

EXTRACT

Together, we are Anna

a short play

by

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Characters

UMA, 60s, a concerned Indian citizen, mother and grandmother. She is well dressed for travelling and carries a suitcase as well as a sign, which reads:
“Together, we are Anna”

NAVIN, a taxi driver, slim, with well groomed hair and a moustache. He is in his early 30s, cynical and street smart. He waits near the Gateway of India hoping to pick up foreign tourists as passengers.

Scene

A street near the Gateway to India, Mumbai

Time

Early morning

Together, we are Anna

NAVIN stands by his taxi, smoking. **UMA** enters. She struggles with her suitcase. She stops on the corner.

NAVIN: Taxi?

UMA: No thank you. I am being collected.

NAVIN: You look like you are going on a journey?

UMA: We are going to New Delhi.

NAVIN: Why so far?

UMA: We go to Ramlila Maidan. We go to support Anna.

NAVIN: Anna? I think I have heard of him.

UMA: All India has heard of him. The whole world has heard of him. Even President Obama. People walk the streets chanting his name.

NAVIN: Delhi is a long way.

UMA: I would go much further to support Anna. You should come with us? There will be room in the mini-van.

NAVIN: Who will drive my taxi?

UMA: What is the point of driving your taxi when corrupt officials will take the money you earn from you?

NAVIN: Not all of it.

UMA: One Rupee is too much. Corruption must be stopped. India must be free. Anna-ji is leading us to a new freedom. He follows in the footsteps of Gandhi-ji.

NAVIN: I think I've heard of him too.

UMA LOOKS AT NAVIN.

UMA: Why do you make fun of me?

NAVIN: I am just a taxi driver. What I think doesn't matter.

UMA: What everyone thinks matters. Every Indian is important. Anna teaches us this. We must listen to everyone.

NAVIN: Not all at once. (COVERING HIS EARS) Two billion Indians shouting. It will hurt my ears.

UMA TURNS AWAY. THE SOUNDS OF THE CITY COMING TO LIFE.
NAVIN LOOKS OVER AT **UMA**.

NAVIN: These protests, aren't they dangerous?

UMA: Anna will protect me.

NAVIN: You will be thrown in jail.

UMA: Then I will share my cell with Anna. Hear his words: "Prepare to fill every jail in India with my followers."

NAVIN: But if you are in jail, what will your family say?

UMA: My children understand and support me.

NAVIN: And your husband? Who will prepare his dinner?

UMA IS SILENT.

NAVIN: So, he does not support you ... Does he even know you are here?

UMA: He will find out when he sees my picture in the Times of India. Marching alongside Anna.

NAVIN: (OPENING TAXI DOOR) Come, I will take you back to him.

UMA: No! I will stand before Anna. I will tell him I am with him.

NAVIN: You must stay with your family.

UMA: I must support Anna. I must protest for a new India.

NAVIN: Corruption is part of life.

UMA: It doesn't have to be.

NAVIN: It is the Indian way.

UMA: No more. The Jan Lokpal bill must be passed. Anna has set a three week deadline. Join us.

NAVIN: Protesting is just for the wealthy. They do not want taxi drivers.

UMA: All of India stands with Anna. Citizens from all walks of life join the protests at Ramlila Maidan in New Delhi, at Azad Maidan in Mumbai, in Chennai, in Kolkata, in Pune. Students, mill-workers, surgeons, dabbawallas, teachers, even taxi drivers are forming convoys in support of Anna.

NAVIN: Politicians?

UMA: Some politicians support us. They also want corruption to end.

NAVIN: I too have seen corruption.

UMA: Then stand with us. I do this for the memory of my brother-in-law. He worked as a principal of a school in Varanasi. He was dismissed by the school management as he did not let certain "favoured" people in during admission time. He made decisions as they should be – in favour of the students. His wrongful dismissal was upheld by the corrupt education department. But it was revoked by the High Court.

NAVIN: So the system does work.

UMA: Not till his career was ruined. He retired in 1997 and he died of cancer in 2001, fighting for his pension which his wife, my sister, has still not received. She was forced to watch him groveling in front of clerks to get his files cleared. And what did the clerks want to clear the files? Another bribe! My sister comes with me in the mini-van - to join the protest.

NAVIN: My family has also experienced corruption. My brother was to be married. He had to pay a bribe to get his marriage certificate.

UMA: So what did he do?

NAVIN: What else could he do? He paid the bribe.

UMA: He doesn't have to.

NAVIN: How else was he to get the certificate?

UMA: My son Vishwesh was in the merchant navy. He had to sit his exams. Everyone else paid bribes. But not Vishwesh. He would not pay. So year after year he sat the exam without passing. He is very clever but still he did not pass because he refused to pay the bribe. Others passed straight away. But Vishwesh stood to his word.

NAVIN: And what happened?

UMA: My husband paid the bribe.