

SIDDHARTHA BOSE

Siddhartha Bose's books include two poetry collections, *Kalagora* and *Digital Monsoon* (Penned in the Margins, 2010 & 2013), and a monograph on the grotesque, *Back and Forth* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015). He has been featured on BBC Four, BBC Radio 3 and BBC Asian Network, and was dubbed one of the 'ten rising stars of British poetry' by *The Times*. Sid's theatre work include *Kalagora*, *London's Perverted Children*, long-listed for an Oxford Samuel Beckett Theatre Trust award, and *The Shroud*. He has made a film on Mumbai, *Animal City*, and guest-edited a special issue of the literary journal *Wasafiri* (Routledge, UK/USA) on international urban writing. Siddhartha was a Leverhulme Fellow in Drama at Queen Mary, University of London (2011-13). He is an Associate Artist at Penned in the Margins, and currently teaches at Global Shakespeare (QMUL/Warwick). He lives in London.

No Dogs, No Indians

Siddhartha Bose

Penned in the Margins

LONDON

PUBLISHED BY PENNED IN THE MARGINS
Toynbee Studios, 28 Commercial Street, London E1 6AB
www.pennedinthemargins.co.uk

All rights reserved
© Siddhartha Bose

The right of Siddhartha Bose to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with Section 77 of the Copyright, Designs and Patent Act 1988.

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Penned in the Margins.

First published 2017

Printed in the United Kingdom by Bell & Bain of Glasgow

ISBN
978-1-908058-48-5

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

No Dogs, No Indians was co-commissioned by Brighton Festival, Southbank Centre, Live Theatre, GemArts, Writers' Centre Norwich & Norwich Arts Centre; produced by Penned in the Margins; and supported with public funding by Arts Council England. The script was developed with Russell Bender and Tom Chivers.

First performed on 17th May 2017 at Brighton Festival, followed by Southbank Centre, London as part of Alchemy Festival, Norwich Arts Centre as part of Norfolk & Norwich Festival, and Live Theatre, Newcastle as part of Masala Festival.

Cast and creative team:

Komal Amin as Pritilata 'Rani' Waddedar

Omar Khan as Shyamal, Ananda, Nirmal Sen

Ashraf Ejjbair as Yogesh, Surya Sen, Biswas, Bahadur

Archana Ramaswamy as Chorus, Durga, Kalpana

Russell Bender Director

Mila Sanders Designer

Jai Morjaria Lighting Designer

Edward Lewis Sound Designer

Lauren Cameron Company Stage Manager

Tom Chivers Producer

No Dogs,
No Indians

The chained dog, being a dog, whines and sometimes barks
This being his constitutional right: he lives on leftovers;
He's used to injustice; his mind is desensitised;
He'd be shot dead if he took a chance to rebel and break free of his chain.
Every street resounds with the drum of 'Total Liberation'.
Friends, I ask an uncircumcised child what democracy means,
What you eat it with.

— NAMDEO DHASAL

for Indra

CHARACTERS

1931-32	Pritilata 'Rani' Waddedar Kalpana Dutta Ramkrishna Biswas Surya Sen Nirmal Sen Three revolutionaries
1970s	Shyamal Chatterjee Durga Chatterjee Bahadur
2017	Ananda Chatterjee Yogesh Ruksana Chorus

ACT I

SCENE 1

2017. A Bombay skyscraper, overlooking the sea and the new skyline of the city. Ananda Chatterjee, a man in his thirties, is visiting from London. He's with his old friends, Yogesh and Ruksana. Yogesh wears a sleeveless t-shirt and frayed blue jeans. Ruksana's in jeans and a kurti. She fixes a whiskey. Yogesh snorts a line of cocaine on a glass table. Offers to Ananda, who's dressed in black. Ananda accepts, snorts, coughs.

YOGESH. Good shit, haan? Get good stuff in England?

ANANDA. Nice. Nahi yaar, I lead a boring, boring life. Work and nothing else.

RUKSANA. Whaddare you sayin', Ananda, you live abroad, na?

YOGESH. Arre, screw 'abroad', yaar. You're lucky to be here, Ananda. Bombay's where it's at. Money and movies. There are more skyscrapers being built here than anywhere else in the world, boss!

RUKSANA. Oh come off that Discovery Channel bullshit, Yogesh! You want a whiskey, Ananda? Don't listen to him. He talks like this when he's all coked up.

ANANDA. Which is pretty much all the time, na?

RUKSANA. That's Bombay. The city is drowning in a hail of cocaine.

YOGESH. Arre, even cabbies in Bombay are snorting cola, boss!

ANANDA. Where's it all coming from? Yah Ruksi, I'll have another —

YOGESH. (*cutting another line*) How should I know? Colombia, via the US, via Amsterdam, all the way to aamchi Mumbai? The globalisation of dope, yaar. You should write an article on it.

RUKSANA. Ya seriously, Ananda, what do you write about?

ANANDA. Leave it, guys!

RUKSANA. Arre tell us, no! What? You think we're too dumb, haan?

ANANDA. Stuff about Independence movements. Our independence movements. Indian Republican Army, violent uprisings, that sort of thing.

Yogesh and Ruksi look at each other and burst into laughter.

What's so funny, guys? Somebody's got to — c'mon guys.

YOGESH. Shit yaar, you Non-Resident Indians are way too serious! Bloody NRIs! Nobody in India gives a shit about this stuff anymore, gandhu!

RUKSANA. Maybe we should, Yogi!

YOGESH. Gimme my blow and I'll care about anything! Shit, I should ask my Nigerian where he gets it. Next time, promise!

ANANDA. What?

RUKSANA. Thomas, he's the one who brings it over.

ANANDA. What are you talking about, chooth?

YOGESH. The cola, chooth!

ANANDA. Home delivery?

RUKSANA. Like everything else in Bombay, baby. Don't have to lift a finger. Just gotta have the rokra to spend. Splash the cash, and watch the fun! Yaar, it's been so long, Ananda! Look at you! All tip-top British gent and all.

YOGESH. Ya, walking around with a stick up his ass!

ANANDA. I didn't think you'd hook up with this fool, Ruksi.

RUKSANA. Didn't have much of a choice!

YOGESH. It's good to see you, bro.

ANANDA. Like being back in college.

YOGESH. Good old days! Let's snort away!

RUKSANA. Started already, haan?

ANANDA. What's this crap about "your Nigerian"?

RUKSANA. What?

ANANDA. "Your Nigerian"?

YOGESH. Yah, so?

ANANDA. Nothing, things are different here.

YOGESH. Whaddareyou saying bhenchod!?! Speak clearly no. Going round and round in circles and all like a bloody auto stuck in traffic.

RUKSANA. Ya, stop mumbling Ananda. Open your heart and say what you want to say.

ANANDA. You guys should be in Bollywood.

RUKSANA. Don't worry yaar, one day, even that'll happen.

ANANDA. You look like you've done okay for yourself, Yogi.

YOGESH. Business is good, yaar, can't complain.

ANANDA. Ruksi?

RUKSANA. Haan?

ANANDA. Work?

RUKSANA. I'm selling soap yaar. And everything else under the sun. Insurance, cars, cricket, mobile phones, 3g, 4g, 5g, you know? Usual advertising shit—

YOGESH. Customer is king!

RUKSANA. This country's full of idiots. The trick is to figure out how to make money off them. And ya, if you work hard enough, you can make anything happen in this city. *(beat)* Arre, you know Swedish House Mafia, ya?

ANANDA. Who?

RUKSANA. Don't tell me—

YOGESH. Arre, I bet he only listens to jazz!

RUKSANA. Doesn't matter. So, they were touring India last month.
You know, all over, Delhi, Bangalore, Bombay, Goa.

ANANDA. No Cal?

RUKSANA. Calcutta's stuck in the past, sweetie. Been left behind.
The British have left. Foreign folks have bigger fish to fry.

YOGESH. (*yawning*) Oye Ruksi, roll a doobie, na?

RUKSANA. You do it!

YOGESH. Spicy! Chal...

Yogesh starts emptying a smoke, rolling a spliff.

RUKSANA. So where was I?

ANANDA. Swedish something—

RUKSANA. Ya, Swedish House Mafia. The chaos starts from the
moment they land. They bring their own security, but they don't
realise this is India. Things work differently here—

YOGESH. Listen to this—

ANANDA. I'm trying—

RUKSANA. We're in Taj land's end in Bandra, right? So these gores with their security people, they're kind of, you know, throwing their weight around. 'We got to vet everything, the journalists, the food, the vibes, the hotel, everything.' At some point, things kick off. I work with this guy called Aman. Delhi dude, carries a gun, and he won't think twice about blowing your brains out if you mess with him. Aman was like, you know guys, *we'll* decide what happens here. And then a Swedish security guy pushes Aman, okay? And that's it! Aman takes the gun out, waves it around in this posh hotel, in the lobby, you know, and the Swedes are screaming like schoolkids, and then he just kicks the entire lot out of the hotel!

ANANDA. No!

RUKSANA. Ya, man. You've got these A-list European musicians sitting outside Bandstand, middle of the day, not knowing where to go. They were all forced to apologise to Aman. That security guy had to get down on his knees, yaar, I kid you not!

YOGESH. That evening, they're all tweeting about how India's the greatest country in the world etc etc. That's how they got back into the hotel, boss.

ANANDA. You guys are totally coked!

RUKSANA. Best thing was the gig in Goa. So there's Sunburn and a bunch of other fests happening around the same time. The whole world's there. Everyone's high as hell. Nobody can do shit. The cops have been bought, ya?

ANANDA. Sounds like paradise.

YOGESH. Arre, shut up and listen, na!

RUKSANA. And I'm organising gigs in the midst of this madness.

YOGESH. And Aman's with his gangster friends, you know, the type who pull their guns out if the DJ plays the wrong tune, ya?

RUKSANA. I gotta manage all the different stages, all the equipment, like if someone says they need a subwoofer, like a Yamaha DXS12, I gotta make sure it's there. Simple as that. We're working 24/7, and the only way we can do it is with a shitload of cola!

YOGESH. And after three days, all the cola we brought over from Bombay's done, yaar. So what do we do?

RUKSANA. I make Yogesh call Thomas.

YOGESH. 'My Nigerian,' yah?

ANANDA. Uh-huh.

RUKSANA. And Yogesh calls Thomas and says—

YOGESH. 'Bro, we need you man, we need another ten grams, you gotta come to Goa, right now, asap, we'll bloody pay for your train, bro.'

ANANDA. (*laughing*) You guys are crazy!

RUKSANA. And I kid you not, the next day he's in Goa—

YOGESH. But check this out, ya? The chooth doesn't just want to deal, he wants to party as well, so—

RUKSANA. Shut up, Yogi, my story—

YOGESH. Sorry yaar.

RUKSANA. So, he's in bloody Goa and I'm waiting for him, you know, and Thomas arrives, he gets out of the cab and –

YOGESH. Mad gandu!

RUKSANA. He's all dressed up in a suit, a leopard stripe suit, I kid you not, and a black hat, and he's carrying a cane, man he's got a chutiya cane with him! Just picture it, ya? You have this big African guy in the middle of Goa dressed in a leopard suit, and he says –

YOGESH. *(in a mock deep voice)* 'If I'm coming to Goa, then I'm coming to party! Yeah!'

All three friends are laughing now. The laughter builds until, suddenly, Ruksi raises her hand and the scene freezes. Yogi and Ananda are frozen in mid-laughter. Ruksi steps out of the scene and becomes Chorus.

CHORUS. Ladies and gentlemen, mesdames et messieurs, aadmis and aurats! Here I am, mother India, forever India, land of the meek, home of the slave, in yoga we trust! Yes, you see, we attained the summits of civilisation as far back as the 4th century BC, but my body bears the scars of...ghulami. Slavery. A few hundred years ago, came the fair folk. And when the fair folk with their moustaches and their leather boots and their bowler hats landed in Calcutta, they said we were nameless. Ha! What a swindle! *(beat)* From Thomas Macaulay's minute on Indian education, circa 1835 – 'We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, – a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.' Here, here, let me give you some examples of Macaulay's great grandchildren, see see – *(she*

points to Ananda and Yogesh, still frozen in laughter) – this is the lot! Indian in blood, Western in ways, foreigners in their own land! *(beat)* Take the case of our dear friend, Ananda Chatterjee here. He's just flown in from England. His father's passed away – oops! So so sorry, spoiler alert! I didn't mean to, but – poor sweetie-pie, cry me a river. His dad's died. And tell you the truth, it's his dad we're interested in.

Ananda gets up, walks downstage towards a mirror. During Chorus's words, he dresses himself up in a neatly pressed suit, cufflinks, pince-nez, polished black shoes, and fiddles with a pipe. Ananda becomes Shyamal Chatterjee, his father.

And here is our asli hero, Shyamal Chatterjee! C'mon everyone, clap for him! And as every hero must have a heroine – even if they'll never meet each other – here is Pritalata Waddeddar, or Rani as she's known to her friends, preparing to launch an attack on a whites-only club in British India.

Rani in front of a mirror, other end of stage. She is dressing herself up, slowly, as a Punjabi man, with a beard and a turban.

Great, give her a round of applause too! But don't get too excited, haan, we'll get to her later. Safe to say Rani's the type who would've been *ashamed* of Shyamal Chatterjee. Why? Let's find out. Here he is, in 1975, not in Bombay, but in Calcutta, once the second city of the British Empire.