



# The jewel thief, part 1

The Maharani loved parties, films and American cocktails and for the people of Jaipur her Fancy Dress party was one of the big social events of the year. Exactly 150 invitations would be sent to people from the town – the most prominent people in the fields of politics and administration, education, medicine, and business. The rest of the town enjoyed watching the guests arrive in their costumes. The Maharani also invited a small number of people who were in some way unusual either because of their jobs or something they had done. These people were always invited to a special cocktail party with the Maharani at the end of the evening. The special guests this year were five members of a Mumbai film crew who were making a film in Jaipur.

THE MAHARANI INDIRA MAHDLO OF JAIPUR INVITES YOU TO A FANCY DRESS PARTY IN THE GARDENS OF HER SUMMER PALACE IN JAIPUR AT 6 PM, 24TH MARCH.

I was also there, but not as a guest. My name is Dilip Pashanka and I'm a private detective. The insurance company says that whenever the Maharani wears her jewellery, a private detective must be there to protect it. This evening she was wearing a diamond tiara worth six lakh (lakh = 100.000) of rupees. I'm always glad when most of the guests go home and the Maharani and her few special guests then go inside the palace for cocktails. It makes my job much easier. The Maharani introduced me as an old friend and I was dressed as my hero Hercule Poirot – a costume, which suits my round, manly figure. As I walked around chatting with the film crew, I made sure they were who they were supposed to be and checked them off against my list.

NAME	JOB	COSTUME	CHECK
1. Sunil Mehta	actor	Blackbeard the pirate	✓
2. Urmila Desai	actress	Marilyn Monroe	✓
3. Mehda Paktar	animal trainer	Queen Victoria	✓
4. Vijay Tendulkar	scriptwriter	Oscar Wilde	✓
5. Bhalji Palekar	cameraman	Alfred Hitchcock	✓

All of the film crew except Mr Paktar had chosen costumes which suited them. Mr Paktar looked very strange as Queen Victoria, especially with a big fat cigar in his mouth! His dress was so wide that he had trouble getting through the door. The Maharani thought this was very funny. I thought it was suspicious. It was a strange choice of costume for a man and a wide dress wasn't very practical – unless he was hiding something under it! I made a note to check that later. I was talking to the beautiful Urmila Desai when all the lights suddenly went out. There were several gasps and the lovely Urmila found my hand and held it tightly. I heard footsteps and the sound of a door opening and closing. After another thirty seconds or so the lights came on again. "My tiara!" shouted the Maharani. "It's gone!"

I quickly checked all the windows of the room. They were all locked. I opened the door. Two bodyguards dressed as servants stood in front of the door. They told me that nobody had left the room. So the thief or thieves and the tiara must still be somewhere in the room. I made a quick sketch of the room and asked the guests to tell me where they had been standing when the lights went out.

