door. He sees all around. He is Samant, the villager. He has in his hand a toy parrot made of green cloth, a book.

**Conversation between Benare and Samant :** Miss Benare has come following Samant. She has bruised (আঘাত পাওয়া) her finger in the bolt of the door. Samant says that this happens with the old bolt. The bolt does not come down straight. There is the possibility of being locked within if it is not pulled clean to one side. He asks Benare to suck the finger a little and she will feel relieved. His finger was once bruised and it remained swollen for five days. Benare says that she feels wonderful since she got down at the station. She is glad in the company of Samant. Others who come by train are left behind. She is happy that they have come ahead. They have walked quickly. Benare says that normally she does not walk so quickly but this day she wants to go far away from her familiar friends with Samant. Samant is a little puzzled. Benare praises Samant as a very nice, pure and good person. Samant gets nervous when Benare says that she likes him. She also likes the hall. (Samant explains that the hall is meant for the functions in the village. Women Bhajan group practise Bhajan in the afternoon here. When there is a function, Bhajan group suspends their practice) Benare asks if his wife is in the Bhajan group. Samant replies that he is not married. The green cloth parrot is for his nephew. There is no particular reason for his remaining a bachelor. He earns his living.

Samant speaks about magic shows. He does not miss any amusement performed in the hall. Benare goes close to Samant and asks how the magician shows cutting a tongue and putting it together. Benare goes closer and closer to Samant and Samant backs away. Samant tries to show the magic and stretches the finger. Benare takes the opportunity to get closer to Samant. Samant tries to show the trick. He speaks of hypnotism that is practised by the magician. Benare sees Samant's complete indifference to her nearness to him and so she moves away.



Benare is a school teacher. She speaks about her punctuality and her care for the children and her daiffulness. She teaches children who are better than adults. There are no pride and pretensions in them. They don't run away by hunting anyone. Samant opens the window to give air to Benare. He gives a chair to Benare to sit down.

Benare says that she gives lessons by standing. She keeps his eye on the whole class. Children remain stiff in the class. They love her. She is ready to drop her last blood for the sake of children. People are jealous of her success, specially other teachers and management. She has worn herself out in her duty. But the management is holding an enquiry against her. They can do nothing to her. They have no right or to interfere in her life. Her wishes are own; her life is her own. She has not hurt anybody. She will do what she likes with herself. She will decide (unconsciously her hand is on her stomach) she becomes silent for a time. Samant cannot understand what he will say or do. Samant wants to go to see where others are. Benare stops her. Samant asks if she is not feeling well. She says that she is fine. She sings an English song about love, marriage and Mummy's warnings.

#### Benare's introduction of the members of the dramatic group :

Benare tells Samant that they are going to perform a drama. Their dramatic group is named The Sonar Moti Tenement (Bombay) Progressive Association. They will stage a mock court at eight in the night. There will be some fun about the law Courts. But they have the purpose of spreading enlightenment. Their chairman is Mr Kashikar who has the prime social objective. Mrs Kashikar is an excellent wife of conventional type. She has no children. Mr Kashikar and Mrs Kashikar have taken the care of a young boy—Balu Rokde and they have made a slave of him. Sukhatme is an expert on the law but he is briefless. He will perform wonderfully in the theatre. There is another who has a pipe in his mouth. He is an inter-failed scientist. His name is Ponshe. There is an intellectual who takes pride in his book - learning but he runs away from real life.

#### Other members of the group appeared :

The mock-court to be staged that night is the trial of President Johnson for producing atomic weapons. By this time, others of the group come. Samant and Benare hide themselves. Sukhatme, Ponshe and Rokde carrying two or three suitcases, microphone set come. A Servant carrying two wooden enclosures—Witness-box and the dock also appears. Samant, Benare leap up in front of them with tremendous

sound. They are startled. Rokde is scared that things could have been broken. In that case Mrs Kashikar would have scolded him. He is blamed for everything that happens. He is paying for his sins (Rokde's dependence on Mrs Kashikar and her bad luck).

Ponshe wears thick-framed spectacles. He goes to see the condition of the lavatory. Sukhatme mildly scolds Benare for her childish behaviour. Benare says that she does not like people with gloomy face. They would laugh, play and sing. It is no use having false modesty or dignity. Life is for enjoyment. Samant cites Tukaram, a Marathi Saint to support the view of Benare. But Benare says that she says from her own experience. Every moment of life is precious. Sukhatme appreciates her.

When Ponshe comes, Benare asks him if he had gone to see the arrangements. Before every show, he has nervousness and he frequently goes to the lavatory. Sukhatme says that Ponshe in the witness-box looks very impressive. He has a pipe and all that. No one believes that he is an inter-failed scientist and he works as a clerk in the central Telegraph office. When Rokde laughs in derision (फ़ाट), Ponshe says that he had his education on his father's money (mocking Rokde's dependence on Mr and Mrs Kashikar).

Benare laughs in a lively manner. She says that when she was small, she cried on the slightest excuse on the first day of school. She put fresh covers on everybook. She used to write in beautiful small letters the poem :

"The grass is green,  
The rose is red,  
This book is mine  
Till I am dead!"

She further says that every night the book got torn one by one. Rokde appreciates the poem and notes it down in his note book. Benare advises Rokde to listen at first and get the poem deep down in the heart. Samant agrees that his teacher also taught them verses by heart.

Sukhatme asks Benare to proceed with her story. Benare begins a story about a wolf and Rokde sits down and asks others to sit down to hear the story. Then Benare recites a poem, a Marathi poem and sings a song. Sukhatme and Samant become very much interested. They all start beating the rhythm.

Karnik, a great pretender to experimental theatre appears. Benare continues singing and Rokde and Sukhatme enjoying. Sukhatme tells Karnik that he must be the king of the Intimate Theatre. Karnik praises the hall as very suitable for staging the Law Court. Rokde enquires



about Mrs Kashikar. Karnik informs that Mr Kashikar wanted to buy a garland for Mrs Kashikar. He asks Rokde if Mike's batteries are all right. There should not be any last minute disasters. He remembered how he managed when last month in the middle of the show a fuse blew. Benare mischievously says that she manages morning session, afternoon session and also private tuition in the evening. Then Benare tells to the curiosity of all that she has noticed something about Mr and Mrs Kashikar. They are full of life. Mr Kashikar buys garlands for Mrs. Kashikar and Mrs Kashikar buys ready-made bush shirts for Mr Kashikar. Karnik observes that for such public formalities between husband and wife, there is something different in private. Rokde does not like this unfavourable remark about his guardians and protests mocking Karnik's pretensions to modern theatre. Karnik reproaches him and asks him to stick to his college work. Ponshe wants tea and Benare looks for some chairs. Ponshe says that in the modern scientific age, they must get what they want immediately. Samant brings some folding chairs. He is awed by the Sahib-like appearance of Mr Ponshe. He says that sugar tea is not available. Sugar is rationed and the little amount available is used for children. The suggestion of gur tea is hateful to Ponshe. Benare tries to tease Ponshe and mimics his sound *Hmm*. She knew a girl called Ertim.

Mr and Mrs Kashikar enter. Mrs Kashikar strokes her garland in her hair. Benare is pointing them out to Samant with gestures. Kashikar asks Rokde if all things have been brought rightly. Rokde shows submissively usher's staff, uniform, judge's wig, etc. Mr Kashikar complains that Rokde is in the habit of forgetting things. Kashikar asks Sukhatme if he has brought his lawyer's gown. Sukhatme answers in the affirmative. Ponshe says that he comes fully dressed. He must have his pipe to remember things in the witness box. Mrs Kashikar says to Benare that she meant to buy a garland for Benare and she could not because something happened meanwhile. Benare laughs heartily and says ironically the garland was taken by some small birds. She never wants garlands from others. She can afford to buy garlands. She earns her living. She never feels like buying garlands.

Kashikar and Karnik discuss about the arrangement on the stage-the positions of the dock, judge's chair, the witness-box etc. Sukhatme mockingly refers to Karnik's view of modern theatre. Karnik angrily tells he plays what seems right to him. Samant asks about President Johnson. Rokde replies that Karnik will play the part of President Johnson.

Rokde informs that Professor Damle has not arrived. Benare becomes silent and motionless. Mrs. Kashikar says that Professor Damle has informed over the phone that he was doing a symposium and therefore he would not be able to avail of the train. She asks if Benare has met him. Rokde tells that the next train reach at 9 p.m. according to Samant. It will be late. There is no train now. Karnik tells that Professor Damle is calculating. He sits comfortable at home. Rokde says that he has informed Damle as he has done to others - Kashikar says that there is then a difficulty. Sukhatme assures him that he will do both the prosecution for the accused as well as the prosecution counsel. He is a lawyer and he knows how to do it. Rokde again informs that Rawte who is to do the part of the fourth witness is absent due to flu. Rokde offers to do the part of the fourth witness - Karnik does not agree and asks Rokde to do his part as the usher. Rokde insists and Mrs Kashikar dissuades him.

Sukhatme suggests that Samant will be the fourth witness. Samant is startled. Kashikar asks Samant if he has any experience of acting in a play. Samant replies in the negative. Benare also approves the idea of Samant as the fourth witness. Sukhatme takes the responsibility of preparing Samant for the role. Sukhatme says to Samant that he has been called as a fourth witness for the day's drama - Living Law Court. Samant is puzzled and says frankly that he does not know anything about the Law Court. He has not seen a Court in his life or in a play. Sukhatme says that his ignorance is a blessing because he does not have all kinds of wrong notions about the court. Sukhatme assures Samant that he will make him perfect before the show. Samant expresses his terror of the Court. Mrs. Kashikar suggests a rehearsal of the play with Samant as the fourth witness. Benare has no objection because that will enable her to pass the time before the show. She has brought no book for reading. Samant has a novel by Suryakant Phataphekhhar. It is a thrilling novel. Benare does not want to read a thrilling novel. Sukhatme asks Benare if she is interested in the Bible or the Geeta which they have for oath-taking. Sukhatme wants to know from Rokde whether he has brought the books or forgot them. Rokde feels miserable and hunts the bags but does not find the Geeta. Benare says that she is not so old as to read these religious books. Kashikar suggests the reading of *True Stories* or magazines. His wife reads but he cannot have time to read them because of his social work. He looks at the pictures. Mrs Kashikar protests and Mr Kashikar snubs her. Karnik also accepts the proposal of rehearsal and asks for four or five packets of cigarettes. Ponshe



supports him.

Benare suggests that the rehearsal of a play which they have done for seven times will make the main show dull. Sukhatme likes the suggestion of Benare and proposes an imaginary case against someone. It will make Samant understand the Court affairs and they will also pass the time pleasantly. Kashikar agrees to act according to majority wishes. Benare is ready to play any kind of games. Ponkshe accepts the idea and asks Samant to fetch some packets of cigarettes. He gives money but Mrs Kashikar says that money will be given from performance expenses. Benare takes a face towel and a case of soap and goes to the inner room humming a tune to get herself fresh. Mrs Kashikar asks Balu to arrange the Court on the stage. Karnik asks if these will be the same judge and same counsels and same witnesses. Only the accused will be different. Karnik asks Ponkshe if he knows something about Benare. Rokde has told him something about Benare. Ponkshe has got something to tell about Benare. Ponkshe suggests that the prisoner will be different. There is discussion about who will be the prisoner. Rokde, Karnik offer to be the accused. Kashikar warns that the play should not be a frivolous affair. He offers to be the accused. Karnik says that Mr Kashikar is the judge. Ponkshe is willing to do the role for fun. Kashikar rudely rules out the willingness of Mrs Kashikar to play the part. Mrs Kashikar is disheartened. Sukhatme then suggests that Miss Benare will be good as the accused. When there is a woman on the dock, the case assumes a different colour. Karnik agrees. The question about the charge against Benare comes up. Ponkshe whispers some plan to all with gestures pointing to the inner room where Benare is. The stage is ready. Benare comes out of the inner room singing and looking fresh. She sings about the parrot and sparrow. Ponkshe comes forward and says to Benare that she has been arrested on a suspicion of a crime of grave nature and put as a prisoner before the Court. Benare stiffens at the sudden development. Kashikar sits on the judge's chair and Sukhatme is ready with his black gown on. Kashikar declares that Miss Benare is accused of infanticide under the section no 302 of the Indian Penal Code. Benare is stunned. The atmosphere is gloomy.

## Act II

The Act is a continuation of the first Act. Mr Kashikar as judge repeats that Miss Benare has been accused of infanticide and she has to declare whether she is guilty or not of the charge. Masala Pan and cigarettes are brought. Rokde gives a pan to Kashikar. Sukhatme offers a pan to Benare who thankfully refuses. Sukhatme asks Benare why she is grave suddenly. The play is a game. Benare says that she is not grave and she is only acting the part. Samant says that he cannot understand the charge. Sukhatme says that the charge relates to the crime of killing a newborn baby. Samant says that it is a terrible charge and this happened in their village one or two years ago - the woman was a widow. Kashikar agrees that the charge has social importance. He asks Benare to stand on the dock. He asks for the gavel from Rokde and orders Sukhatme, the lawyer to start. He wants his earpick and finds it. Sukhatme wants the adjournment of the Court for a quarter minute in order to enable all to spit out the pan in the mouth. Sukhatme as the counsel for prosecution opposes it as this involves wastage of time. Adjournment of ten seconds may be granted. Benare is amused and says that only nine and a half seconds may be granted. Kashikar the judge observes that the accused cannot interrupt the Court. Samant is to learn the Court procedure. Karnik says that there has been no normal practice to chew pan while a case is conducted in the Court and so there is no precedent in the matter. The judge's chewing the pan is first of its kind. Kashikar asks the counsel for the defence if he has established the fact that it is possible to spit out pan in ten seconds. Sukhatme agrees that he has. Kashikar goes out to see for himself. Benare comments with a sigh if this is a court of law or a spitting contest. Samant asks Karnik if a real court works like this. Then it is very interesting. Karnik observes that Samant will be guilty of contempt of court. Kashikar, the judge knows that fifteen seconds have been spent for pan spitting. Now the case should proceed seriously. He orders silence of the court banging his gavel. Mrs Kashikar explains to Samant that the pan-spitting episode is just fun and now the real proceedings of the Court start. Everything could be done in the court with the permission of the judge. Kashikar admonishes his wife for talking. Mrs. Kashikar resents the scolding by her husband at every step.

Kashikar now takes up the charge of infanticide against Benare. He orders silence for the dignity of the Court. Samant should be given opportunity to know the proceedings of the Court. Benare mockingly remarks why the charge of infanticide works. They can accuse her of



snatching public property. Mrs Kashikar comments that there is nothing wrong in the charge. Kashikar again bangs the gavel to order silence. Benare initiates a lawyer and says that the wife of the judge (Court's family) should be given a suitable reprimand. She has never committed the crime of infanticide (implying that she has not conceived); she has not stolen any public property except for Milford (the judge, she implies that she is economically dependant on her husband). Mrs Kashikar asks Benare to stop commenting. Samant observes that Miss Benare is interesting. Ponshe seriously comments 'in many respects'. Kashikar issues a reprimand to Benare for disobeying the authority of the counsel and for obstructing the due process of the law. Benare light-heartedly thanks the judge and offers a pan masala for the reprimand. Karnik resents the frivolity. He asks Benare to be serious at least for the sake of Samant who must know the rules of the Court. Sukhatme also feels sad for the childishness of the game. Benare begs to be excused but says that the prisoner has no reason for showing respect for the judge. Not to speak of infanticide, she has never killed a cockroach. She was annoyed with a naughty boy in the school and she only reproached him.

Kashikar asks Rokde to put the book for oath taking on the witness-box and asks Sukhatme to start the prosecution. Sukhatme starts with the remark that motherhood is a sacred thing. Benare intervenes to ask how Sukhatme knows it. Kashikar gives a second reprimand to Benare for obstructing the work of the Court. Sukhatme resumes his arguments. He says that the concept of motherhood is noble. Culture enjoins on permanent worship of a mother. She has the great responsibility to protect and preserve the child. Kashikar adds 'mother and motherland are higher than heaven. Mrs Kashikar enthusiastically adds that mother has great favours. Benare asks for order. All these statements are taken straight from a school composition-book. She imitates the judge issuing reprimand to Benare for disobeying the Court. Sukhatme thanks the judge for his additional remark and observes that a woman is a wife for a moment, but a mother for ever. Samant claps; Mrs Kashikar reminds Samant that he will not clap in this way when the real show will take place. Samant, however, appreciates the sentence used by Sukhatme. Sukhatme continues that there is nothing more base and vile than killing a newborn babe who is a bundle of joy. He would prove by means of evidence that the prisoner has done this devilish thing. Benare addresses Rokde as Balu mischievously. Ponshe is annoyed. He is called as the first witness. He is described by the lawyer as the world famous scientist. Ponshe enters the witness-box.

Rokde places the big volume (Oxford English Dictionary before him). He takes the oath. Benare laughs when Ponshe says that he will tell the truth, nothing but the truth. Rokde says that he has forgotten to bring the Geeta and brought the Dictionary by mistake. Benare calls him unfortunate and Rokde angrily reacts. Mrs Kashikar asks Samant to observe the examination of the witness. Sukhatme asks Ponshe if he knows the accused and her social status. Ponshe answers that she is a teacher. On being asked if the accused is married or not, Ponshe replies that this can be best answered by the accused herself. When Sukhatme insists on his answering the question, Ponshe says that to the public she is unmarried. Benare interrupts to ask what to the private eye. Kashikar again warns Benare and advises self-control. He goes to the lavatory asking Sukhatme to continue. Mrs Kashikar remarks to her husband that this habit of going to the lavatory in the midst of prosecution during the real show will not be right.

Sukhatme continues and asks about the moral conduct of the accused. Benare again intervenes to say how he would know the moral conduct of a normal unmarried woman. Ponshe does not pay attention to what Benare says and remarks that she runs after men too much. Benare provokes him saying 'stop, stop' unfortunate man. Sukhatme charges Benare with committing the contempt of Court. Benare jocularly (छेड़छाड़) replies that the Court (meaning the judge) has gone to the lavatory. Samant laughs. Sukhatme addresses Benare and says that it is very difficult to tackle her. He remarks that nobody is serious. He again asks if the accused has any close relationship with any man - married or unmarried. Benare again interrupts asking if she has relationship with the counsel for prosecution, with the judge etc. with Ponshe, Balu or Karnik. Rokde warns Benare that she will be in trouble (if she continues to provoke them by her mocking remarks). Ponshe tells Sukhatme that there is no point in continuing the farce of a trial. Nobody is serious; the judge has gone to the inner-room. Benare is acting light-heartedly. Karnik comments that even the rehearsals are done in right earnest. Mrs Kashikar asks Benare not to create trouble. The real show at night will be a flop if Benare behaves in this manner.

Kashikar comes back from the inner room and asks Sukhatme to continue. Benare says that she will go out for a walk through the village. She will have some fresh air. Karnik wants the trial to stop. Mrs Kashikar asks Benare to complete the trial. Kashikar announces that hearing must continue. He has found out his earpick. Mr Kashikar asks Ponshe if he finds anything odd in the behaviour of the accused.



Ponkshe answers that sometimes she behaves as if she is insane. There is no sense in her actions. Ponkshe gives an example. Once she arranges his marriage. At the moment she sticks out her tongue like a mad woman. Kashikar asks Ponkshe to sit down and summons Karnik as a witness.

Karnik takes the oath and declares that he is proud of being an actor. Karnik hesitates to answer if he knows the lady. He says that he thinks he knows the lady. Sukhatme asks what he means by 'think'. Karnik answers 'truth is stranger than fiction'. Then he says that she is a member of the group that performs the living Law Court. The theatrical performances are tremendously popular. Karnik's conduct and speech are theatrical. Kashikar asks Karnik about the description of a mother in the plays he performs. Karnik says that modern plays are all about the uselessness of life. Kashikar intervenes to say that he disagrees. Man must have a purpose in life. As to the definition of a mother, Karnik says that mother is one who gives birth. Motherhood means giving birth to a child. Kashikar remarks that even a bitch gives birth to pups. A bitch is a mother. Benare, at this stage bucks up Karnik. Kashikar wants straight answers from Karnik. He should keep his theatrical form for the performance at night. Sukhatme asks Karnik his opinion about the moral conduct of the prisoner. He replies that he does not know anything about the moral conduct of the prisoner. Sukhatme then asks him if he has ever found the prisoner in a compromising situation. Karnik says that he has not seen her in such situation but Rokde can testify. Rokde is confused. Sukhatme is pleased to elicit a secret. He thanks Karnik and asks him to sit down. Sukhatme summons Rokde as a witness. Rokde is trembling with nervousness. Ponkshe asks Karnik what Rokde saw. Karnik says it is just a joke. The game must go on. Sukhatme asks Rokde his name, occupation etc. He wants him to throw further light on the hints given by Karnik. Mrs Kashikar urges him to give a marvellous and complete evidence. He has got a chance to play a role. He must make use of it. Sukhatme questions him what he saw. Rokde is disturbed and cannot utter words. Sukhatme takes the pose of a lawyer and questions him about what he saw. Rokde is sweating. He has almost a hellish experience. Benare is laughing, Kashikar ridicules him; Mrs Kashikar urges him to say without fear. Benare taunts him by saying 'speak, Balu, A-B-C. This makes Rokde furious. He can no longer bear with ridicule and taunts. He says that he will tell everything to the lawyer. He went to the house of Professor Damle once in the evening and saw there Miss Benare. Rokde relieves himself as if by avenging the

taunts of Benare. Sukhatme is enthusiastic and asks Rokde what he saw in Professor Damle's house when night was falling. Mr Kashikar objects that this is a personal matter. Sukhatme however says that this has relevance to the trial.

Benare now intervenes and says that this has nothing to do with the trial. She objects to her private life being dragged into the trial. She is free to visit whom she wants. She can visit Professor Damle who was not eating her up. Sukhatme asks Benare to stop interfering and tells Rokde to continue. The game has become funny. Benare should not spoil it. Rokde continues to say that they (Professor Damle and Benare) were sitting there. On being further questioned, he says that that's all. Sukhatme who is getting enthusiastic becomes disappointed. Rokde says that he got a shock to find Benare and Professor Damle sitting when night was falling. Benare taunts him by saying that he is a baby. Rokde is provoked. He asks Benare why her face fell when she saw him there. Damle got rid of him. He did not let him to go in. But whenever he had gone there, Professor Damle invited him into the room. Benare laughs and says that Professor Damle can say why he got rid of Rokde. Her face fell because Damle snubbed Rokde in front of her. Her face was in the right place. Sukhatme concludes that Benare's behaviour is certainly suspicious. Benare objects. She may be seen in her principal's room. She can give names and addresses of twenty five more people whom she meets alone. Sukhatme asks Kashikar to record what Benare says. Benare continues and says that she was alone with Samant a little while ago. All these are suspicious. Sukhatme does not know the meaning of suspicion. Samant rises now and says that Benare behaved in a very exemplary manner. They talked about hypnotism and all these. Sukhatme requests the judge to note the word hypnotism. Kashikar asks the lawyer if all these evidences are within the jurisdiction of the Court. Karnik observes that this is just a rehearsal; Ponkshe says that this is a game and there is nothing serious. Sukhatme is a good lawyer. He cannot understand why his practice at the real Court is so small. Samant tries to explain what he means by hypnotism. Ponkshe stops him by saying that this is just a joke. Karnik wants the case to go on. Mrs Kashikar finds the whole affair getting interesting. She asks Sukhatme to continue.

Sukhatme now summons Samant as the fourth witness. Samant stands up confused and distrustful. Mrs Kashikar exhorts him to answer. He may not remember the details. He should not be scared. This is a practice trial; the real one will take place at night. Rokde is not found.



Samant gives his name and occupation and takes the oath. He takes pride in the fact that he is not frightened. In response to the question of Sukhatme, Samant says that he knows Benare and that she is a nice lady. When Sukhatme observes that one cannot form an impression or opinion about a person in two hours, Samant vehemently answers that it is possible. His mother used to say that a person's worth can be summed up in one minute.

Benare is sitting in the dock. Her eyes are closed as if she has fallen asleep. But Benare denies that she is asleep. She never sleeps when she wants to. Sukhatme says that he falls asleep in a flash. Kashikar advises to put corn oil on the head and rub it well. Corn oil gives him peaceful sleep whenever he is vexed with social problem. Calm brain gives calm sleep.

Samant wants to be questioned. Sukhatme asks Samant to tell what he saw or heard when he went to Professor Damle's house half an hour after Rokde had seen Damle and Benare there. Samant at first refuses to say because he can't go to Damle's room in Bombay from his village. He is assured that this is all imaginary and for the sake of trial, somethings are to be taken for granted. Ponshe mockingly remarks that only the accused is real. Samant feels confused. Samant continues that he reached Damle's house; there was darkness; and silence. The door was locked from inside. He rang the bell. An unknown man, Professor Damle stood before him. Damle asked whom he wanted. Samant wanted to see Professor Damle. He said that Professor Damle was not at home. He slammed the door shut. He wished to press the button once again because he had an important errand. He wanted to arrange a lecture by Professor Damle. He was thinking how he could go back without arranging the lecture. At this time he heard someone crying. It was a woman's voice. He could not understand who was crying. He thought that it might have been a female member of the home. But the crying was secretive. He stood there. Then he heard some words. Ponshe, Karnik are interested and want to know who spoke. Samant snubs them and wants the counsel to ask him. Mrs Kashikar is also curious. But Samant will speak only to the lawyer. Sukhatme asks him to tell what he heard as far as he remembers. Samant hurriedly looks at the book which he carries and begins to read from the book. As a matter of fact, he is speaking from book. Now he forgets the words in the book and so he looks at the book and reads from it. The details in the book fit in with the case of Benare. The woman asked the man what she would do if he abandoned her. Professor Damle said that it was her affair. He must

protect his reputation although he had sympathy for her. The woman said that he was heartless. Professor Damle said that Nature is heartless. The woman continued that if he abandoned her she would have no other choice than to take her life. Professor Damle said that he could do nothing if she killed herself. The threat would not make him move an inch from his stand. The woman said that he would be responsible for killing the two living beings. Professor Damle gave a terrific laugh.

Benare can no longer endure this. She cries out that it is a lie and it should be stopped. Benare says it is made up. Samant agrees because Samant was reading a passage from the book. He does not know that the details related there tally with what happened with Benare. Samant shows the book and says that what he had said was from the book. Benare is furious and will not allow further proceedings. She threatens to smash everything to bits. Mrs Kashikar suggests to Benare why she is angry if her conscience is clear. Benare shouts that they have all conspired against her. Sukhatme, however, wants to know more. Samant hurriedly consults his book. Benare threatens him. Samant can not find the page.

Sukhatme draws the attention of the judge to what has been related and asks him to note down the entire evidence against the accused. This is sufficient to establish her guilt. Benare is extremely agitated and asks the judge to note down the evidence. She is full of tears but she defies the judge and asks him what he will do to her. Samant cannot understand what has happened. He has given the evidence innocently. He does not know that his evidence though related from a book has been deadly for Benare.

Kashikar observes that the trial has been enjoyable. The social life is spoiled. Sukhatme remarks that thoughtful man like them should consider the matter seriously. Sukhatme suggests that thoughts and feelings are not enough. They must get together to act. He knows that what happened is a mystery but he knows the answer to the mystery. All are eager to know the mystery. Sukhatme says that there is some substance in what Samant has said. It is applicable to the case of Benare.

Benare is in the doorway. She picks up her bag and purse and goes towards the other door and unbolts it. But the door does not open. It is shut from outside. Benare has thus no escape route. She is shut up in the room and in the hands of her persecutors. Samant explains that mishandling of the bolt has looked the door from outside. There is no one outside to open the door. Kashikar suggests that in the



circumstances the case should continue. Sukhatme agrees and summons Benare, the accused to the witness box.

### Act III

The Act is a continuation of the previous act and the actors are in their positions as they were in the Second Act.

Sukhatme bows to the judge and requests him to summon the accused on the witness box. Benare is summoned but she remains still and silent. Kashikar exclaims that such insolence at the Court is incredible. He asks the usher Rokde to conduct Benare to the witness box. Mrs Kashikar goes and starts pulling Benare to the witness box. Sukhatme asks the Lordship to wear his gown in view of the grave nature of the case. Sukhatme puts on his black gown and prays twice or thrice. He says that his father taught him the habit of praying to family God at the beginning of any enterprise. Then he starts business. Benare is asked to take the oath but she is silent. Mrs Kashikar takes the dictionary and asks Benare to repeat the oath. Benare remains silent as usual. Mrs Kashikar declares that she has taken the oath as her hand was on the dictionary. Kashikar warns Benare that the Court would not tolerate her insolence as it constitutes the contempt of Court. Karnik asks Sukhatme to fire questions. Sukhatme asks Benare to tell the Court her age. Benare does not answer any questions in spite of repeated warnings of the judge. Mrs Kashikar calculates that Benare will be over thirty two. Mr Kashikar refuses to accept someone else's answer and expresses extreme resentment at the rudeness of the accused. He gives ten seconds to the prisoner to answer. But Benare is as silent and still. Sukhatme withdraws his question and Kashikar is satisfied with the inference that she is not less than thirty-four. He observes that the custom of child marriage should be revived. The sexual wantonness (सौम्य ऐश्वर्या) happens during the adolescent period.

Sukhatme asks to tell the Court why she is unmarried till such advanced age. He puts the question in another way. How many chances of marriage has she missed?

Benare's silence becomes intolerable to the judge. Sukhatme closes the examination of the accused for the time being. Benare comes down from the witness-box and goes to the door but it is locked from outside. Mrs Kashikar leads her to the dock. She enters the witness box. Kashikar is surprised. Sukhatme has not summoned her but she has entered the witness-box voluntarily. Mrs Kashikar says that she has

already taken the oath. Sukhatme asks Mrs Kashikar how Miss Benare remains unmarried till such a late age. Mrs Kashikar answers that this happens these days. A woman gets everything without marriage. Any woman can get married if she wishes. But it is the fashion of modern women who earn. Sukhatme asks Mrs Kashikar to explain everything. Mrs Kashikar is embarrassed to explain it. Kashikar asks his wife not to be shy at her old age. Mrs Kashikar says that everything means everything. She gives examples. Benare behaves freely. She laughs loudly, sings, dances, jokes. She wanders about with men always. Sukhatme is not satisfied with the explanations of everything. What Mrs Kashikar says may suggest that she is free. Mrs Kashikar says almost spitefully that she is free but why she would have Professor Damle alone to see her home after a performance. Sukhatme now has got a point. Once she and her husband sometimes in September (She wants confirmation from her husband but Kashikar refuses to prompt her) asked Benare to come to their car and they would drop her at her home. But she went off with Damle secretly. Mrs Kashikar draws the attention of the lawyer that Benare is no longer protesting. She is dumb. Sukhatme points out that Professor Damle is a family man. Mrs Kashikar adds that she has five children. Sukhatme observes that she may have been in the company of Professor Damle innocently as a responsible elder person. Mrs Kashikar reacts and says that Damle is an elder person and they are vagabonds. She then refers to the case of Balu (Rokde). Sukhatme asks what has happened with Rokde. Mrs Kashikar replies that after one performance, she proposed to Balu in the dark. Balu told her about what happened. There is agitation all around, Benare becomes tense, Karnik is not agitated. Rokde is confused. Samant objects to the insinuation (संज्ञित); Sukhatme is bright and enthusiastic.

Sukhatme asks Mrs Kashikar to step down and calls Rokde on the witness box. Mrs Kashikar tells Balu to speak the truth. Sukhatme asks Rokde to tell truthfully what happened that night after the performance. Rokde says that Benare held his hand in the dark after the show at Dombivli. Sukhatme tells the judge that the accused had committed an outrage on a boy like Rokde and even threatened him with consequences if he disclosed the matter.

Ponkshe is called to give his evidence. Ponkshe tells the Court that Benare keeps a bottle of Tik-20 (Poison) in her purse. He came to know it when he was invited ten days ago by Benare to see her at udipi restaurant for important talks. He went there and Benare came there looking guilty. They sat in a family room. When Benare's problem was



discussed, she opened her purse to take her handkerchief and the small bottle of Tik 20 fell. Ponshe then told the detailed discussions with Benare. She expressed her desire to marry him. She was pregnant. He cannot disclose the name of the man responsible for it because he is oath-bound. Kashikar asks Ponshe to tell the details of their conversation because it is a matter of social importance. Benare shouts to Ponshe not to tell. Benare is dragged to the dock. Ponshe begins saying what happened with Benare. First, talks were aimless. Benare spoke about Sukhatme's goodness and ill luck as a lawyer, Kashikar's torment of poor Rokde. Then the real issue was taken up. She asked Ponshe whether he is engaged to any girl and what type of girl was to his liking. A mature girl would be one who had experience. When he asked if she had any promising bride in her mind she said cryptically that she had the kind he wanted. The girl had some unusualness. The girl had a shattering heart break and the fruit of her love was in her womb. She wanted to bring up the child. She could love only for the child. Ponshe says that he grew suspicious. When he wanted to know the scoundrel who was responsible, she answered that it was Professor Damle. She however, did not like to call him a scoundrel. She loved him. He might be great and she was not able to convince him how she felt for him. She worshipped the man's intellect. But she could not find a place in Damle's life.

Kashikar bangs in the table and says that the secret is out. Ponshe continues that Benare fell at his feet (with the proposal of marriage). But Ponshe refused to oblige her. He was not so worthless. Benare got up and laughed. She said that it was all a joke. She burst out laughing. But tears in her eyes made everything clear. She went off in a hurry.

Sukhatme says that the evidence makes everything clear. She at first proposed to Ponshe and then to Rokde. Karnik now comes to the witness box and tells the court that it was not Rokde who slapped Benare but Benare slapped Rokde. He had seen the whole incident talks between Rokde and Benare from the distance. He gave the details of the he had decided about her proposal. Rokde answered that he could not do anything without the permission of Mrs Kashikar. The accused assured him of supporting him. He would be independent. Rokde replied that he was scared, and the society would slander him. He asked her not to depend on him. He would tell everything to Mrs Kashikar upon this, the accused slapped him. He has also another information to give the Court. It is very relevant. He says that he came to know a cousin of

the accused. The cousin told him that the accused tried to commit suicide because of a disappointment in love with her maternal uncle at the age of fifteen. Sukhatme concludes that it was an immoral relationship. The accused is licentious, smeared in sin.

Kashikar observes that the case has great social significance. He will cast aside his judge's role and will give evidence. Thus the tradition of the Court is broken. Kashikar observes that these grown up unmarried girls are sinful cankers in the society. Sukhatme takes a lawyer's pose and warns Kashikar against giving any opinion unless he is asked for. He is now a witness and will give evidence if he has anything about the case. Kashikar then states that he often visits the famous leader Nanasaheb Shinde of Bombay. Their bond is that of a common love of social work. He is the chairman of the education society. Recently at his house he heard a conversation in the next room between Nanasaheb and another familiar voice. When Nanasaheb came, he asked about the conversation. Nanasaheb replied that a school mistress had come there. She wanted to drop an enquiry against her. He could not deny her straight out. He asked her to call on him again. Kashikar realised that the woman was Benare. Kashikar further informs that this morning he went to Nanasaheb's house to offer him a garland on his birthday. There Nanasaheb was speaking angrily to someone over the phone. Kashikar heard him saying that it was a sin to be pregnant before marriage. It would be immoral to let such a woman to teach. She should be dismissed. He instructed the man on the phone to send the order of dismissal for his signature. Benare is shocked to hear that she has been dismissed. Sukhatme observes that she has been rightly served. There is the proverb "as you sow, so shall you reap." He asks Kashikar how he thought that the woman in question was Benare. Kashikar replied that he had been studying society for the last forty years. He can guess right. He is sure that there is order for the dismissal of Benare.

Benare is about to swallow poison when Karnik dashes forward and snatches it away. Kashikar again takes the seat of the judge and asks Sukhatme to continue the prosecution. Sukhatme says that the prosecution is completed. Kashikar calls the counsel for the accused. Sukhatme rises again as the defence counsel. He calls the witnesses - Professor Damle and Nanasaheb Shinde. Both are absent. Mr Rawte is also absent. His appeal to the judge to cross-examine the witnesses for prosecution is rejected.

Sukhatme then sums up the case of prosecution. He pleads that the accused is the blot on motherhood. Motherhood is pure as heaven, and



the accused has defiled motherhood and corrupted social and moral values. Motherhood without marriage is a serious crime. The society will be in danger, if the institution of marriage is defiled and social tradition is destroyed. No mercy should be shown to the woman. She should be given the severest punishment for the terrible crime.

Sukhatme again plays the role of the Defence Counsel. He argues that the crime is serious. But youth is prone to going astray, to error. The crime may be regarded with mercy. Kashikar then gives the chance to say about the charge brought against her. She is granted ten seconds for speaking.

There is music in the background; the light changes. The Court 'freezes'. the motionless Benare rises to speak. She says that she has a lot to say. She has suffered many strains and stresses. Everyone around her seemed silly and stupid. Her life was a burden to her. But she realises the value of living. She wanted to live to this world. Every object of nature, every sound and smell seem beautiful to her. She has tried to throw away her life but when it is saved, she is happy. Life is a dreadful thing. It has to be sacked and hanged. Why is she sacked? She has done her job worthily. She has swallowed the poison of life, but the children she teaches are not touched by it. She taught the children purity, joy. She is a free individual. Her private life is her own. The men who are standing before her are mortal remains of some cultured men of the twentieth century. They talk of some old orthodox things because they cannot satisfy their desires. She is scared of them. She committed a sin. She loved her maternal uncle. He came close to her and praised her beauty. She was only fourteen. She did not know what a sin was. She insisted on marriage but all were against it. He ran away. She tried to commit suicide but she did not die. As a grown woman, she loved an intellectual. She worshipped him and offered her body on the altar of her worship. Her intellectual god took the offering and went away. He enjoyed her body but did not care to know her mind. The body is a traitor. I hate the body and I love it. For a moment she had the blissful experience of the body which raised her to heaven. And her body carries the witness of that moment. She wants her body for the child. He must have a father, a mother and a shelter.

Kashikar declares that Benare's time of speaking has ended. She cannot make any further statements. Rokde gives Kashikar the judge's wig. Now he gives his verdict. Miss Benare has committed the gravest crime. She has acted immorally and irresponsibly by defying social customs and moral laws. Marriage is a sacred institution; motherhood is

sacred. She has tried to destroy all this. She cannot deserve mercy. Moreover, she has conducted herself arrogantly in the Court. This is very dreadful. Sinners and criminals must know their places. The future of posterity (children) is entrusted to her. The conduct of Benare would infect the children and the future of society will be endangered. By the grace of god, this has been stopped. The Court sentences that you shall live but the child in your womb shall be destroyed.

Benare cried out "no! no! no!" this cannot be done. All are statues; Benare comes sobbing. She collapses with her hand on the table.

At this time, local people start coming to see the show. All become conscious. Samant asks the people to wait outside, the show will start soon. All regret that they were unconscious of time. Sukhatme says that they had a very good time. He thought that he was fighting a real case. Kashikar asks all to get ready. They are all ready. They look Benare collapsing on the table. Mrs Kashikar consoles her. Benare is too sensitive to take the fun as serious. Sukhatme and Ponkshe together say that it is all a game. Karnik asks Benare to get up; it is time for the show. Kashikar calls all to wash and dress up. All withdraw. Benare lies motionless. Samant comes nervously and puts the bright green cloth parrot by her side. He calls out but Benare does not hear. From somewhere, her own voice is heard singing softly.

The Parrot to the Sparrow said

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Light is focussed on Benare ; the rest of the stage is dark.