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1961 ●

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25 STORIES

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INDIA MAGAZINE

6th Year of Publication

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MARCH 1961

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Stories

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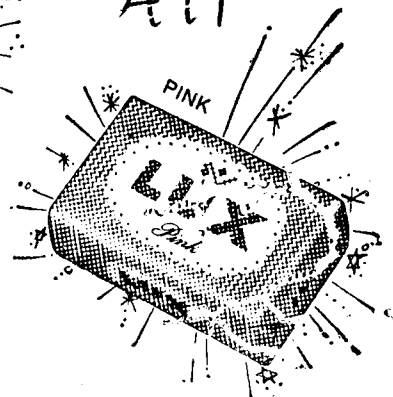
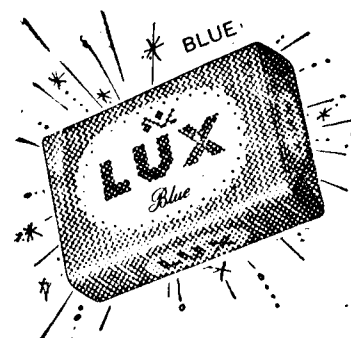
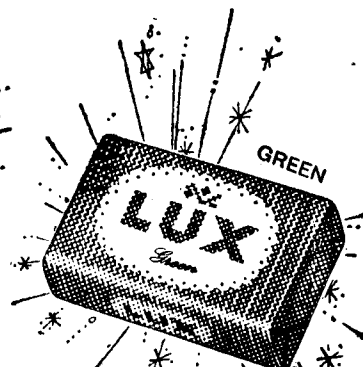
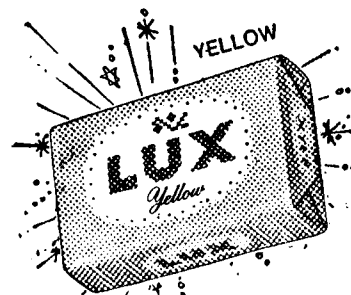


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INDIA MAGAZINE

LEADING MONTHLY FOR HOME AND FAMILY

6th Year of Publication

Vol. 6

ANNIVERSARY NUMBER:
MARCH 1961

No. 1

THANK YOU, READERS!

INDIA MAGAZINE is entering on its sixth year of publication with this Annual Number. We have brought out this Bumper Story Issue in response to the suggestions of numerous readers. The stories have crowded out some of the regular features. We assure them that they will continue to appear regularly from our next issue, dated April, 1961.

We apologize to our readers and subscribers for not intimating earlier about the Annual Number. In consequence of this sudden decision, the February issue was not brought out.

We are sure that our readers will not grudge the special price of Rupee One for the Annual which provides excellent fare in the form of varied fiction.

Our future issues, priced each at 50 nP. only, will come out regularly as usual. We hope our readers as well as our subscribers who overwhelmed us with their enquiries, will bear with us in the light of this explanation. They can look forward to the next issue dated April, 1961, in the first week of that month as usual.

It is happily acknowledged that our readers with their excellent suggestions are giving new shape and new look to INDIA MAGAZINE every time. To all of them and to our advertisers we render our grateful thanks and look forward to their increased co-operation and support.

INDIA MAGAZINE

(a question put to the world)

You that stand and walk and fly
 Are you all sheer dreams ?
 Mere multiplicities of illusory appearances ?
 You that learn and listen and think
 Are you all trifling delusions ?
 Is there no deeper meaning in you ?
 O sky, young sun, lush jungles !
 Are you all mere mirages !
 Empty hallucinations ?
 If all the past is buried and destroyed
 Like a dream,
 Then am I a dream ?
 Is this world a lie ?
 Are the memory of Time
 And the thoughts of Distance
 All lies ?
 Are qualities lies ?
 If the trees from a garden spring
 from the seed,
 Is then the garden a lie ?
 If what we see will disappear
 Will not the disappeared then be seen ?
 Will Fate follow us in vain utter
 falsehood ?
 What we see is Shakti
 And this seeing is being.

—Subramania Bharati

(Translated from Tamil by R. S. Murti)

INDIA MAGAZINE

By **G. Ramakant**

MEMORY NEVER FAILS

She went to the countryside to open negotiations for her daughter's marriage. But there was a wrong turn.....

SUSHEELA was sad and cheerless of late. She had been very gay and bright like a butterfly despite her fifty-five years. She had a son by name Narendar who had just then set up practice as a doctor. She had a daughter, Nalini, who was fair like a flower. She was twenty-nine but few would believe that she was past twenty-three. She had graduated with distinction and had been courted by a number of admirers.

But Nalini was in love with Dhar, a fine young sportsman, the son of a zamindar whose glory had faded but whose wealth still remained. He did not sport his riches and he reciprocated Nalini's feelings in full. They found many things in common between them since both of them studied in the same college. Detective thrillers interested them both though they did not dislike

poetry. They bought their favourite books from the railway stalls and exchanged them.

Both liked rasagollas and almond cakes in plenty. When they entered any hotel or restaurant they would be gorging platefuls and discuss miscellaneous matters with their mouths full. To them Hollywood slapstick comedies had a great appeal and they would never miss them when they were on show. Slowly, step by step, love brought them closer and more intimate.

Since he was living in bachelor quarters, she would invite him to her palatial residence. He was always welcomed there with cordiality by both her mother and her brother if he happened to be in town and at home. Her mother had accepted Dhar as her future son-in-law. Nalini had made it plain in so many words that she had surrendered her

SINDIA MAGAZINE

her heart to him. She was full of disdain for her other admirers who besieged her at all times but whom she scorned. Susheela assured her daughter that her happiness and prosperity were her main aim. She had had her day and she lived only to see her son and daughter well settled in life. Luckily she had wealth enough and she was ready to share it between them on Nalini's marriage.

She was eager now to contact Dhar's parents and place the proposal of marriage formally before them. It was only then that she learnt of Dhar's high position in life. Brijlal, his father, was a zamindar with fabulous riches. Although the zamindari system and all the feudal relics of princely India were slowly being buried in the limbo of oblivion, Brijlal had still several estates, servants and jars of gold and precious stones hidden in the vaults of his grand mansion. People in the neighbourhood still looked upon him with awe and respect. He was generous with his purse but he was a terror to those who opposed him or crossed his path.

Dhar, his only son, was studying in college like any other young man. He never told his friends that he was the son of a zamindar who was rolling in wealth. He was, however, known to be very rich. He used to be lavish with his money and threw parties for his friends who included Nalini. To such of those who were needy or who approached him for help he gave liber-

ally and never asked them back for the loans. He was generous enough to forget them. When he did a favour he did it in a spirit of humility as if he was the recipient and not the giver.

One night when Dhar and Nalini were sitting on the terrace of the former's house, and enjoying the moonlight and a spot of romance, Susheela came up coughing to attract their attention. The couple drew apart blushing and feeling guilty.

"Dhar," said Susheela, "please sit where you are. You see, I am anxious that you should marry my daughter and make her happy. I have a feeling that the marriage should take place early—say, in two or three months. May I know your parents' address?"

Dhar smiled. "Ma, that is easy. My father's name is Brijlal, the zamindar in the district of T—. All you have to do is to take your son Narendar and give him this letter of mine discussing the details. Sorry I have not told you about him earlier for fear too much of wealth might be a disqualification." And he gave Susheela a closely written letter marked 'confidential.'

Susheela was like one dazed on hearing the news but she soon composed her feelings and looked cheerful.

For reasons best known to herself she undertook the journey to the zamindar's village alone. She sought for an interview and sent in Dhar's letter. At once she was admitted to the august

presence of the old man. He rose to receive her and insisted on her taking some refreshments. He said after a time that his son's choice would not be disapproved. His only aim was to make him happy. He asked Susheela to wait for a few minutes. His wife who was ailing would be wheeled into the hall from her sick bed and she would have to answer her questions. But he assured her that his wife would not dream of opposing her son's choice. Moreover, the photograph of Nalini was fascinating. He wanted an educated daughter-in-law to run the household.

In the wheel-chair was brought a sick old woman, the mother of Dhar. But she had sharp eagle eyes. She asked Susheela to come close and scanned her face for more than ten minutes. Then she called her husband to her side and whispered a few words.

The zamindar then spoke to the guest. "Madam, we shall send you our formal reply within a week. We shall finalise the arrangements. Before you go, will you tell us whether you knew my late brother Shankerlal? My wife wants to know."

Susheela felt hot blood rushing to her cheeks and she turned red with shame. "No," she said and hastily left for the city.

Recollections of Shankerlal came to her thick and fast as the tonga took her back to the railway station. She was alone in the carriage and gave free vent to her tears that scalded her cheeks. How shameful that the zamindar

dar's wife had discovered a guilty chapter of her life some twenty years ago.

Susheela's memory traversed back. Her husband had deserted her and she was leading a life of misery and semi-starvation. She was about to throw herself before a speeding car to end her life but the man at the wheel suddenly applied the brakes. She was unconscious and when she opened her eyes she was in a comfortable bed in a well-furnished room. Her saviour was Brijlal's brother Shankerlal. How beautiful you are!" he said kissing her and cuddling her. "Be mine and live here. I will provide you with all amenities. I will surround you with money and luxury."

He was handsome too. He had given back her life to her and he had a right over her heart too. And she made an absolute surrender to him. Of this illicit union were born her son Narendar and her daughter Nalini. For ten years they lived together. Then came Brijlal's wife and pleaded with Shanker to come back to his wife and children whom he had neglected. Brijlal's wife gave Susheela a lakh of rupees to release Shankerlal from all obligations. And now she had recognized Susheela. It meant the end of all hopes for Nalini.

When she came home she found Dhar had mysteriously been called away by the zamindar and Nalini was weeping her eyes out.

THE NEW LIGHT

She was incompetent for the job and the old man gave her helpful advice and warning...

JASWANTLAL was a businessman of all sorts. He advertised cosmetic products manufactured by some other company and earned commission for booking orders. He sold perfumes of different varieties. Sometimes he was daring and original. He poured the various scents in a big jar, mixed them up and bottled them again under a new name. He fixed a fancy price and reaped a fortune. He undertook agency for any products if the terms were attractive.

On the upstairs portion of a huge building which had many groceries and fruit stalls in the ground floor, Jaswant had his office. He managed with two clerks and two servants. He had his room behind the office and led a care-free life.

The new typist girl, Malti, was struggling over a letter. She was

constantly erasing the words with a rubber. Watching her over the rims of his spectacles was Bhargava, an old man nearing sixty. He took a fatherly interest in the newcomer. She was cheerful and pretty and she loved to hear him talk and appreciated his jokes.

"So spelling is your weak point, Malti. He won't like so many erasures. Why not you consult me? I am reading the dictionary for your sake," he said with a merry twinkle in his eyes.

She beamed at him. "Dadaji, I am so grateful to you for the interest you take in me. Do you spell the word 'embarrass' with one 'r' and double 's' or 'double 'r' and one 's'?" she asked.

Bhargava passed his right hand over his bald head. He thought for a minute then. "But," he warned, holding up his forefinger

"the boss is temperamental. He doesn't keep anyone in his service for longer than three or six months. He is prompt in his payment of course but dismisses his clerks one after another. Either they are incompetent or he wants new faces every season. I can't fathom his mind."

Malti stopped typing and turned tearful eyes towards him. I failed in the Lower exam twice. It is all my fault. I haven't picked up a good command of English. My father died two years ago when I was eighteen. My mother is a sick woman and can just manage to cook a meal in the morning. I must do something to win the bread, you see. When I saw Jaswant a fortnight ago he gave me the job."

The old man kept mum but he

was listening to her with a sympathetic interest.

"But how is it, Dadaji," she asked, "that you are staying on here while the other clerks keep moving on?"

"There are two factors in my favour, Malti. I am doing some dirty work for him. I am cooking accounts as he desires. Nobody else will do it for him and at the same time keep his secrets. Another reason is that I am economically independent. I have got a house and some savings. I lost my wife six years ago, and I have no children. There is a nephew of mine Jogesh, who manages my lands in my village. He will come to me twice a year to render account.

"Several times Jaswant stormed and ragged at me but I would

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simply snap my fingers," Bhargava produced a folded sheet and flaunted it before Malti. "Can you guess, Malti, what this is? It is my resignation letter and I always keep it in my pocket, ready to hand it over to him. So he has stopped his exhibitions of temper."

"You are a brave man, Dadaji. admire you for it" she said.

They heard footsteps on the staircase and became alert. His pen was racing fast over the paper and she was pounding the typewriter. Jaswantlal strode past them and went into his room. It was nearing seven in the evening. Bhargava sorted out his files and papers and quietly slipped out, patting Malti with affection on the shoulder.

In a few minutes she heard Jaswantlal calling her sharply. She went in with a palpitating heart.

"How many letters have you typed, Malti?" he asked.

"Just three, sir," she stammered, her pretty face turning red with shame. "There are seven more to be typed."

"It is atrocious," he thundered thumping the table with his fist. When I left office at 11 a.m. I gave you ten letters to be typed and it is 7 p.m. now. Don't you see you are thoroughly inefficient and unfit for this job? You are committing such horrible mistakes. My business will be ruined if I keep you in my service. You are dismissed, Malti. Come tomorrow and take your pay for

the number of days you have worked."

She burst into a flood of tears and went on her knees before him. Mr. Jaswantlal, please don't send me out. I shall serve you in any other capacity. Pay me anything you like but don't starve us to death."

Then she told him her tale of suffering—her mother's illness, her dire poverty and utter helplessness. He rose from his chair and went over to her. "My dear Malti, I wasn't very serious. You can do other work for me. I shall engage a male typist but you shall be my personal secretary—on one condition. Don't talk too much with old the man. You can sit in my room, sort out my letters, bring the important ones for my immediate attention. I will give you instructions every now and then. I shall pay the same salary."

She began to smile. "Mr. Jaswantlal, that is wonderful. You will find me to be an asset! Her smile showed through her tears as the sun shivers through the final burst of a summer cloud.

"I am sorry I frightened you," he said. "Malti, to mark this occasion, let us have a good meal in the best hotel and then I shall drop you in your house."

She was quite willing and together they sallied out. It was a luxury hotel. He took her to the fifth storey and went into a separate room. At a sign from him the waiter brought the most excellent dishes. Joking and laughing they ate—and drank some

liquor which he had brought with him in his coat pocket.

"I have found one thing about you, Malti," he said, laying his hand on her shoulder and looking at her firm young bosom.

"Yes. what is it?" she asked laughing.

"That you are the most beautiful girl in the world and that I can't help loving you," he said, kissing her on the neck.

The wine had gone to her head and she threw her arms round his neck. "I, too, love you, darling," she cooed and glued her lips to his.

The room was securely locked from inside. He switched off the light and carried her to the bed.

He dropped her at her home at 2 a.m. with several promises and assurances of help.

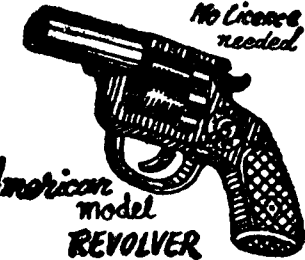
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SHORT STORY

AWAY FROM HOME

BY C. S. GANGA RAM

She could not brook her step-mother's tyranny any longer. She planned a way of escape with her lover.....

THE young woman was wiping the tears from her eyes and the young man sitting close by her side was comforting her. "Don't give way to grief, Sarsa. Your step-mother seems to be a very cruel and heartless woman. Where did she beat you yesterday?"

At first she felt shy and looked about to see whether anyone was in sight. They were sitting on a large slab of stone in the heart of a ruined temple. It was evening and a large num-

ber of birds were flying over their heads. The setting sun was a red ball of fire and appeared most beautiful. All round them was a thick growth of wild plants; shrubs and flowers of various hues greeted the eye.

"You want to know why my step-mother has beaten me. Accidentally I upset the soup pot on the oven and the contents spilled on the floor. My step mother howled as if she had lost all her property. 'You shameless hussy, how could you bring yourself to do it? You are so careless and negligent these days. What has happened to you? How many times have I warned you not to talk to any young man when you go to the bazaar or elsewhere? Can't you finish your shopping and come back early? And then, Mohan, she took a horsewhip and lashed me on the bare back. I shall roll up my blouse and show you the wound.'"

Her brown skin on the back was a red gash and Mohan gasped and exclaimed in sympathy. "You must be suffering untold hardships, Sarsa, at the hands of this woman. She must have been a devil in her previous birth. Is there no one to check her at home? Why is she so callous to you?"

Sarsa sighed as she straightened her blouse and sat straight. "I lost my mother fifteen years ago. My father was forty-seven

then, I was eight years old and knew nothing about the world. Until her first daughter was born my step-mother was kind to me. With the advent of her second daughter she began to hate me. She regards me as an obstacle in the way of her daughter's well-being and prosperity.

"My father is in full sympathy with me in my wretched plight. When he sees me toiling and slaving in the kitchen he is deeply moved but does not show his feelings. She orders me about and shouts at any imagined slight or neglect on my part.

"She denies me good food and even lets me starve at times. She stretches herself on the sofa and complains of pain in the heart. The doctor visits her on alternate days and prescribes a lot of medicines and powders.

"With all that, she is always complaining about my conduct to my father and tells him a tissue of lies. My father pretends to be angry with me in her presence but pats me encouragingly behind her back. Several times he opened negotiations for my marriage but she compelled him to stop them. Her idea is that I must look after the household until eternity. In my absence who will wait on her? Several times has my father pleaded with her not to stand in the way of my marriage as I am well past twenty-three. But she will not yield. Often they used to quarrel over this question and my father would swoon

at the end and would not get up for hours.

"I couldn't bear this horrible sight and told my step-mother to stop arguing with father. I promised that I would not marry without her consent. My father does not know about my undertaking and he has gone to his sister's place to fix my marriage. You see, he is on the wrong side of sixty and his only ambition is to see me married and get away from the atmosphere of this house. I know, he has some money and jewels secretly earmarked for me and has even told me where he has kept them.

"But, Mohan, I prefer my freedom to marriage. There is still time to think of the latter. I mean going to the city where my mother's elder sister is residing with her widowed daughter. They are very fond of me. You see, I am no more a minor and I can take decisions on my own. Neither my father nor my step-mother can compel me to go with them and live under their roof.

"My anxiety is that there should be no quarrels on my account hereafter. Let them live in peace. I may even try to get a job in the city. Mohan, if you feel that you still love me, you can meet me in the city and we shall continue to love each other. Here is the address to which you can write. Will you do me a favour?"

"Sure enough, Sarsa. I am sorry you have decided to go but you are a brave girl and I respect

your decision. The moment I get a steady job I shall marry you straightaway. That is certain. But if you continue to remain here, some grievous harm may be done to you. My blood boils to think that you are beaten like a dog and that you are silently bearing it all up. What a tragedy. Just give me your consent, I will go and throttle that step-mother of yours. But I know it will create all sorts of complications, and apparently you want to end the trouble and not foment it. Well, what is your wish? You wanted me to do a certain thing for you. I am here to oblige you to any extent. How I wish I could mitigate your misery forthwith."

She smiled at him. "My troubles will soon be over, Mohan. When I am in my aunt's home I expect a new chapter in my life will be opened. I will write to my father why I left him and I would beg his forgiveness. I don't think he will scold me. My only regret will be that I won't be by his side for some time until, at any rate, my step-mother begins to understand me aright."

"Now I have clean forgotten what I was talking to you about. Tomorrow at 7 p.m. will you book a ticket for me to Bombay? I will come to the station at 8 p.m. with my clothes, my own jewels and some money which father has reserved for me. I shall be thankful if you travel with me up to Poona. Shall I pay you now for the ticket?"

He gestured impatiently with his hands. "Not at all, Sarsa."

I have plenty of money. So don't bother on that account. Why, I shall come with you to Bombay and leave you at your aunt's residence. I shall personally satisfy myself that you are safe and comfortable. See the glorious moon rising."

She rose, alarmed at the realisation that she had stayed too long. "I must be going now. We shall meet at the station."

They stood and faced each other. Her face looked so radiant and beautiful that he took it between his hands and kissed her on the lips. They were both startled at the noise of somebody moving among the bushes and took a hurried departure.

When she went back to her house, her step-mother sprang upon her like a savage cat. "So you have gone one step further? My little son went spying on you and he says you were kissing and embracing that Mohan. Don't deny it, you have planned to run away with him tomorrow."

She beat her hard with a big stick until the girl screamed and ran into the backyard. Unable to bear the agony and the insults heaped on her, Sarsa fell into the well deliberately.

When they took her out she was dead but there was a triumphant smile on her face. She had escaped from her troubles and miseries. The only person who felt most grief-stricken and disconsolate was her father.

SHORT STORY

By A. Bharat

A honeymoon on snowy heights was exquisite but it became suddenly chilling!

ONE fine day in December I got myself hitched up to a pretty girl called Asha. The next question was where to spend the honeymoon? "A friend in need..." and all that sort of thing. This fellow offered us his cottage in the mountain resort. Think of it—going to a mountain resort in winter: I accepted it because she thought it would be a novel idea—and there won't be any crowd around at that time of the year. That was that.

Let us slip the first two days of our stay there. The third day dawned—or rather came out doubtfully from its lair. I turned over in my bed and lazily opened my eyes. She was not there. Well, she has got what it takes, I thought, to get up so early on such a morning. I snuggled up into the number of coverlets and closed my eyes.

I woke up later because Asha was shaking me by the shoulders, "Hey, lazybones! get up!"

I half opened my eyes and yawned.

HONEYMOON ON ICE

"What's the matter?" I mumbled:

She stood there with what one may call "righteous indignation" on her face. She looked prettier each time I looked at her.

"How do you manage it?" I asked feebly.

"What?"

"How can you compete with the dawn and still look prettier?"

She blushed. "Well, if you want to know, it is in your question itself" she finished quizzically.

"Huh" I tried to collect my wits.

"And what do you mean 'early'? Do you know what time it is?"

"What?" I asked to get in a word edgeways,

"Ten-thirty."

"The clock is fast" I concluded decisively.

"How much fast, pray?" she asked outraged.

"Oh, about a day or two." I replied. She pouted.

I seized her hands and pulled her to me. She lay with her back across my chest.

"You look devastating, darling" I whispered in her ear.

"Now don't try to flatter me!" she said with mock severity.

But she made no effort to release herself.

Finally it was I who got up.

"You have a demoralising effect on me, darling," I said.

She smiled mischievously.

"You need it."

A bell tinkled at the door. She looked at me inquiringly. "You answer it" I said, "I am not personable." She went out as I pushed back the covers and standing up stretched myself.

"It was the postman, darling," she said as she returned, "there's a letter for you."

I searched for my glasses but they were missing. Finally I gave it up and said "Go on, open it and read it aloud."

"Service for a blind man" she commented as she opened the cover. I went to the mirror and looked at myself closely as she opened it.

Suddenly, I heard her stifle her breath.

"What's the matter?" I called back. "Someone dead?" No answer. I looked back and got the shock of my life. She was holding the letter and staring at me as if I were some ghost.

I ran to her, got the letter off her hand and read it holding it close. Now I got my second shock of the day. It was a letter from someone called Meena and the contents were hardly suitable for a bridegroom of just two days to come face to face with.

I looked back at her and found her staring at me with her brown eyes misty.

"What are you going to say now?" she asked in a voice I had never heard before.

As a reply I tore the piece of paper into infinite shreds and threw them into the fireplace. She turned her face away from me and said in a trembling voice, "That won't wipe it away."

"What do you mean?"

"You know what I mean," she said. "It's all over now, darling. I can't stand it another moment here." I knelt before her bed and took her shoulders in a harsh grip. "What are you talking about? What's all over?...Please, Asha, Use your mind before you decide anything, darling. Why, it is just a couple of days since we married...!"

She sobbed. "That is what makes it more horrible."

I could not think of anything else to say. Then I spoke slowly,

"Please understand this, Asha. I don't know who wrote it or why. It is probably a joke..."

She looked at me. "Then it is a horrible joke. But I can't take your denial, I would have listened to any explanation. But you simply refuse to tell me—share your secret. You do not have faith in me..." she could not go on.

"Now what are you going to do?" I asked.

"I am going home. Perhaps never to return. But if you tell me about it..."

"I tell you I don't know anything about it!"

She was silent.

"You are out of your head," I shouted.

"Perhaps I am," she said calmly. Then you are well rid of me!"

I had a crazy desire to laugh. I did not. I walked away and put my head under the jet of water in the washbasin. That helped a little to cool my fevered mind. When I came out towel-drying my head, I was a bit calmer.

I searched for her but she was not in the room. Smiling wryly I dressed myself and carefully combed my hair. Then confirming my appearance in the big mirror I came down the stairs and walked into the kitchen.

"Asha!"

But she was not there either. I felt a bit apprehensive. Then

I saw a sheet of paper propped against the cooker.

"Am leaving you. Don't search for me—Asha."

She had not taken anything with her. Of that I was sure. And going in that flimsy dress in this weather. I was like hell to the front door and wrenched it open.

It was just ice—ice all over. I could see her footprints clearly. I calmed myself. As it was I was late. So why not another second? I ran in and picked up a coat from the closet and ran back.

It was the craziest thing I did, running on that ice. I slipped many times. The icy wind sent goosepimples through my skin. I shut my eyes to ward off the flakes. I struggled along. Even if I found her, would she be alive? The doubt tortured me.

Then I saw her. She had slipped and had not got up. I ran to her and hastily pulled her up. She was not conscious. But was she alive? Trembling more from fear I tested her heartbeats. They were there—but very slightly.

Her face had attained a bluish pallor and she was icy to the touch. I put the coat around her but that was hardly any help. I had to do something to bring out that trace of life. But what? I rubbed her palms and legs and her cheeks. Panic was eating at my heart. What if she did not regain consciousness?

I prayed to God to tell me a way. I'll do anything—anything. Suddenly, it came to me. It was crazy, plain crazy. But I did not want to lose that hope.

I placed my hands behind her and pulling her to me, kissed her on her lips. It was like kissing a marble statue. I kissed her again as I had never done before, putting my faith in God. Again I kissed her desperately—and there was a very faint echo in her lips. I could have cheered: This time it was more like kissing her, and slowly her lips opened in mine.

"Oh, Asha!"

I embraced her and kissed her hair. But now she was all right! She had crossed that border and come to me.

"Well, that was that!" finished my friend and looked at me. I had sat through the recital enthralled and now asked him, "I may not be much of a critic, but even I find a lack of fairies in your account!"

"Fairies!"

"Yes, fairies!" I reminded him. "You should remember that that was the subject of our discussion when you started to tell your story."

A rather stout woman was making herself a nuisance in the big store which was holding its annual sale. Nothing, it seemed, would suit her, and the unfortunate sales girl was beginning to get a little weary.

"Haven't you anything readymade that will fit me?" asked the customer at last.

"Yes; the umbrellas and the handkerchiefs are downstairs, madam" the girl replied.

"Oh, fairies! Well, Here it is!"

"Where?" I asked suspiciously.

"Surely you have not forgotten the climaxes of the dear old stories. 'Snow-white' and 'Sleeping Beauty'?"

"You mean to tell me, they inspired you to do it...I mean the kissing bit?" I asked disbelievingly.

"They did not," he assured me. "But when I thought about it later I saw how it adheres to them."

"But what happened later?" I asked in an effort to trace the loose threads.

"Oh, then," he began. "It was all tight. My action, well, sort of turned the balance. She conceded she was not serious when she started out."

"But the letter?"

He laughed. "That was exactly what I thought it to be! A practical joke by a couple of inspired old classmates of mine! But it was nevertheless a very dangerous joke. It almost made Asha lose her life!"

I agreed and called it a day.

Short Story

BITTER WORDS

By Girija Shankar

The Headmistress was shrewd and laid her finger unerringly on the young woman's weakness.

THAT day at the school had been most strenuous for Gomati. She had to supervise the examinations and before going home to attend a meeting presided over by the Headmistress. She gave the teachers a review of the work done collectively and individually by the teachers, the progress made by the girl pupils and stressed the necessity for better team work from the next academic year after the vacation. She finally wished her colleagues well-earned rest during the ensuing summer holidays.

The meeting broke up but the teachers re-assembled during the farewell lunch and Headmistress Durga was talking to Gomati who sat next to her. The chief was sour in mind and sharp of tongue. When she found anyone in the wrong or not up to expectations she would flay her alive.

"Gomati, I shall be very frank with you. These three months you have been quite listless and

careless. When the Inspector wanted to know some details about you I was rather proud enough to claim you as one of the ablest of newcomers. I told him you could turn your hand to any job assigned—you could teach Maths, Geography, History, Drawing, Music, Sewing etc.

"I regret now I made such a tall claim. I am afraid you have let me down very badly. Something has come over you, I don't know why you are coming to school without any preparations. My report is that you have not cared to clear the pupils' doubts and answer their enquiries properly. You want to say something. Go on eating and listen to what I have to tell you. And then give your explanation. This school has a great tradition and the management believes in maintaining strict discipline. When you first came here you made a great impression on me. You had a nice way of handling the children and they all raved about you. You were that popular.

"What has now come over you, woman? Something has gone wrong with you. I can say without fear that you are carrying on an affair with some man. I know you have no parents. There is only an auntie who cooks and keeps house for you. But are you aware that any teacher who is married cannot be entertained here. The objection of the management is understandable. The married woman cannot reconcile her duties as a wife and mother with those of a teacher. So out she goes. Anyway, you are not more than twenty-five or twenty-six. Where is the hurry in rushing to the altar? Why not save some money beforehand and then plan it all?"

"Don't you know me? I refused to divide my attention between marriage and this profession. I am well past fifty and I have had no regrets. I see, you are very near to shedding tears and making a silly exhibition. Please don't. Whatever your decision, come and tell me when the vacation is over. You can be sure of two months' pay at any rate. There is time enough to think over my words. I am leaving now. Don't trouble to answer me just now. And take care of your health."

Gomati wanted to draft a letter of resignation and fling it in the face of the Headmistress then and there. Her words scorched her like red-hot coals. What piqued and galled her most was Durga's capacity for finding out the truth about her. Yes, it

THE IDEA!

Tom: I won plenty on races today.

Joe: You picked the winners, eh?

Tom: I bet that a few would lose and I won.

x x x

Customer: (Settling accounts) Here, full settlement. I am square now.

Shopman: Thanks. I hope you will be round again.

was a love affair these past six months with Prakash, a very rich man though he was ten years older. He was a widower and his grandmother had been urging him to marry again so that the hereditary line should not be interrupted.

She was residing with her aunt in a small outhouse in the back part of his bungalow. He was courteous and kind to her. One night when a thief had intruded into her residence she raised an alarm. Luckily for her, Prakash who was sitting in the balcony heard her screams and shouts and raced down to catch the thief who was threatening her with a dagger. When he saw Prakash he took to his heels, scaled the wall with the quickness of a monkey and disappeared into the darkness. Thus was formed the first link in a chain of liaison. Prakash put up an

iron fence in the front part of her residence and thus removed her fears for her safety.

That was a time when her auntie was out of town. Daily night after this incident he used to knock at her door and chat with her for a while. But Cupid could not keep them apart. It is not clear who made the first move but she found herself in his strong arms and when he kissed her ardently she showed no disposition to struggle or resist him. She returned his kisses with greater warmth. He promised to marry her, demanded his rights and got them.

As the months passed they met surreptitiously and the romance was a long uninterrupted spell. But there was no concrete proposal from him and she hadn't the courage to pull him up and ask him what were his intentions. She did not like the idea of being a rich man's glorified mistress...

Durga's words stabbed her in the heart. At home while her auntie was preparing her food she was weeping in the drawing room. Prakash would meet her after her auntie was asleep and she was determined to put to him a straight question. He had invited her to the hill station where he proposed to spend the summer. It was an alluring prospect and she had completed her plans to go to the hill station and enjoy her holiday and romance.

That night she asked him about his intentions. He was

visibly vexed and told her she would have to wait for at least one year. Could she not? What did a few more months matter? A rich relation of his was urging him to marry her daughter with a promise to will away all his property. He had not yet replied.

When he left her she felt a wave of disgust and bitterness flooding her very being. She had been frigid and cold when he took her in his arms and kissed her. He had sensed a change. The next day he left for the hill station without leaving a word for her.

The break was complete. Gomati had decided to pack up and move to another residence before his return. She was thankful to Durga for her plain but prophetic words of wisdom. Her aunt understood her trouble and kept quiet.

In another month Gomati had moved to another house. She met Durga at her residence and told her she would continue at the school.

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V. P. P.

By C. LATHBRIDGE

HE
WAS
TOO
SHY!

The ecstasy of their first kiss transcended all things...It was a bond..a pact of love.

LOVE comes to us as though in a dream, gently settling down on our closed eyelids and filling us with its exquisite consciousness, so that when we awake we suddenly realise that it is present in all its majesty and power and depth of feeling. The days when we first become conscious of this strange emotion called love are bitter sweet; they are days of faith and of hope, of grief and of despair, of yearning and of fulfilment. Yes, they are days of hopes and dreams, and I first met her in a dream, or so it seems to me now.

I first saw her hanging out clothes to dry on a clothes line near my house. She was stand-

ing in my path but probably I would not have given her another glance had she not turned round at the sound of my footsteps and looked at me.

I looked deep into eyes of such a light brown texture that they almost seemed to be golden; eyes that caught my heart in their golden clasp and enslaved it for ever. It seemed as though Time and Eternity themselves stood still and the whole world seemed hushed and silent. Forgotten were the twitterings of the birds in their nests, the roar of the city traffic outside the gate and the coldness of the approaching night, everything was extra-corporeal and unreal; except for a girl, an exquisite little creature

with haunting brown eyes and an adorable tilted nose speckled with sun-kissed freckles; with the wind playing a wild symphony in her hair and blowing strands of it across her face. The palm trees behind sighed their message to my heart 'you love her, you love her' and a great emotion welled up within me and reached out to her. But she, unknowing and uncaring, broke the magic spell by moving away and leaving me standing there with the love and the yearning seething within me. Then gradually I came back to normal and things shaped themselves in their proper perspective, and I silently went home and dreamt that night about a girl, a living poem of grace and beauty, who stood silent against a background of palm trees with the sun making a bright halo of her fair hair and exposing hidden reddish glints in it, and the wind playing a wild symphony in it.

I first spoke to her about a month after this incident and asked her to come to the pictures that same day. She was a very quiet companion, not speaking unless she was spoken to, but her very silence and reserve made her more fascinating and adorable to me. So I took her out to the cinema many times after that and bought her presents, and her way of saying 'thank you' made me want to buy her more and more. I was very shy and awkward in those days as I had not mixed often with girls, but the fact that I was so desperately in love with her encouraged me

to write a love poem to her, and so I got my first taste of her anger. She was annoyed and called me impertinent and told me not to write such things about her, and so I got my first taste of her anger. I thought that her anger meant that she would not talk to me again, so I went away from there with the agony and the despair tearing at my heart. And I went home and knelt down by the altar and called out for God in my agony and I think that He heard me, because I was somehow comforted and I went back that same evening and she smiled and talked to me as though nothing had occurred.

She had a strange make-up, she was part tomboy and part wall-flower; sometimes a running, shouting, laughing dare-devil, and sometimes a little child, frightened and shy. Sometimes she fought with me and made me miserable and sometimes she was as gay as she could be. But yet, though I yearned to tell her what was in my heart, I dared not, for fear of incurring her anger and her scorn. And I was so desperately in love with her that I lived only for her smiles and her words.

So the time passed, the summer-season drew to a close and the monsoon arrived in all its fury and destruction. And the cold winds and the rain affected her, so that she contracted pleurisy. Her parents and I used to visit her every day in the hospital and sometimes I used to bring

her sweets. But she, being a very nervous and frightened child, used to thank me cursorily and then cling to her parents. And one day she said to her mother in jest (though I knew it not then). "Why does this fellow come here?" And so she scorned me and my heart ached and I went home with the sick despair tearing me inside. And I went to church and there I called out to God in my agony to deliver me from this hopeless love of me. They were having evening service, I remember, and the choir was singing solemnly.

The words of the song pierced my already tortured heart. 'Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord, hear my prayer.' It sounded so much like a sad, sweet requiem for my hopeless love that I felt the anger rise up within me and the resentment; that a God supposed to be so merciful and loving could look down on me with such callous indifference for my suffering, and I got up and went out of the church. But I felt the eyes of of the crucified Lord beckoning to me, and suddenly they seemed filled with such compassion for me, that I felt my heart melt and quiver within me with repentance and sorrow, and I went back into the church, and prayed, and was comforted.

So the days passed on, and by the end of December she was discharged from the hospital, and I carried on my romance, shy and backward as ever, with my heart telling me to speak of my love, but my cowardly soul

refusing to do so. The opportunities to do so were many but they were not taken advantage of. Once I asked her for a lock of her hair. And she answered, "Why?" I said. "To remind me of you." Again she asked me, "Why do you want to be reminded of me? Why only me, why not any other girl?" And my heart was yearning to tell her just those three little words, and a great wave of love filled me and reached out to her, so that she would have been blind indeed not to have sensed it. And she turned around and gazed outside for a little while awaiting my answer, and seeing that I did not speak, turned towards me again and looked into my eyes. She saw the hunger there and yearning in them, and perhaps her soul was touched for she said, very softly, "Why don't you answer?" And again the fear came upon my cowardly self and I could not speak. So the moment passed, and was forgotten and I went away sad at heart and bitterly reproaching myself for the coward that I was.

But fate had ordained me to be happy, and the day of fulfilment came unexpectedly. I had taken her for a picture show and was talking to her mother after they had finished their dinner. Her mother went inside to the kitchen to do some work, and the girl was talking to me alone. Then she brought out a bottle of some scented liquid and began to apply it to her face. Purely out of mischief I went over to her and took away the bottle from her, and pouring a

little of the liquid into my cupped palm, began to apply it to her face. As my hand touched her cheek, I felt something tighten within me. I began to stroke her cheek, feeling the pleasure run in waves through me.

Our faces were very close and my lips moved instinctively towards her cheek. I brushed my lips against her cheek. And a great fear and a trembling came over me so that I moved back quickly. Then she turned and looked at me and I saw a tiny flame burning deep in the shadowed depths of those haunting eyes. And a great love and a tenderness took possession of me, and I moved quickly towards her and kissed her on the lips. The ecstasy of our first kiss was almost a pain that cut through me sharply like a knife. And the fire of love took possession of me and I kissed her again and again until I was spent and gasping and the thunders had died down in my blood. The ecstasy of our kisses transcended all things; the world was naught to me when I held her in my arms, for what else mattered when I held the meaning of life, its realisation and fulfilment in my arms? And our kisses were a bond, a pact of love which would last for ever.

There was no need for words. I moved away silently and sat down. And it was only when I had kissed her the second time, that I whispered brokenly against her hair. "I love you, I love you so much. Do you love me, A...?" she made a

funny little motion with her head, and I was afraid, and I cried out in terror. "Oh, please, please, only a little! Only a little, I'm asking you!" The lovely head lifted itself from my shoulder and the haunting eyes opened wide and she exclaimed. "Of course, I do love you." And in gratitude and love, I kissed her eyes and her throat and her hair.

The years have passed and now it is time for us to part for a few months. Our love has not died with the passing years, rather it is stronger and more mature. And every man has his own light to show him the true path through the darkness; and mine comes towards me now, with that angelic smile hovering around the corners of that pretty mouth. Arm in arm we walk through the garden, our so familiar garden, filled with the soft fragrance of flowers and scents of the big trees in the corner. At the gate we kiss and cling to each other and then she is gone for a while and my heart goes with her. At the corner she turns and waves to me and the nearby light from the lamp-post turns her hair into a web of living gold. Then she is gone and I am left alone with my memories and my hopes. And the palm trees whisper to me as they did on the evening I first saw her. "You love her, you love her." And I thank them deeply with love and affection and I see again a little figure with a freckled nose and red-gold hair, in which the wind is playing a wild symphony...

THE WILY LOVER

By S. K. Prabhu

He had a number of adventures and boasted of his conquests to his friends...

"SO, Ravi, you have returned from Delhi after three years," said Gopichand, grinning. "Haven't you married? Men who are younger than yourself have children—quite a brood of them."

"Gopi, you are always a very shrewd fellow but you are a Nosy Parker as well. To tell you the truth, I haven't married but I don't deny I have had any number of sweethearts. Why marry and subject yourself to the eternal torture of one girl and remain her slave all your life? I don't believe in marrying. My salary of Rs. 300 is hardly sufficient to meet my own expenses. So why bother about a home and children? One of the girls for whom I had a fancy became pregnant and she pestered me to marry her. But I was stubborn and refused to tie myself down. One night she ran away from home and nobody knew what became of her."

Gopi Chand gazed at him in admiration. "You are a true Don Juan, Ravi. I don't know why girls fall for you so. Probably your smiling face, and stylish ways carry a great appeal to feminine hearts. How long are you planning to stay here?"

"Don't you know, my mother is bedridden? She summoned me urgently by telegram. I have taken two months' leave for the present. First thing I did on coming here was to engage a doctor to visit her twice a day and a housemaid to be in constant attendance on my mother. Come to my house and see my mother. You are an old friend of the family and she will be pleased to see you."

The two friends on the way entered an hotel and attacked plates of sweets and savouries with hearty appetite.

"Gopi, while in Delhi I met some friends from here and they told some interesting stories

about your adventures. Why not you give me a first hand account?" asked Ravi.

Gopi laughed. "Our friends have a way of magnifying little incidents. There was a girl called Pramilla, a widow's daughter. She was an excellent creature, a delicate rose, I would say—sweet-natured, slight of build and perfect in her features. They were residing next door to ours and the widow used to come to my house for a chat with mother. Truth to tell, I fell in love with this fine girl. At first she seemed to be very haughty and imperious. She had one regular visitor—Ramji—a middle-aged fellow who came to her house every evening swinging a walking stick and who looked grim enough with his thick spectacles. Whenever he came, mother and daughter made a lot of fuss, prepared tea and cakes and pressed him to eat. He would sit on for two or three hours, talking with the mother while Pramilla was listening with rapt attention.

"After all, Ravi, that old woman was earning not more than thirty rupees a month but they were spending nearly Rs. 200. This seemed a puzzle to me. The old lady had some jewels which she was reserving for her daughter but she had no other assets. This was the secret which the old woman at first confided to my mother and was later on passed on to me. So it was easy to infer that Ramji was supplying plenty of cash and was practically supporting both daughter and mother.

"You know how curious I am. When I start probing into a mystery I never stop until I explore it fully. I made a startling discovery. This Ramji had a wife and two children in a village near Bombay. His wife had lots of money and he was using it liberally to promote his own romantic affairs.

"I thought that so long as Ramji visited my neighbours, the young woman wouldn't care for me. And I was crazy about her. I hit upon a trick. I went to Bombay and sent a telegram to Ramji purporting to come from his wife. 'Enough of that affair. Start for home or I will stop allowance.' From this town I rattled a telegram to Ramji's wife: 'Send for your husband. He is carrying on a romantic affair here. Keep this confidential.'

Ramji was so scared that he left for Bombay. A fortnight passed and he did not return; the mother looked like a deflated balloon and the daughter was a bit humble. I knew they had no money to pay their mounting bills. Luckily I had some savings. First I got very chummy with the mother and talked sympathetically. When she asked me to lend her some money I readily assented. I entered her house again when the mother was away on her duties and got into a conversation with Pramilla. This time her eyes lighted up at my sight and she welcomed me in a mellifluous voice. After talking on familiar matters I asked her, 'Where is your

mother? She wanted some financial accommodation. I have brought Rs. 100 for the present. Will you kindly pass it on to her? But, mind, neither of you should breathe a word about it to my mother. Is that promise all right."

As I gave her the currency notes, her fingers touched mine and an electric current passed through my veins.

"Come every evening at this hour, will you?" she invited coyly.

I almost jumped at the opportunity. Every evening when the mother was away I would go in and talk. I was charmed with her, so was she with me.

Then I told her about Ramji's deception. He was trying to enslave a beautiful maiden though he was married and had two children. He had had many affairs like that. After a bite at

one fruit, he would drop it and go in search of another fresh fruit. What would be Pramilla's fate I asked, if she was one of such fruits, tasted and dropped on the road-side?

"The young woman was frightened and wept at such a possible fate. If he had stayed here for a few more days, she revealed he would have taken her easily. It was Providence who must have brought me to her, she said sobbing.

"It did not take me long to comfort her. She was in my arms the moment I made a sentimental move. The strange thing is that Ramji didn't return.

"What happened to Pramilla then?" asked Ravi.

Gopi laughed. "I will introduce you to her when you come to my house in the evening. I may marry that peach, as you can guess."

I am making a plea for the dunces in this world, who have done such great things in our history.....Only conventional school-master—wedded as they are to their wretched curriculum—think that dunces are low-brow.

—Lord Esher.

I can talk English, but only to myself.—Nobel Prizewinner. Signor Salvatore Quasimodo.

The life of every man is a diary in which he means to write one story, and writes another, and his humblest hour is when he compares the volume as it is with what he vowed to make it.

—J. M. Barrie.

INDIA MAGAZINE

HAND OF DESTINY

The raja had cast his covetous eyes on the girl and decided to marry her...

SHORT
STORY

By

SAGUNA BAI
MONSINGH

IT had long been my wish to visit the shores of Cape Comorin, we call Kanyakumari, and see the wonderful coloured sands. But when we went there some years back, people explained that once there used to be those wonderful varieties of sand. Well, we had only a vision of some coloured sand and nothing more. We visited Swami Vivenkananda's rock and the temple at the land's end. Anyway the sight-seeing lasted only for a day and the next morning we started an exploration up to Agasteeswaram. We were four in that old car belonging to one of our friends and it was by God's immense mercy we were able to survive after all the breakdowns and repairs, throughout the way. After a quarter of an hour's

coaxing, the car started whining pitifully like a child.

There was nothing interesting to see on the way. Herbs and shrubs that belong to sandy soil were all around us, and rows and rows of oleander with red and white flowers smelling sweetly in that lonely spot. Now and then we espied fully laden cashewnut and casuarina trees fanning the passers by and giving one a feeling of repose and peace. Nothing eventful happened until we came across a thick grove in a closed garden full of mango trees in front and rows of oleander in full bloom. The ground was covered with layers of leaves, flowers and mangoes giving a touch of beauty to the deserted garden. We got a glimpse of a vast, old fashioned house beyond, sheltered by palms and varieties of

cactus and prickly pear as ancient as the garden.

The breeze was heavenly and the juicy mangoes that were hanging from the branches in profusion were inviting. We alighted from the car to take some rest as well as to help ourselves if possible to a few mangoes. The place was deserted and red round and long mangoes were on the ground, some rotting and others fresh surrounded by birds and squirrels feeding on them contentedly. They flew in all directions at the sight of us.

'Have you ever come across such honest people?' one asked in awe.

'If it is our place, there will be boys inside the fence, stealing mangoes and destroying everything' another remarked.

'Maybe people in these parts are rich and they leave their garden and produce to anybody like us to use' a third replied.

Just then, an individual appeared from nowhere and stood among us. He was short and fair of about fifty, looking at us mysteriously, eager to talk. We looked at one another. The man smiled and introduced himself as Varma.

'We appreciate you people and admire your honesty. In our place people won't leave mangoes like this. How is it that you people are so good?' one of us questioned him.

The man took a deep breath. Our people are equally bad.

H'm it's a long story. This is a cursed place. Nobody will dare to step inside the garden, least of all taste the fruits. It is like this for over hundred years' he said with another sigh.

'Then how old are you? Do you people of this part live more than hundred years?' one asked in fun.

Varma laughed outright. 'Oh no. I am fifty two. It happened in my grandfather's time and he used to tell us the story during rainy days when we sat huddled up inside our house' he said reminiscently.

'The same story every day, eh?' one wanted to know.

'Yes, the same story, but we are not tired of hearing the heroic tale' he said with reverence and mystery.

'Varma, we are aroused. Why not we go and sit under the tree and taste those delicious fruits while listening to your story?' the young of the party suggested and we exchanged looks of approval.

'Last year, a number of white men and women came here for a picnic. They spent a day here and ate the mangoes but...'

'But what happened to them after eating the fruits, Varma?' We asked in unison, expecting some unbelievable yarn.

'Nothing. Maybe the curse does not affect white people but you are more or less like us' he drawled.

As a matter of fact two of our party were very dark, unlike the people of those parts who were mostly fair. We were dressed up to date in order to give those southerners a high opinion of ourselves. Their eighteenth century heavy ornaments, especially those hangings from the earlobes of women, dressed in coarse saris without blouses were queer.

'There's nothing like curse and ghost in this world at least nowadays, Varma. I will tell you one thing. If we die after eating the fruits, this garden is really cursed but if we survive, you must forget for ever that it was ever haunted. Now then come on, let us enter in state into the old garden of some unknown nawab or rajah and partake of his bounty' said one and we went inside through a great rickety gate. We cleaned a shady part and covered it up with our carpet. From our picnic basket, we took the giant flask of ovaltine and eatables. After seeing us spread the eatables, Varma got bold and collected some juicy mangoes for us.

'These long ones are 'Vottu' mangoes and the red rounds are 'Kappa' and so on' he explained. The mangoes tasted excellent since they were fresh from the trees.

'Now to your story, Varma' we encouraged him and wiping his mouth after eating a piece of cake, *murukkus*, bread and jam and 'mysore pak' no doubt new to him, he began his narration.

'You see, this part belonged to

Kshatryas a hundred years ago. The kings were dead long back but the descendants were powerful warriors without any title. The women lived in the inner courts and went out in palanquins, thickly veiled. In this very place lived a chief named Martanda Varma with his brother Veerasingam and sister Chitra. The parents were dead and the household treasury was in the decline after decades of spending without much income. They were great chiefs only in name, having no money to keep retainers or maintain their status. Still they had family heirlooms, jewels, century old places, mostly dilapidated due to want of repair. They were the most honourable people who ever lived, giving the highest value for chastity and chivalry. The men killed their unchaste females without a second thought, and they never gave their daughters in marriage to outsiders.

In this house, the two brothers and Chitra lived a peaceful and contented life. They gathered precious roots, leaves and berries from the famous mountain 'Maruthuvamalai' nearby and exported them to outsiders. They had an old sadhu living with them and it was he who collected the medicinal herbs. For years this went on and they had a regular income for keeping up appearances. The sadhu in his leisure hours instructed Chitra from the puranas and taught her ever so many things like a rishi.

Chitra was very beautiful and she was the promised wife of a

handsome and rich chief Jeyaveer. She was sixteen and you know well the dreams and desires of that sweet age. She begged her brothers to send her with the sadhu to the shores of Kanyakumari for a day. She knew that she could not go out anywhere after her marriage. She would be more or less a prisoner in her husband's place. The brothers after a long argument, sent her in their old palanquin carried by their old retainers. She was delighted to be outside her house and peeped out through a hole in the hangings. Later, in her joy she rolled up the hangings and looked at the clean outer world in wonder and awe. The beautiful wild birds, flowers and the general scenery enchanted her.

It so happened that the young Kerala raja was staying in his place at Kanyakumari. It was the fourth day of his stay and the young raja tired of the monotony of the place. His young mind yearned for the sight of the pretty dames he was accustomed to seeing at home. While he was walking about in the jasmine scented, palm sheltered garden brooding over his loneliness, he heard sweet bell-like laughter floating in the air. He was for a moment stunned and thought that it was some fairy in answer to his longing for a pretty face. Trembling with excitement, he looked around, pinching his chin to ascertain that it was not a dream. Again he heard that same laughter, this time nearer. He looked at the road and saw a pretty

SO APT!

There are two occasions when a person should keep his mouth shut—

“—Yes; when swimming and when angry.”

X X X

The Owner: “I think of calling that filly ‘Bad News’.”

Trainer: “Whatever for?”

The Owner: “Because ‘Bad News’ travels quickest.”

young girl in a palanquin with an old sadhu laughing at some dove oblivious of everything around them; so engrossed were they in discussion that they did not perceive the open mouthed, handsome prince in the sheltered garden.

The young prince devoured the fresh beauty of the girl, until the palanquin passed out of his sight. With him it was love at first sight and for her marvellous beauty he forgave her for those orthodox clothes and ornaments. He knew that she was the daughter of some poor Kshatriya chief. His young mind was tormented with desire and he hurried to his place. Summoning his faithful servant, he sent him after the palanquin to know the whereabouts of the girl. He returned after a time with information that she was Chitra, the sister of the famous brothers Marthanda Varma and Veerasingam and the

sadhu was their family friend and instructor.

Next day the raja sent two men to Chitra's house with an offer of marriage. Meanwhile, Chitra enjoyed her bath at a remote corner of the sea shore and spent the day; temple visiting and worship. When the dazzling red sun sank low in the western sea, they unwillingly started back home.

The morning began joyously enough for Chitra who never ceased to sing her praises of the sceneries and the temple. Little did she know of the cruel fate that awaited her for the morrow. The brothers were surprised to see two horsemen alight from their horses and enter the place with silver trays full of jewels, money and fruits. A fine silver-laced white cloth, the Malayalis call ‘Mundu’, was on top of the tray. The brothers knew that it meant but one thing. The ‘mundu’ to the Malayalis meant just what the holy ‘thali’ was to the South Indians. The horsemen and the costly gifts were no doubt from a Malayali raja. The messengers delivered their messages respectfully.

‘The young Kerala raja wishes to marry your sister Chitra, whom he had seen by chance yesterday. He wants to tell you that he will come and claim the bride tomorrow noon just before his journey to his capital’ they said.

The brothers controlled themselves with an effort and nodded assent. When they were left

alone, they looked at one another in utter misery and sorrow. The happy and care-free face of their sister brimming with the fullness of life and joy sprang before their misty eyes. They whispered among themselves and planned their future. Just then Chitra entered very much excited to find out the meaning of the arrival of horsemen. The sight of the glittering jewels and the ‘mundu’ told her the exact tale. Without a word she turned back sorrowful and terrified. In her room, she gave vent to heart broken sobs. She could not imagine what might follow after that. But she knew for certain that the raja would not have her. Then how about appeasing the royal wrath? Her head whirled after innumerable strange probabilities her small but gallant kshatriya brain had conjured up. Tired and exhausted after her mental struggle and sorrow she slept there itself, her fair face stained with bitter tears. It was thus that her poor brothers saw their beloved sister, whom they loved like their own child after the death of their parents long ago. Uncontrollable sobs shook the brothers for a time, to think of the final doom decided for the morrow.

Suddenly she awoke in gathering darkness; while the brothers managed to cover their sorrow with calmness they mustered quickly in their stout hearts. Gently they beckoned Chitra to the puja room and there they worshipped God and their

parents. Telling Chitra to wait there, the brothers went out. Chitra looked out through the window at the beautiful garden with rows of oleander and jasmine, wafting their intoxicating scent to the tune of the murmuring palms and huge plantain trees. Tears rolled down her face to think of her unknown fate that might perhaps end her life for ever. For a moment her mind revolted at the injustice of dying so young and in the midst of innumerable desires and longings. She cursed the raja and herself for being so careless as to expose herself to the view of the lurking, cowardly raja, all because of her innocent joy that day. If only she had travelled in a closed palanquin, the raja could not have seen her. Those were her melancholy thoughts and regrets.

She saw, at a distance, her brothers talking to their one and only retainer of the ancient house. They looked sad in the advanced evening. The old retainer lived in the back yard with his family and they served as cook, watchman, gardener, groom and house-keeper. In a short while, he was seen driving the old horse cart they used for marketing. Chitra could not make out anything. She saw her brothers entering the inner court yard leading to the underground room. In those days all the old families had underground rooms, where they kept their treasures. Chitra's people were poor and they stored logs of sandalwood and other valuable things there.

Standing by the window, engrossed in her own sad thoughts, Chitra had no count of time until she heard the rumbling noise of their cart. Noisily it entered the court yard and her brothers came out to lift a kerosene tin from the cart. The servant took a sack inside the kitchen, while the brothers took the tin indoors. Minutes later, Chitra smelt good food, fortunately all her favourite dishes, but she had a sort of nausea at the mere thought of a meal. Her brothers were nowhere to be seen. The back portion of the rambling house swallowed them up.

The temple bells rang cheerily at eight o'clock and Chitra found herself following her brothers for the tasty meal. Poor souls! none of them could eat well and they wondered at their want of appetite.

After their silent meal, they went to the central room as usual but again none had the mind to talk. Finally, they prepared for an elaborate worship of their family deity. The jasmine garland woven by Chitra that morning adorned the neck of the goddess and the dim brass light emanating its odour of ghee and the scented sticks moved them strangely and when they looked at one another, their eyes were full of tears. At last the elder brother cleared his throat.

'Chitra dear' he said quietly, 'let us sleep in these benches to-night, for we have to wake up with the early dawn'. The other

brother arranged their peculiar round silk pillows on three of the marble benches.

In her dim corner, Chitra once again gave vent to her agony and thought of Jeyaveer, her brave strong betrothed with anguish. All her young hopes were shattered and tears soaked her pillow. At last, its cool touch lulled her to sleep.

At the sudden sound of opening doors and the strange light from the blazing torches, Chitra woke up with a start. Outside, it was still dark. Faintly she heard the sleepy cries of some early birds and somewhere a cock crowed. Stark terror at the impending calamity made her tremble for a moment. The faithful jasmine flowers were already blooming and their gentle immature scent was slowly filling the house. With a pang, she realised that it was the last dawn that she would ever see. Tears were flowing from her beautiful eyes dimming her sight.

Already her brothers were busy preparing for their final journey. With a final hopelessness, she nerved herself to face the ordeal like her brothers. Wiping the involuntary tears, Chitra waited for the doom that she was yet to know. After a long time, her brothers took her hands and led her to the underground room, both of them carrying torches. It seemed hours to reach the room and silently the elder brother lifted the trap door and descended leading Chitra gently behind

him. The other brother followed, closing the door after him.

The things inside the underground room looked sinister in the torch light. A strong smell of kerosene assailed her and Chitra at last knew for certain what her fate was. Tensely she awaited developments.

All of a sudden Martanda Varma lighted the highly piled sandalwood and herbs already soaked in kerosene with his torch. Green and blue tongues of flame greedily stretched out to snatch the poor victims. They stood stupefied in the terrible light that now changed into orange, red and purple. Martandavarma placing his hand on Chitra's head whispered, 'Our beloved Chitra, this is the only way of escaping from the Raja's hands. Think that we are dying together for the honour of our ancient house. It is far better to be swallowed up in the sweet smelling flames rather than face the humiliation of becoming one of the raja's innumerable wives. Let us be brave, dear child. Here comes our deliverance.....' and already an emerald fork of hungry fire devoured the dark curly hair of fair Chitra. Locked together in their last embrace, they closed their eyes and chanted their last song to God. Slowly their voice trailed and stopped until only the hissing noise of the raging fire was audible. Everything was over in an hour. The battle of burn-sandal wood and other stores went on until the sun innocently smiled at the world with benevolence, unconscious of the terrible

struggle of three loyal souls in underground room.

The faithful retainer watching the scene through the trap door shivered once at the strange silence after the pathetic conversation and ran away sobbing and hitting his head. Hastily he bundled up his meagre worldly possessions along with the little bundle of jewels the kind hearted brothers presented him the previous night and gathered his family of seven members to be ready for their journey away from the sad memory of their beloved masters and mistress. Just then a string of horsemen and soft music and sound of trumpet disturbed the neighbourhood in the early hours of the morning.

The raja looked resplendent in jewels and velvet. He was impatient and excited. In his mind he was already planning to transform the beautiful wild flower Chitra into a delicate hot house bloom, the envy of the whole town. Solemnly he alighted from the white horse and entered into the hospitality of the open house. Until he reached the hall, he had not noticed the grave-like silence of the surroundings. The old retainer informed the raja that they were not in the house. The raja ordered his men to fetch the three people from the hiding place. The old retainer, his mission over, started his journey in the horse cart unnoticed.

In rage, the raja went from room to room in search of them. It took some-

SMART!

A girl seeking a new job told the personnel manager she had won several prizes in crossword puzzles.

"That sounds good," the manager said. "But we want someone who will be smart during office hours."

"Oh," said the girl. "This was in office hours."

time to reach the underground room. Detecting a faint smell of sandalwood and smoke, they stopped listening for some sound. They found the trap door and opened it. Suddenly a strong whiff of smoke escaped outside filling the room and unbearably suffocating all. Fascinated, all of them stood agape waiting for the smoke to abate.

Without a word one of them decended and one by one all followed into that doomed chamber, where they now found only a few white bones and an amount of melted gold. The reeking smell of burnt flesh made them giddy. Again they ascended silently outside the death chamber to breathe fresh air. With bent head, the rajah, his face sadly distorted with anguish, reviewed in his mind the havoc he had unconsciously set upon that ancient Kshatriya house, who prized their honour

best and first in life. He bade his men retrace their steps to their palace by the shore. For the last time he looked at the old dead house and two poignant tears dropped on his pearl-studded slippers. That was his tribute to the dead, who blamed not their oppressors but slept grandly in eternal oblivion of the troubles of the world.....

Here Varama ceased to narrate his story. His voice had gone hoarse and shaky and for our part, we tried our best to hide our emotion at the tragic end of the heroic family. When at last we looked at Varma, he was more or less sobbing like a baby. Heedless of strangers around, strings of tears raced down from his eyes to the ground.

"Strange indeed are your people" said one of us after a pause.

Varma gazed at the speaker, wiping his face and blowing his nose aside.

"Is it a crime to be heroic?" he queried at last in wonder.

"Oh no. I want to know why your people call this place cursed

when such unheard of chivalry had been enacted in this very house' he remonstrated in earnest,

"Well, people of yore had a superstition that the ghosts of the three young souls haunted the place and so feared to come near the place' Varma explained.

"Well' the other continued. 'If it had happened in our place, we might have erected a great monument in that place. Do they not deserve a prominent place for their bravery?'

Varma thought for a while and wondered. It was getting late and we bade goodbye to Varma offering him a rupee. But the fellow refused to accept it. His face had a strange relief as though he got rid of a great burden from his shoulders. The happiness and satisfaction he experienced after relating the heroic tale to someone was enough for him. It was rather touching to perceive the strange satisfaction his eyes revealed. Truly men are strange animals.

DEEP DOWN

There is a strange conflict in human nature. We say we want change, but we say it with our lips. Deep down in our hearts we may not really want to change. At least we don't want it badly enough. Until you come to the point where you really want to change so profoundly that you will let everything go that holds you back, not until that point will you ever be a better person.

— DR. NORMAN VINCENT PEALE

SHORT STORY

THE QUARREL

Had her husband got wind of her affair before her marriage? She was troubled at the thought.....

By R. Jayadev

UMA was a picture of misery. She had been weeping for a whole week. Her eyes and nose had become red and there were traces of tears on her cheeks. The cook, an old woman well past sixty, placed a dish of cakes and a glass of steaming tea before the young woman on the table. She gently lifted up her face and smoothed back the curly hair on her head. "Asha, dear, don't give way to despair and gloom like this. Now that your mother is no more, you must regard me as your mother and guide. Have I not served your family all these thirty years? Take my advice. Your husband Kishore is a fool. He is fond of you and at the same time he is cruel like a savage of the woods.

"I can't understand why he beat you so. He left off only when the neighbours heard your screams and peeped out through their windows. I too was horrified when I saw blood gushing out of your nose.

"Don't take him too seriously when he said that he had done with you and that he was turn-

ing his back upon you for the last time. Where in all the world can he expect to find a woman as beautiful as yourself? I knew he was trying to intimidate and bluff you. On the whole, he is very jealous and suspicious. I used to see him hiding in street corners and watching you unobserved.

"I wanted to warn you about it. But, you see, I had my own scruples in that matter. First of all, you are such a modest perfect creature. Your virtues are greater than your beauty. I know, you are most devoted to your husband and you will never look upon another man with desire. If your husband did not discover that truth before, let him do so now, I thought.

"So I didn't choose to inform you about his movements. Of course, there was that Raghuvir the famous jeweller's son, who was running after you. But that was before your marriage. Everybody thought you would marry him. He worshipped the very ground you walked on. But somehow the plan fell through.

He was most disappointed and fell sick when your mother told him bluntly that he could never expect to marry you though he might be a money bag.

"You too, I know, were disappointed and wouldn't touch food or drink for some days. Nobody was there to console you. You had my sympathy but how could I come and comfort you when your mother was so watchful? But time healed your wounds. But you never quite got over that shock.

"Then came your marriage. You didn't like like Kishore very well at first. I am aware of it. He was domineering and would not brook any contradiction. He is an upstart's son and he has very peculiar ideas about the status of women. I have often heard him remark to his friends that every woman must remain behind closed doors and that she who comes out into the streets must be thrown into boiling oil.

"Your modern ways and ideas were never liked by him though he would not openly tell you so. But he is very shifty in his ways and I even suspect that he does not know his own mind. Yesterday I found him out. I was on my way to visit an old friend in Vasant Colony and whom do you think I saw?"

Here she paused and Uma forgot her own grief and suffering and looked up with interest. "Maiji," she said, embracing her. "I am simply overwhelmed by the affection and consideration you have shown me. You

are the only person who has not deserted me in my present crisis. You see, my uncle, Shyam, scenting trouble, left for his village last week. Up till his departure he was very fond of me and treated me as his own daughter. His conduct is inexplicable. Now, Maiji, I have interrupted you. Well, what did you see last night or... whom?"

"It was your husband walking along with a woman. One glance at her, and I was convinced she was of doubtful reputation. My own impression is that he is living with her somewhere here. I wanted him to know that I was aware of his game. So I deliberately crossed his path, stared at him and his companion. He was shame-faced and pretended to see something aside and let me pass. I am of opinion that this woman must have instigated him to break with you and go away with her. Let us wait and see. Don't worry in the least. Please, dear, don't starve yourself. You haven't touched food for a whole week. You look so terribly weak and shrunk. Take something to keep body and soul together. That is a nice girl. Let me go down to the kitchen and attend to the chapathi preparation. Look and be cheerful. Take a hot bath, dress well and tune in to the radio for some songs to restore your spirits."

Uma nibbled at the cakes and began to muse again. It was the jeweller's son that had disturbed her domestic harmony. True

she had given him all the encouragement before her marriage. She admitted to herself how she had lost her heart to this dashing youth. He often came to her house, took her out to pictures and there in the darkness of the theatre pressed into her hands jewels studded with diamonds that flashed at her and influenced her mind and heart. She recalled that night when in the privacy of her home—when her parents were out—she made an absolute surrender to Raghuvir. From that day it was a regular whirl of gaiety and giddy pleasure for them both.

Then all of a sudden—after six months the scamp had tired of her and left her. There was another girl to lure him and he was always after new faces.

Uma's mother decided to give her in marriage to Kishore. Though the young woman did not like him she did not question her mother's decision. Kishore was moody and suspi-

cious and some fellow with a grudge must have told him about the jewels and diamonds that had been given to her as presents by an admirer. Without stating his reasons, he quarrelled with her, called her a wretch who would not hesitate to sell her body, gave her nasty blows and left the house.

Uma decided to entrust all those jewels to the old cook and keep them in her custody until she chose to dispose of them. They were tainted presents but being a practical woman she saw no other way. To return them to Raghuvir now would be to invite more trouble and publicity. That the man was now doing mischief was very clear to her.....

The door opened and in walked her husband. He came up to her with a sheepish smile. "Oh dear, I have been foolish to quarrel with you. I come back with an apology. Won't you forget and forgive? For answer she wept on his shoulder.

I have been doomed to spend most of my life among politicians... they are both dangerous and dull, an almost miraculous combination. But it can be done, and by them it is done.

—Lord Boothby.

x x x x

Television may be very useful from an entertainment point of view, but so is smoking a pipe or drinking whisky, but they are not necessities of life.

—Judge Ralph Stove.

IN LIGHTER VEIN

WHEN OPPOSITES MEET!

By
K. V.
RAMACHANDRAN

AFTER exchange of some unpleasant words with his wife (instead of a welcome smile and a greeting coffee-cup)—all for the displacement of the shoe-rack, Chandru went off to Ramu's cafe. As he neared the hotel, he noticed a new sign-board, displaying 'A. D. D. A. C. S. (secret)' and before he stepped in, a handbill was thrust into his hand. He ordered for a cup of coffee and straightened the handbill and read: "Opening of ADDACS (secret) ... A real long awaited boon to all husbands (without exception). Come and become members immediately for ushering in a new era of freedom of speech, movement and action at HOME, more than anywhere else!"

Chandru could not make out anything and was vacantly looking at the bill when the server reminded him that the coffee was getting cold. Mechanically he finished it and walked out.

Still pensively looking at the chit, he tried to figure out what 'ADDACS' meant. He knew most of the new abbreviations—even unfamiliar ones like: AMSHI, GADMAN, IWLS, etc., but this one did not throw any light on his dim mind. Driven by sheer curiosity he stepped into the stall whereon the board was hung. A lean, lanky, dusty-haired and weather-beaten (or wife-beaten?) person greeted him: "Come in, please. I am Sri Ardhangidas, tentative Secretary of this Association".

"What do these abbreviated letters indicate?" asked Chandru, "and what is the aim of this association?"

"You shall come to know everything tomorrow evening," Sri Das replied, "at Sri Saticharan, our now headmaster's residence at 7 p. m. sharp. You are"

"But what is the subject matter about?" cut in Chandru.

"Yes, yes, I'll tell you that in brief," replied Das coolly, "our aim—when I say 'our aim' your effort is also counted upon—is to chalk out a practical solution to achieve free, frank and fearless movement and speech for all of us—down-trodden married males. Now, I suppose you gather what I mean." He appeared to see a tinge of understanding in Chandru's eyes, "so, don't fail to be there."

"Give me then the membership papers" said Chandru, half-mechanically and half-solacefully.

"I shall fill them in at home and bring them tomorrow ready."

"No! no," Das interrupted soon, "don't commit that mistake of taking these home. There is every risk to you and also to this budding asso....."

"Yes, yes, I understand," Chandru assured him, "I shall do this there itself."

"That's good. Cheerio "

x x x

Next evening, Chandru went straight to the new headmaster's residence without going home as that might altogether rule out the prospect of attending the much-awaited meeting,

The hall was fully packed much before the appointed hour and so, the tentative secretary proposed starting of the business

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earlier, "On behalf of this august gathering, I request Sri Saticharan to take the chair and address us on this important business."

From a corner, a soda-bottle-glass-spectacled, long-coated and thick turbaned person, pushed his way through to the chair and gesticulated a 'Namaste' with folded hands right under his nose criss-crossing his broad smile. "Gentlemen," he started and paused, "No! I had better address you as 'Docilemen', because that is more apt—you may be wondering why we have gathered here this evening. We shall presently go into that. But, firstly, let me express my appreciation and—yes—gratitude to Sri Ardhangidas for the tact he has displayed in not letting out prematurely the aims of this institution lest the very foundations be rocked. Now, coming to the issue, docilemen, we have hit upon a pilot plan for our emancipation from 'domestic' tyranny, we all

are subject to. All of us here have led—or rather followed—married (without the 'i' in it!) life for one, two, three or even more decades but yet we have no voice of our own in the house where we are supposed to be masters. We are slaves in every sense to our so called Dharma-patnis. We have no say in the bringing up of our children".

He was evidently warmed up to continue in one breath with added force. "We have been oppressed, suppressed, depressed and compressed too (there was a loud clap of hands and see-sawing of heads in admiration) by the WIFE, who is omnipotent, omnipresent and what not? Not," he gulped in a copious quantity of water from the glass as if to cool down his

radiator system, "my poor fellow-creatures, we have gathered here for the purpose of pulling out and pooling our latent strength to deal an infallible blow to this petticoat government so that a new life of free movement, free speech and free action anywhere but most certainly at HOME, can be ours. We shall cast off fear and frustration and walk with heads held high. We shall not any more subjugate ourselves to these choli-wallis. For achieving this much-coveted objective, we have to work hard and secretly too, think clearly and plan wisely and assiduously and then" there was a sigh of achievement in his tone, "ours is the life." Thereafter, we shall no longer be called hen-pecked husbands and, on the contrary they shall be branded 'cock-

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plucked' wives. (loud claps and cheers) Pardon me for being very, too very frank. My inner devil has been roused and righteously too. I am sure this equally is your position also. Now before we wind up, we shall elect the office bearers. And, in this connection, I propose Sri Bharyanukul to be the President, because he is best suited for this intricate work, with his long experience. Secondly, I propose Sri Ardhangidas for secretaryship for obvious reasons."

There were loud cheers and approval. "I propose Sri Saticharan to be our Planning Commissioner of this stupendous task" voiced Sri Ardhangidas—which again elicited the desired applause. After some more proposals and disapprovals, Sarvasri Patnisevaklal, Aurat Miyan, Preetan Dasya, Baikochipayapad and Betterhalf's Littleworth were elected as Steering committee members.

After everything settled down, membership enrolment forms were distributed and Chandru was again confronted with the mystery-filled 'ADDACS' on the form. 'I beg your pardon, sir,' Chandru mustered courage and drew the attention of the chair, what is the meaning of 'ADDACS'?

"Oh, that's the very secret," propounded Sri Saticharn, "talismanic abbreviation of our beloved association. But, for information of the members, I shall once disclose it but do not let that out to any outsider. It is:

Association of Docile Drakes for Abolition of Choli Sarkars."

"Beautiful transformation from henpecked to docile drakes!" chorussed some.

"Very decent and secretive" was some others' approval.

"Co-sufferers," shouted Sri Saticharan, "let not the name affect you in any way. You will see that when we are on the right track and achieve some substantial success, we shall call ourselves: 'A. F. F. A. H. S.'—that is—Association of Full Fledged and Animated Husba....."

Before he could complete, his tongue automatically stuck to its roof as he saw a batch of amazons rushing in, with files, pads, rulers and cutters (paper). One of the bespectacled bellowed, "Don't you see that very important meeting of the Central Executive Committee of your samaj—AIMSPER—is in session and you are causing nuisance?" All eyes turned back in utter dismay, murmuring in an undertone:

"What is AIMSPER?"

"Well," one of the other party vociferated, "if you don't know, it is 'ALL INDIA MAHILA SAMAJ FOR PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF RIGHTS.'"

All were suddenly motionless and lifeless like statues!

New Mystery Serial

Instalment Ten

By Lindsay Hamilton

THE BLACK ASP

THE STORY SO FAR:

Lady Muriel Waine is eloping with Nat Bingham when their car is attacked by three masked men, and the leader, "The Black Asp," takes Lady Muriel back to town—to her friend Mrs. Arkwright. Muriel fully realises from what she has been saved. But who is the Black Asp? And how does he come to know her movements and intentions so thoroughly?

Tony Wilmot (Mrs. Arkwright's nephew) finds life "doosed fatiguing". Major Grier, of the Intelligence department, is his friend. The Major is puzzled by the queer behaviour of Bingham, who, since the attack by the Black Asp, is a nervous wreck. Grier believes they may be on the brink of solving the mystery of a series of abominable crimes. One thread of the tangle is blackmail—by a creature known as The Flail.

Jack Parnell—known as Gentleman Jack—has just been released from prison. He comes out to find his daughter Susie missing. He is nearly frantic with anxiety, when he receives a note, "Ask Bingham".....

Sonia Deane is Bingham's ward. She is attacked by two ruffians, but is rescued by a masked man calling himself "The Black Asp," who tells her he loves her and intends marrying her. Sonia has no idea who this man can be. That night she sees him enter the house from the balcony. In the morning Bingham is found murdered. But Sonia cannot believe that her splendid laughing cavalier can be a brutal murderer.

Mrs. Arkwright invites Sonia to stay with her until things are straightened out.

On Bingham's body is found a note of warning from The Black Asp, and a letter from Parnell, also a list of twelve names. Major Grier points out that these are all names of women who have died

gossip turned out to be quite a long one.

"Of course it isn't announced yet," said Lady Muriel. "I wanted you to be the first to know."

Mrs. Arkwright was looking particularly severe.

"Well," she said slowly. "It may be a good thing. You certainly need keeping in order, and he looks the sort of man to do it."

Lady Muriel smiled happily.

"Mm, perhaps. But you don't know him."

"Know him!" scornfully, "Humph! All men are alike. Silly great babies for the first six months. At the end of that time you'll be flirting again, I suppose."

"Do you know, I don't believe I shall," said Lady Muriel with a rather dreamy expression that was almost too angelic. "I could eat plain bread and butter when there was any cake about."

"A sickly diet, my dear."

"Not good, wholesome cake. In any case the other isn't even bread and butter. It's froth, and froth's no use when you've earned how to be really thirsty."

"Bless the child!" exclaimed Mrs. Arkwright. "I believe she's really in love with the man."

"I believe I am."

"Hm! well that puts an end to gallivanting around after that coat-heaving ruffian."

"Oh dear no. I'm just as keen as ever."

"Incorrigible hussy!" said Mrs. Arkwright with a smile that was half indulgent, half indignant.

But Tony, it seemed, had a word to say, for at the first opportunity he drew Lady Muriel aside with a great air of conspiracy.

"I've been talking to that big bloke of yours, Mu."

Some sort of answer seemed expected of her.

"Well?"

"I thought I'd ease your mind. Don't worry unnecessarily. I didn't give you away."

"You didn't what?"

Tony grinned all over his face.

"I didn't let on about you. Just did what I could for the poor chappie though. Gave him an idea of the sort of life he was in for."

Finding nothing handy to throw at him Lady Muriel fell back on invective.

"You utter wretch! I wish I had—"

"Ah no!" broke in Tony sententiously. "Let us bury the past. I should never have been able to cope with that fiery nature of yours."

He beamed upon her with warmest admiration.

"You certainly do grow lovelier every day, dear Mu. I love

your hair. It's so nice and coppery. Reminds me of roasted chestnuts and winter sunsets and nice things. I'll always remember you in my dreams."

"How nice of you, Tony," she said sweetly. "Then I shall never be absent from your thoughts."

"Copper and flame," retorted Tony with an air of abstraction. "I wonder which will win. I'll put my money on the flame. He looks the sort who'd make a good wife-beater."

The idea seemed to tickle Lady Muriel immensely.

"Andrew, a wife-beater. Oh, that's rich. Here he is now. I must tell him."

"Eh! no, don't, for the love of Mike," said Tony.

But she had already called him over.

"Tony says you'll beat me with a stick," she announced wickedly.

Sir Andrew for a moment looked a little staggered and then burst into a hearty laugh.

"Beat you with a stick. He's a brave man. When you need it, little lady, we'll send for him, shall we?"

"Delighted," grinned Tony. "But it would do no good, I assure you. Fact is though, I'd much sooner be best man and murmur 'Bless you my children.'"

To her look of wondering inquiry Sir Andrew nodded.

He had a point

A meeting was called in a small town to raise money to build a fence round the cemetery. The chairman asked how many were in favour of the fence. All except one stood up.

"And why do you oppose it?" asked the chairman stiffly.

"Don't need a fence nohow. Nobody that's in can come out, and nobody that's out wants to get in."

"That's all fixed up," he told her.

As the two had only just met, it seemed to Lady Muriel a little unusual, but still it would be nice. The idea grew upon her and she began to laugh in high amusement. She pictured Tony arriving a day too late for the ceremony and at the wrong church.

"I could think of no one better fitted," she said. "Provided you see to all the arrangements yourself, insist on him sleeping all night in the church, and have a reserve best man on the spot."

"Perhaps you'd prefer me to give you away," suggested Tony threateningly.

"Papa will do that," she said sweetly.

Tony gave her a beaming smile.

"Papa! I'll bet he doesn't know one half."

Here Sir Andrew intervened good-humouredly.

"If you two have finished squabbling, suppose we join the others."

Sonia had been at The Hollows no more than five minutes when she began to feel that her visit was long overdue. James was full of troubles of all sorts.

"And then there's Elsie," he finished up. "She's gone and left, and without giving notice too. I did hear she's going to the Old Grange."

"Has someone taken the Grange?" asked Sonia in surprise.

"Oh yes, Miss Sonia, didn't you know?" James having himself got over the surprise of it, felt that no one else ought to exhibit any such weakness. "The workmen have been in nearly a fortnight and the new tenant is moving in to-morrow. A Mr. Otto Beutz."

Sonia started.

"But how curious," she remarked to Tony. "It must be the same Otto Beutz. He's Nat's cousin from America. I had a letter from him. So he's taken the Old Grange."

"He called this morning," said James. "I told him you would most likely be over this afternoon, Miss Sonia. He said he would call again later."

"Did he?" Sonia was not deeply concerned about it. "Oh well, if he does, we must give him some tea."

For some time she was busily engaged in domestic affairs and Tony wandered about and amused himself as best he could. He was asleep in a chair when Otto Beutz arrived, but roused himself with an effort to play the polite host until Sonia should relieve him.

"My name's Wilmot," he said genially. "Tony Wilmot. Our hostess is among the pots and pans, but she'll be here presently."

Beutz was coldly polite. He seemed none too pleased to find that he was not the only visitor. His conversation was of the scantiest compatible with civility. But Tony went on chatting away amiably about nothing in particular. He was being polite, most oppressively polite.

"And how do you like England after America?" he inquired as though he was asking a small boy how he liked his new school. "A little on the small side, what? Cramped-er-overcrowded, eh? Too many aliens, my dear sir, too many aliens—Jews, Gentiles, Greeks and ice cream johnnies."

Beutz lifted one eyebrow and smiled a little contemptuously.

"Aliens! America is a nation of aliens. Every year they pour in from all parts of the globe."

"Ah!" exclaimed Tony brightly. "That's why they call it

'God's Own Country.' Save a lot of squabbling over who it really does belong to. Then, of course, you've got plenty of room for 'em. You can turn 'em back wholesale if you don't like their morals or the way they part their hair. It's a great idea that Coney Island place of yours. All the fun of the fair and a free passage back home."

Beutz picked up a magazine.

"I expect you are thinking of Ellis Island," he said coldly. "Coney Island is a pleasure resort."

"Perhaps you're right," Tony admitted with a ready smile. "My geography is a bit weak. Won't you find it quiet here? Of course the Old Grange is-er-beautifully situated an' all that, but a bit tomb-stony—'Here lies the body' sort of thing, don't you think."

"I like it," said Beutz shortly. "I bought the place five years ago. I was thinking then of settling down near Nat, but business prevented it."

"Yes, yes, of course. Business they say is business. Why the doose people find it necessary to say a thing like that I can't imagine. No one's likely to mistake it for pleasure. Well, I hope you'll like it. No earthly reason why you shouldn't. By the way, folks round about say it's haunted. That's one thing in its favour—gives it a tone."

Otto Beutz was staring at him with an odd expression in his eyes.

Sex Appeal

A film company was at its wits' end to find a girl with real sex appeal. One member suggested one young lady, not knowing that the director had just quarrelled with her.

"Her!" shouted the director.

"If she did a Lady Godiva act the horse would steal the scene!"

"Haunted?" he asked a little too casually. "Ancestral ghost or what?"

"Not ancestral, therefore it must be 'what.' One of those 'whats' nobody seems to know who-that sounds a bit involved. Anyhow, some say it's Bingham looking for his murderer. Others swear it's not a bit like Bingham. What rot people do talk if you give 'em half a chance!"

"All nonsense, of course," Beutz agreed almost eagerly. "In these days no sane man believes in ghosts."

Tony looked thoughtful.

"Oh, I don't know. I wouldn't say that. I've known the queerest things happen in genuine haunted houses. There was the affair at Doone Moat. Rather a grisly business. But I'll tell you about it."

The story, however, was never told, for Sonia at that moment came into the room and

Otto Beutz's manner underwent a change. His smile was quite charming.

"How do you do, Sonia? I hope we shall be very good friends. Forgive the seeming familiarity. I had always thought of Nat's wards as Sonia, the little girl. Curious how one's ideas remain fixed in spite of the march of years."

Sonia felt a little repelled and she was unable to say why. His manner was pleasant, a little intimate perhaps, but not aggressively so, and certainly his smile was very attractive. But there was something about him, some unknown quantity that vaguely disturbed her. She caught a glitter in his eyes for the fraction of a second and turned away quickly, a little scared and unaccountably shocked at something she had seen there. Fantastic! Absurd! but she could not shake off the feeling.

"We are to be neighbours, I hear," she remarked forcing a little cordiality into her voice. "I shall quite miss the Old Grange. It seemed to have grown into the countryside. I really believe I looked on it as my own."

"I hope you still will," said Beutz quickly and added as Sonia frowned. "I shall be away a great deal."

"I loved its air of ruin and romantic dilapidation," said Sonia.

"Rather!" exclaimed Tony. "Regular place for picnics, I think. They used to leave their tins all over the place."

"Do you know it?" Sonia seemed surprised.

"I've only been there once—looking for that grisly ghost. A pretty lively one too, if you ask me. Must have been old Romeo himself. It used a rope-ladder."

A sharp exclamation from Otto Beutz made Sonia start.

"I beg your pardon," he apologised with a smile. "Your friend is a little disconcerting. I was taking him seriously. It's all nonsense of course?"

"Absolute bally nonsense," Tony agreed heartily. "Ghosts always are—until somebody or other dies of fright. And that never happens. At least I've never seen it in 'The Daily Mail'. That's proof enough."

"For goodness' sake, Tony, do talk about something less gruesome" Sonia laughed.

"Sorry. Suppose I show Mr. Beutz round," he suggested amiably.

Sonia grasped at the idea eagerly, though Otto Beutz did not seem attracted by the prospect of enduring more of Tony's conversation.

"Yes do," she said, "There are still a few things I must attend to. Then we can have tea."

"Right you are," agreed Tony. "What about the library first?"

Libraries are always interesting places. Lots of books. Bingham had a fine looking collection."

He led the way into the library talking volubly the while.

"Great things, books. Can't say I've read many myself. But great company to have them about you. Look at 'em. Rows and rows of 'em. What a comfort to come into a room like this, tired and worn with the battle of life and sit down with them all round you—and go to sleep."

Beutz was walking round on his own and took not the slightest notice of Tony's oration, but this mattered little to Tony.

"Gives you such an air of being well read too," he babbled on. "Look at this hefty fellow. Fancy wading all through that. Oh, I see. It's a catalogue. Here's one now on Geology—fossils, pterodactyls and stone hammers. I'll bet Bingham never read that one. Poor old Bingham. A bit rotten to be sitting among all these books and get bashed on the head with a hammer in the middle of an exciting chapter.—Hullo! what's up?"

A faint sound had come Beutz's from lips. He was staring down and there was a blank look on his face as though the functions of mind and body were temporarily arrested.

Tony strolled over to him and leaned against his shoulder to see what had attracted his atten-

Puzzle!

A few years ago a gentleman who had lost his nose was invited out to tea. "My dear," said the old lady of the house to her little daughter. "I want you to be very particular and make no remarks about Mr. Jenkin's nose."

Gathered around the table, everything was going well; the child peeped about, looking rather puzzled, and at last startled the table:

"Ma, why did you tell me to say nothing about Mr. Jenkins' nose? He hasn't got any."

tion For a second he stared at Tony stupidly and then pointed.

"There," His voice was like the dry whisper of a man parched with days of thirst. "That—thing. What's it doing here?"

On the carpet in the exact spot where Seregeant Baker had found the weapon the murderer had used, lay a large hammer; a hammer so like the original it might almost have been the very one.

Tony laughed lightly:

"It's only a hammer. Somebody's left it lying about. By George though, you do look seedy."

"Heart trouble," gasped Beutz and staggered to a chair.

Tony was now very concerned.

"Take it easy," he said, "You leave it to me. You'll be all right in a minute. I'll go and get you a drink."

He turned to go out but stopped suddenly by the table in the centre of the room.

"Hullo! why, there's one here already poured out."

On the corner of the table stood a decanter half full of wine and beside it two wineglasses of beautiful design. One of them was empty but the other was full to the brim.

Raising the latter warily, Tony came over with it slowly in order not to spill any of the wine. Not till he was within a yard of him did Tony see the awful look of horror on Beutz's face. His eyes protruded, his jaw dropped. At every step Tony had taken, he seemed to shrink a little further into the chair. His lips began to mumble the words "My God! Oh! My God!" over and over again in a kind of in-drawn gasping whisper.

Then suddenly something seemed to snap. His eyes glowed madly and with a savage sweep of the arm he dashed the glass

from Tony's hand and rushed from the room. Tony stood looking after him blankly.

"How was I to know he was a pussyfoot?" he murmured.

A little later he was explaining to Sonia.

"Our friend regretted he was unable to stay. Must have remembered he'd forgotten something. Queer chappie! Very religious I should say. Anyhow, he went out in a hurry calling upon his God."

Sonia was relieved to hear that he was gone, but a trifle puzzled. Tony's explanation certainly seemed to leave much to the imagination.

"What did you do to the poor man?" she asked suspiciously.

"Me?" said Tony in an aggrieved tone. "Nothing, absolutely nothing! In fact I was full out on all six cylinders being entertaining, talking books most intelligently! Chappie must be a bit touchy, I offered him a drink and he's a teetotaler! That's about it."

— To be continued

REACHING PERFECTION

We are what we are; we cannot be truly other than ourselves. We reach perfection not by copying, much less by aiming at originality, but by constantly and steadily working out the life which is common to all, according to the character which God has given us.

—Baxter.

A STORY IN TWO PARTS

WAS IT ROMANCE?

By T. K. B.

Manian was at first not sure of Shantha's feelings.

Was she setting her cap at him?

SHANTHA unfolded the letter and read it again, probably for the fourth or fifth time. That bold writing on the blue bond paper was somehow familiar to her. But she did not know how. Nor did she know what prompted her to read it again. Was it because the letter was so very poetic and so very funny? Or was she simply lured by the praise bestowed on her by the writer?

Anyhow there was no harm in reading it once again.

The way the letter began was in itself intriguing:

"My dear Shantha--Do you know that you are the only girl for whom I ever felt? I am attracted irresistibly by your intellect, beauty, childlike behaviour, grace and poise. I love you terribly, I

realise. 'Very much would I like to know what your feelings towards me are!

"Dearest, you are for me an inspiration, someone closest. If you have no feelings left for me forgive me and forget this. Believe me, my intentions are honourable and you will know what to do if you have been kindled by me.

"Au revoir!

Your own,
BALA."

The tingling sensation of having received a personal letter--a love letter at that was still annoying her. How bold of this Bala--she wondered who it would be--to write "Your own?" How audacious of him to send the letter to her house! If somebody else had received the letter and had opened it!

Shantha was not too happy to think on these lines! What if she tore off the letter to pieces? But the idea somehow didn't appeal to her. She opened the jacket of her shorthand textbook, and re-wrapped it after inserting the letter.

The clock sent forth its melodious chimes. Oh, was it ten? Already she would be late to the typewriting class, though the institute was so near.

She got up and hastened towards the bathroom.

* * *

A jugglery was going on! The trained left hand with the wiper swept the board. The deft right hand with the chalkpiece moved with equal celerity. It drew up hieroglyphical signs with amazing swiftness. Two and twenty students who were assembled sat spell-bound.

Well, what was going on?

A shorthand class...

Shantha who was waiting at the corridor wondered how a subject as dry as shorthand could become so very interesting at the hands of her new instructor. How nice of him to make the lesson so very absorbing! She was ready to acknowledge that, here before her eyes, stood no ordinary teacher. How could he, who looked so young, so fresh and so very boyish outdo her instructor, the principal of the institute? The

latter like the other instructors made the already drab subject boring and insipid!

Manian adjusted his tie and dipping his hands in the washbasin to remove traces of chalk-powder, said with the usual gait: "And now for the homework--you will do." With that, the class was over but within a few minutes he had to take the next class. And there he was as fresh as ever. It looked as if he had an enthusiasm, a gusto that never slackened, no, not even an iota!

The mirror in the water closet reflected a goodlooking, well-shaven, youngish man with a beaming smile. He would be at the most twenty-two or twenty-three. Outwardly he looked happy, care-free and gay. A happy-go-lucky kid! But was he really? It was a question that could never be answered. Manian never exposed his heart, he was so secretive.

But every man betrays his likes and dislikes, his longings and aversions, by a hundred and one deeds of his, which, though quite involuntary, could not escape the notice of a close observer. And a searcher of hearts would have much to tell if only he attended a few of Manian's shorthand classes.

"Can anyone of you tell me what is meant by vowel indication? I have dwelt on that at great length just yesterday. Yes, Raja?"

Raja stood up, blinking.

"Ramesh, can you try?"

Ramesh peeped into his textbook. No use, the answer wasn't there. He kept his mouth shut.

"Bala...Shankar...Vincent?"

There was a pause in between the names. Three pillars stood out in response to the call.

"Bhanu...Prema...Nalini?"

Nalini was bold; she always was. She came out with an explanation. "Vowel indication is the indication of vowels..."

"...in shorthand!" completed Prema, who wanted to share the recognition.

"Ha...ha..." The whole classroom resounded with gay laughter. Sometimes there were jokes even in a shorthand class!

The next was Shantha.

But there was a perceptible pause in Manian's attitude. It appeared that he was hesitant to ask her. Suppose she did not know the answer, wouldn't it embarrass her? And could he humiliate her so?

But Shantha stood up by herself, and in a resonant, vibrant voice began:

"Vowel indication is the showing of the presence or the absence

Tragic!

A man stranded in a Lancashire town went in search of an evening's amusement. Suddenly he heard roar after roar of laughter proceeding from a large hall. He inquired of the doorkeeper what was happening.

"Amateur Dramatic company, sir," came the reply.

"Ah," said the other, as there came another outbreak of mirth. "Doing a comedy, eh?"

"No, sir," said the doorkeeper grimly. "They are playing 'Hamlet'."

of an initial or a final vowel by means of..." She went on, calmly.

There was a deadly silence. You could have heard a leaf fall. "Well...my students," Manian exhorted, "I expect each and everyone of you to emulate Shantha (He made a significant glance at Shantha and was satisfied with what he found there) You must have the spirit of rivalry and competition. Each one should try to outclass the other..."

As if by an automation, Manian's lips sent out sermons and instructions.

He always found in Shantha a keen, assiduous and receptive student, full of devotion to the

subject and respect for the teacher. But was it just a reverence for his teaching? Or was it something else, something more than that? He gave up the chain of thoughts that ensued and said "These girls--they are a mystery, quite incomprehensible."

Time and tide waits for no man. Days go by, on and on. Every day brings forth a change, expected and unexpected, happy and unhappy.

Manian's class was over, somewhat early that day. It was only 8-30 and he had half-an-hour's respite to start for the office. He was glancing through the day's paper in a cursory way.

"Sir..." Manian was disturbed from his meditation. He turned his glance from the newspaper.

The inseparable trio of Nalini, Bhanu and Shantha stood before him. His eyes twinkled at the sight of them. Of course, they had a reason to.

Two weeks back there had been a shuffling of the classes and the respective teachers. Manian's class was assigned to another teacher. He had to take a new class without Shantha.

"We are not able to understand what the new teacher tells us, Sir," began Nalini who was noted for boldness.

"He simply goes on and on keeping the textbook open in

his hands...Instead of explaining the principles, he tries to muddle them up," followed Bhanu quickly.

"Why can't YOU take our class, Sir? We like your teaching very much, you make everything perfectly clear," said Shantha. There was a placidity about her, a calmness in her voice, a smile dancing in her half-parted lips. Was it a tribute, suggestion or invitation? Manian could not decide.

But it was a complaint, and that too about one of his colleagues. Even though it was natural for youngsters to dislike another when they had got attached to one teacher, Manian felt that he should not encourage it.

"If you say so, then it is a reflection on your intelligence and NOT on his capacity to teach! You lack the power to grasp what is taught. I may say you're inattentive."

"When you taught us, were we inattentive, Sir? Were we lacking grasping power, previously? Can't you, for our sake, take this class?" There was a friendly persuasion in Shantha's voice. Reflecting over her words, Manian was unable to reply, at once.

"Don't come to me with your complaints, henceforth. It's not nice. Anyhow, for your sake, I shall have a special class on Sunday afternoon at four o'clock." He laid emphasis on "for

your sake" and looked significantly at Shantha.

Shantha smiled at him. She was glad and triumphant; her face reflected it.

After they had gone, Manian pondered over the incident. He was unable to place Shantha. Was it because she was studious, she came up with a request—a personal one? The question that followed in his mind was "Did she like me personally—or only my teaching?" He was sceptical.

He was very shy, reserved as far as girls were concerned. He talked only when it was absolutely essential, even in office. Most certainly, he didn't know the rudiments of moving with girls—or of love. Of the latter, he read only in the novels and the pictures. "Sheer nonsense, what they call 'Love'." There is no such emotion in reality" he had opened his mind oftentimes. Yet, in his heart of hearts, he was conscious that the way he felt towards Shantha was different. The teacher-student relationship didn't exist in his mind.

Manian didn't know feminine psychology. By and by he came to the conclusion that Shantha cared for him. Time and again she came to disturb his loneliness, with her "doubts" on shorthand.

The other day, she came with a journal on shorthand and troubled his tranquillity. Was it in genuine pursuit of knowledge or

THEY ALL KNOW!

A mother teaching her little daughter, four-year old, pointed to something in a book, and asked :

"What is that, my dear?"

"Why, don't you know?" inquired the child.

"Yes," said the mother; "but a wish to find out if you know."

"Well," responded the little one, "I do know."

"Tell me, than, if you please."

"Why, no," insisted the little miss, "you know what it is and I know what it is, and there is no need of saying anything more about it."

was it a fake? Did she look so innocent, as she seemed—or was she creating opportunities of talking with him? Why should she smile at him, whenever she saw him? One day, she was so anxious to introduce him to her father, when accidentally they met. Was that introduction necessary? Manian doubted very much.

"Oh, these modern girls—they are quite unpredictable. All the time, you cannot say what their feelings are towards you, or for that matter, towards anybody," murmured Manian.

(To be concluded)

THOSE INVISIBLE FOES

By P. K. MOHANTY

WE are continually surrounded by a host of tiny living things—the bacteria, the moulds, the yeasts, and the viruses. These micro-organisms are better known as germs or microbes. The microbe-world is very rich and varied. These tiny beings, invisible to the naked eye, live all over the earth's surface. They inhabit the water we drink, the air we breathe and the earth upon which we dwell. They are always with us in our air, in the waters of our oceans, lakes, rivers and ponds, but they are numerous in the soil.

Scientists have established beyond doubts, that although some of these micro-organisms are very helpful to us, the host of others are exceedingly dangerous and harmful. For many centuries mankind had to live in constant

fear of epidemic diseases—fear was aggravated by utter sense of helplessness. For pretty long years mankind remained blind as to how these terrible diseases were caused and spread. Being helpless the man had to simply acknowledge defeat to their invisible and unknown enemies. In this state of ignorance and apprehension mankind had to live till the beginning of a century, when one of the great scientists of the world and the greatest benefactor of the mankind, electrified the whole world by announcing that he had found the cause of these diseases. He was the great French chemist Louis Pasteur, who gave the world the germ theory of diseases. This theory is indeed one of the great scientific achievements of all time.

The germ-theory of disease:—This theory, now almost universally accepted, has a very strange origin—the study of Fermentation. Since time immemorial men had been making and drinking wines. Yet no one did know why and how the grapes turn to wines or cereals to beers. In the early 19th century Leibig, one of the great chemists of his time advocated that the fermentation that turned grapes into wine was a chemical reaction.

But Louis Pasteur showed that the fermentation was due to activity of certain living organisms called bacteria. On an extensive study of these bacteria, he launched his epoch making theory that some of these tiny beings, the germs could overwhelmingly invade the human body or animal body, and thereby could cause the disease. Although this germ theory has now a wide acceptance, in his time he was opposed and criticised by his contemporary scientists. He could silence his opponents by performing a series of experiments in which he showed that these minute germs were very numerous and were present almost everywhere and were responsible to spoil our food, to ferment the grapes into wine and to make them sour and lastly to cause the epidemic diseases.

Louis Pasteur was not only prized as the propounder of the germ theory of disease, but also as the father of bacteriology, the science of studying these minute

bacteria. He was also discoverer of the immunity from diseases. He pointed to the man his invisible and hitherto unknown to him, his foes and gave him the weapons to hunt these microbes, to combat with the diseases and to alleviate the sufferings of the countless millions. His contribution to bacteriology will rank equal in merit to the discovery made by Newton in Physics, Lavoisier in Chemistry or Darwin in General Biology.

Following Pasteur a great number of scientists of various countries were got interested to study these invisible foes. Perhaps the greatest microbe-hunter after Pasteur was Robert Koch, a German doctor and scientist. He was exceedingly a pains-taking man who identified a large number of bacteria and also determined the specific diseases they cause. He devised methods to stain these germs so as to be studied under microscope. To credit his painstaking works, he discovered the tubercle-bacillus which causes tuberculosis, the comma bacillus which causes the Asiatic cholera and many others. He amazed the world by announcing that he had found out a substance, the tuberculin which would cure tuberculosis. Although this substance could not live up to his claim, as a sure-cure of the disease, yet he in 1905 was awarded the Nobel Prize in Medicine for his extensive studies on these disease-causing bacteria.

Soon after Koch a good number of scientists and research

workers got involved in the work of invading and exploring the microbe world. Soon the world got armed to declare war against these invisible foes and to bring all these microbes into light. As the result of a world-wide research campaign, a large number of bacteria and other moulds were identified. In 1874 Hernik Hansen discovered the Hansens bacillus of leprosy, in 1879 Albert Siegmund Neisser isolated gonococcus of gonorrhoea and in 1894 Arthur Nicolai identified the bacillus of tetanus.

Use of Antibiotics

Owing to extensive research in the field of bacteriology we could recognise the right culprit, yet we are helpless to defend ourselves from their terrible onsets. In 1887 Louis Pasteur and Jules Francois Joubert advocated that one microbe could check growth of another. The microbes do not live singly in nature. They live in groups. The different species in these groups come in contact. They remain together in a relation of friendship or strife. Where there is a strife one species attack others and destroy them. They carry on the struggle, they attack or defend themselves by means of a special weapon—a poisonous substance produced in their cells and excreted into the environment. Every species of micro-organism produces its own toxic or poisonous substance and direct it against own rival. These poisonous substances are nothing else than our antibiotics, are defined as the substances

which are elaborated by living organisms in their normal growth and which have a powerful antagonistic or lethal effect on other microbes.

Discovery of Penicillin

The use of antibiotics became popular only after the discovery of Penicillin, a substance first of its kind to attract wide attention. So it is a powerful antibacterial substance acidic in nature produced by the two species of ascomyceteous mould, *Penicillin notatum* and *P. Chrysogenum*. Penicillin was described and named by Sir Alexander Fleming in 1929.

In 1928 it attracted the curiosity of this great bacteriologist to see an unexpected contamination of his culture plates of *staphylococcus* by the spores of *Penicillium*. He noticed that this contaminating mould was destroying the well developed colonies of *Staphylococcus* by secreting a toxic substance into the medium. The idea of using this antibacterial substance as medicine for germ infection diseases soon attracted his mind. Now the penicillin is used extensively to combat infection of blood, heart, ear and eyes. Although the penicillin has got a strong antibacterial effect, it is apparently non-toxic to human cells. This strange combination is a very unique feature of all these antibiotics.

Discovery of other Antibiotics

Following penicillin a large number of other antagonistic substances have been discovered,

Chief among them is streptomycin which rivals with penicillin as a germ killer. Other promising antibiotics are aureomycin, tetramycin, chloromycetin, viomycin, gramicidin, and etc.

In our times these antibiotics are most popular both among the physicians and the public. It cures the diseases which were once to be regarded as incurable.

Use of antibiotics for plant-protection

Plants also suffer from various diseases caused by these bacteria, fungi, or viruses. They cause great losses to our agriculture as they damage the harvest. The brilliant success of antibiotics in medicine and veterinary sciences prompted agriculturists to dry them in case of plant diseases. It was first tested only 5 to 7 years back. Recent researches show that these antibiotics will cure the sick plants by killing the pathogens and these plants will continue to grow yielding normal harvest.

Germ-free animals

It has been told earlier that in nature these micro-organisms live together. So also our bodies contain normally various kinds of germs... So at times it becomes immensely difficult to detect the specific germ which causes the right disease. In recent years Prof. Reynier and his associates have devised a special apparatus, a germ-free-cage, in which life can live without germs in a

FOR HIM!

The boss was exasperated with his new secretary. She ignored the telephone when it rang.

"You must answer the telephone," he told her, irritably.

"O. K." she replied. "But seems silly. Nine times out of ten it's for you."

germ-free environment. If these germ-free animals are used in the experiments, it can accurately determine the effect of a given germ in a body, since no other germs prevail. New schemes are in progress, in this line of research, in the Lobund Institute, NotreDam (Laboratories of Bacteriology, University of NotreDam).

The world had experienced two great world wars, but it had profited nothing. The world can hardly remember them, those who fought in these battles, but it will never forget those who fought against these invisible foes. Mankind may forget the names of Napoleon or Alexander, who once conquered the world but can hardly forget Sir Alexander Fleming, Louis Pasteur, and others, who conquered these minute microbes. In any way this war has not ended. We have to fight incessantly against them for safety. We are very much hopeful that our future result will over-top our present progress.

SHORT STORY

THE PATH OF LOVE

By HAMSA

MEENA waved a cordial goodbye to her friends who had come to the platform to give her a fitting send off. She was the most popular girl in her college and every one liked to see her off. It was but natural that her friends had come to the station for, Meena was on her way to her sister's house at Bangalore where she would be seen by a boy from Calcutta, and in all probability, he would marry her. Meena's sister had written to her father to send her sister to her place, as the occasion of the boy's visit to his parents at Bangalore could be availed of to settle the marriage, which had reached the stage of "the boy seeing the girl" for further negotiations.

The train moved, and Meena continued to wave her hand leaning on the door. Her eyes

were directed at the gathering of her friends whose movement of hands as they waved the handkerchief symbolised their affection and the interest they had in her welfare. She was happily moved by their affection and she felt that this was largely due to her being kind and nice to one and all. That very moment a young man was trying to get into the train which had already begun its motion. Meena stood at the door and would not let him open it. He roared wildly, he pleaded mildly, but she would not budge an inch. She retorted that were too many inside already. He cursed her and tried the next door in the adjoining compartment and got in. Obviously

he was in some great urgency and wanted to travel by that train at any cost. You could

She had wronged
him and he felt
the injustice rank-
ling in his mind.
There seemed to
be no way out of
the tangle

not blame him for coming in at his own time if you knew he depended on the much talked of Public Conveyance to take him to the station of the city.

Soon after he got into the compartment he took off his coat, flung it on the bench where a seat was vacant and wiped the sweat off his face with his handkerchief. His breath was rapid and hot and he gasped a little, too. Thrusting his head and shoulders through the window he peeped out with the intention of looking at the girl who refused him entry into her compartment. It was intensely dark outside. He could not see her as she was no more near the door. But, however, the flow of cool air was comforting. He stood in that manner for a time and withdrew himself to his seat, his look expressive of hurt.

The train ran for a full hour and halted at a junction, the next important station since her start. It was meal-time and the train was to stop there for forty minutes. The young man left his compartment and entered the refreshment room for his dinner. The dinner was over in five minutes, (the five ounce of rice, pepper water and "pappadam" would not have taken more time for others,) and he came out to stroll for a while along the lengthy platform. Five and thirty minutes had yet to go for the train to start and there wasn't any other business which he could do then. He loitered from the engine to the last van and as soon as he reached his compartment he focussed

TRUTH

Suffering from shock and panic, the soldier started running towards the rear while a battle was under way. Presently he was stopped by an officer who asked him: "Don't you know there is a big battle going on up front?"

The young man said he did.

"Then what are you doing here?"

The soldier did not answer.

"Speak up, man!" cried the officer. "Do you know who I am? I am your general."

"Good God!" exclaimed the soldier. "Am I that far back?"

his attention on the girl whose affront he could not forget. He wished to see her again at length. He sauntered near her compartment and looked in through one of the windows.

"Want some space here, Mister? We are quite full already" muttered the girl looking at him peeringly.

Without uttering a word he walked back to his seat. He thought to himself "look at the cheek of that girl! She is very pretty but audacious. She should learn a lesson, but how?" This began to worry him for the rest of the time. It was already quarter past ten and the train once again commenced its journey.

He placed his forearm on the window sill and resting his forehead on it leaned forward to have a short sleep. But his mind was agitated, far too agitated to go into a restful sleep. In spite of closing his eyes tightly he saw her in his mind's eye. She was very pretty and charming. Only her temper was a bit impudent. He could not get her off his thoughts. It interested him to see her but irritated to conceive that a slip of a college girl had put him out of countenance. But as the hours rolled by, the monotonous rhythm of the clank of the moving wheels over the silvery rails lulled him to sleep.

The chill morning breeze made him feel the cold a bit. He shook himself and opened his eyes. The familiar fields of his home town were before him. He was nearing his destination. The sun had climbed the mountain tops and its golden beams were flooding in through the windows. He looked into his wrist watch which told that in another half an hour he would alight from the train. He prepared himself to look fresh. He dusted the particles of coal that had settled on his coat. He combed down his disorderly hair and wiped his face with his kerchief which removed a lot of sweat, soot and oil off his face.

The long shrill blast of the engine was heard. He put out his head through the window. The station was in sight. A few more minutes. The train slowed down and halted. He opened the door and alighted. He looked around for his brother who was

sure to meet him at the station. He noticed his brother peeping into each and every one of the compartments a few bogies off. Soon he met him and they both emerged out of the station. His brother had brought their car and both made for it.

Near their car was a maiden with an elderly man by her side, obviously waiting for someone.

As they neared the girl asked them with a graceful smile how they could reach a particular place. The girl was no other than the one who slighted the young man the night before. He thought it was time to cast it in her teeth. "Enquire at the nearest post office" he replied brutally.

She turned her head aside sneeringly, hailed a taxi and drove in it.

It was four in the evening. The sun was very pleasant during that part of the year. Ranjan got dressed in his best tweed and impatiently waited for his mother and sister to get themselves dressed. They took their own time. They had to be at the bride's house before five. He cursed the whole of the female species for their usual tardiness. He blamed his sister for taking up the whole evening for her decoration. He remarked that no one was going to see her to marry. He was almost furious when his mother, sister and brother all got into their sedan. He took the wheel himself and drove.

When they reached the house of the would-be-bride, a gentleman welcomed them at the gate and let them in. The bridegroom-to-be and his brother sat in the hall. His mother and sister went into an inner room. There was a mat spread out and a veena laid on it towards one end of the room. The sister of the bride-to-be welcomed the ladies. When they all sat down, the girl came from a side room and took her seat near the Veena. Her sister asked her to play a few songs on it and the girl in obedience to her sister's wish sang and played a few songs. The music was excellent as she had attained a proficiency very near that of a skilful professional artiste.

Music over, the girl was led by her sister into the hall for affording an opportunity for the boy and girl to see each other in the conventional way of the day. The girl with all her coyness advanced slowly towards her father and made a couple of "Namas-karams" and turned to the boy and repeated the same. When both the boy and the girl looked straight at each other both felt uneasy. The girl turned her head to a side and receded back.

What a turn of events! The girl was the same who refused him entry into the train. There was no need to see her. She was exquisitely beautiful. But the boy thought she would certainly refuse him. Was she not rude to him?

There was a violent disturbance of feelings for the girl too. She was harsh to him the night be-

fore. She did not mean it. He was quite handsome and pleasant. Father had told that his parents were good people and were quite wealthy. He too was holding a position in Calcutta. Which girl would resist such a choice? But would he understand her now? She liked certainly to marry him. But he might refuse. She had behaved very indecently. Such thoughts as these oppressed her very much as she sat among the ladies, prosaic and purposeless.

Meanwhile, her sister and the visiting ladies began to talk topics far remote from the one for which they had met there. The clock in the hall chimed six and the party took "thambulam" as was the custom and got into their car, and drove home.

Ranjan started out for a solitary drive a little while later. He parked his car near a temple tank and seriously reflected over the matter. He leaned over the steering wheel and closed his eyes. He could then think better. Or, perhaps, he could day-dream better. He was picturing her in his mind. His heart was troubled at the thought she would not consent to marry him.

He forgot about the whole world while his thoughts were roving like that. Meena just then stepped out of the near by temple gate. She had finished her worship and was on her way back home. She saw a familiar car parked near the tank wall. She also saw some one at the wheel. She looked at him intently. It was the boy who came to see her. She looked around. There was no one anywhere near. She

thought that God might have set him there so she could apologise to him. But her courage failed her. She passed by the car. He did not seem to be awake. She stopped for a moment. She did not know what to do. Her perplexity was great. There was very little time to think and act. She had a silver plate in her hand in which she took betel leaves and coconut to the temple. She adroitly placed it through the rear window on the rear seat of the car and walked briskly home.

Ranjan opened his eyes after a time. He must have had a nap. He brushed his eyes and turned back to see if it was clear behind to reverse his car. His attention was attracted by a white object in the rear seat. It was a silver salver. He knew it did not belong to his house. He guessed that it should have been brought along with the thambulam from the girl's house. He felt it his duty to return it at once lest they should be looking for it elsewhere. He drove straight to Meena's sister's residence. He went in to hand over the plate. Meena's father was in the hall. He apologetically handed over the salver and spoke a few words and returned to his car, got in and started off. A small piece of paper was dangling in the back seat. He tore it off and was about to crumple it in his palm. There was something written in pencil. He smoothed the paper out and read the words. It ran "I didn't mean to offend you last night. Please forget all about it." This was a short enough message. It was posi-

tively placed by Meena, he concluded. It meant a lot to him. It spoke volumes about her heart, so he thought. He felt that Meena was a peach of a girl with a heart of gold. He pressed the accelerator and raced down home. He was extremely happy. The drive all alone had done him good.

At dinner his mother asked him his opinion of the girl. They were all in entire accord for the match. He expressed he had not anything else to add. It was too polite of him. But in faith, he was rather too anxious that no one should say anything to put off the match.

When two hearts met there wasn't anything on earth that could stop them mingling. A few months after their marriage they set *underway* a new home at Calcutta. When one morning he set out to office, his wife stood on the threshold, watching him intently like a curious child. He mounted on his bicycle and turned back to smile adieu to his wife. Meena's sparkling eyes met his. "I suppose you wouldn't refuse entry to me to-night" said he with a wink of his eyes.

Meena smiled, a dimple appearing on her rosy cheek, and said demurely "Definitely. If I didn't know you."

All men are by nature equal made, all of the same earth by the same creator, and however we deceive ourselves, as dear to God is the poor peasant as the mighty prince.

— PLATO

SHORT STORY

THE TWO JEALOUS GIRLS

By

Manu Somani

They loved the same young man and waged a bitter war of words!

NASEEM and Rita were two friends, who studied together in the college. Rita was a tall slim girl of seventeen with jet black hair and large expressive eyes. Naseem was of medium height, with supple build, red hair and beautiful blue eyes. Naseem and Rita were close friends, they could not do without each other at all.

One Sunday evening Naseem and Rita set out for a walk, both of them were engrossed in thinking about something and that was about Dev. Dev was a young man of twenty with manly build and a very impressive personality. Dev was tall, dark and handsome with curly hair. He

studied in the college with these girls and was well acquainted with Naseem and Rita.

Rita started by saying, "Eh! Naseem, how is Dev?"

"Which Dev?" Naseem replied in an indifferent manner.

"Stupid, how many Devs do you know?" said Rita with her temper rising. Naseem was in a mood to irritate Rita, so she replied again in an indifferent manner by saying, "Look, if you want a proper answer, for heaven's sake speak clearly."

"Please now stop running round in circles and stop pretending you don't know about whom you are speaking."

"Honestly I do not know about whom you are speaking."

"Well, I mean Dev with that light and dark blue Lambretta."

Naseem took quite sometime in recollecting Dev, though she was well acquainted with him.

"Ya, now I know about whom you are speaking, It is about that fellow who looks somewhat like Dev Anand, am I right?"

"You are quite right," but it seemed Rita didn't like the way Naseem had replied to her question.

Rita also tried to behave indifferent, but she could not help asking Naseem questions. Rita said in a questioning tone "Hey! what else you noticed about Dev?"

Naseem replied in a cool voice "I think he is kind hearted and loving towards children."

Rita trying to sound casual said, "I think you are a bit too imaginative."

Naseem continued in her cool tone, "Perhaps I am, but I have known Dev for the last one year."

"That is no news for me because I gave you an introduction with Dev."

Rita was struggling with strong feelings within herself, because she loved Dev immensely and she wanted to find out for sure from Naseem that she did not love, because whenever Rita asked her question directly, that if she

loved Dev it was no, so now Rita was trying to find out about the truth in another way.

Rita fumbling for words retorted and then suddenly blurted out "I love him deeply!"

"Deeply? and whom?" asked Naseem in a shocked voice.

"Who? I do."

"Smashing, wonderful, splendid" one could sense a note of acute change in Naseem's voice.

"You do not seem happy at this news" said Rita trying to be patient.

"No, no, not at all, I am very pleased at this news".

"Really? then it is just really splendid" Rita continued after a silence of few minutes. I want to marry Dev."

"Oh fine would it be."

Naseem could not endure anything, so thinking of something unpleasant she smiled.

"Well, you say, you love him and you want to marry him but what about his feeling towards you?"

Rita replied in an irritable voice at the indifference shown by Naseem, "what the hell do you mean?"

Naseem carried on as usual "Are you sure Dev loves you and you love him?"

"Is there any doubt about it?"

"Well, some doubt," said Naseem in a careless voice.

"I think he is marvellous."

"I agree."

"But I think he seems a happy-go-lucky type of person."

"Maybe," continued Rita in a doubtful tone.

"Sometimes I think he looks a poet, or someone great."

There was silence for a couple of minutes and suddenly Rita sprang up with a question for Naseem, "You seem to be happy?"

"Far from being happy, I feel so down in my dumps."

"It is a real pleasure to know, you are not happy."

"You seem happy at my displeasure and why so?"

"You see.... it just slipped out. I quite did not mean what I said."

"Hope so," replied Rita in a sharp voice.

"Hang it and stop being so childish" said Rita trying to put on a carefree tone.

"I am not being childish, but I am shocked at your behaviour towards me, because I had never expected this from you."

"Oh! for heaven's sake forget it" said Rita trying to switch the topic, "By the way....."

"Look here, I want to ask you some questions."

"Okay, then what are they?"

"First of all tell me if Dev loves you, as you think he does

The Value of Laughter

Laugh and grow fit. That could be the latest health slogan. According to an American team of laughter research scientists laughing is one of the best of all exercises, especially for those with sit-down jobs.

Scores of different muscles are exercised each time you laugh and this has a massaging effect upon the body, the researchers tell us.

People who rarely laugh will never be really happy, say the team. But the experts recognize that many people find it impossible to laugh heartily, and some can't laugh at all.

The German General Helmuth von Moltke was one of these. It is said that von Moltke, who died about 70 years ago, laughed only twice after his twenty-first birth-day.

An Essex man who could never laugh once offered £100 to anyone who could make him do so. Many tried, but nobody succeeded.

In Ceylon there is a small tribe known as the Veddas. None of the people will laugh.

and are you sure about him loving you?"

"I should say... well, I think he does."

"You think still? You ought to be sure by now."

"How can I be sure? But all the same I feel he loves me a great deal."

Naseem asked in a worried tone, "would you care to tell

me the reason, what has made you confident that Dev loves you?"

After hesitating Rita replied in a shaky voice. "To tell you frankly whenever we happen to pass each other he stares at me and why?"

"Well, you think so, but what about him?"

"What do you mean by 'think so,' it is a fact and I am the object of his vision."

"What makes you sure....?"

"Then why does he look at me in such a way? He never looks at anybody else in that cute style, so what does this all boil down to in the end?"

Naseem said in a husky voice, "Rita, I quite do not follow what you say. I think you are..."

"What junk you speak, Naseem. Your eyes are filled with love for Dev. You want him to love you—you are pretending you do not,....?"

"Shut up, for God's sake."

"I can't help saying so."

"What you can't help, you selfish creature."

"Yes, I can't help....."

"What do you mean 'by your eyes'?" asked Rita turning red in her face, "and for heaven's sake speak up about it."

"How....the...the hell....am I...to"

"As usual... you fool!"

"But, this is not the usual case..."

"Then let it be unusual and speak frankly."

"Frankly" Naseem said taking a gulp, as if to stop herself from bursting out in tears and carried on, "It is unfortunate... that...we both...should....."

"Look here, Naseem, you are trying my patience."

Naseem said with tears rolling down her cheeks, "You must... forgive me...we have both...made the same choice."

"You don't say that?"

"Yes, I do love him so immensely and deeply as you do, if not more."

This was quite a jolt to Rita, though she had expected it sometime or other.

An embarrassing silence prevailed; both of them were attempting to talk to each other but failed to do so, without saying "Good night" to each other. Rita and Naseem parted for ever.

A few days later at College Dev received a letter from Naseem and a day after from Rita. Rita's read as:

23rd Oct.

I hope that you will excuse me for talking the liberty to write to you. Once again let me request you, if any part of this letter offends you, please excuse me.

Naseem is none new to you. Just yesterday quite accidentally I came to know how deeply she loves you.

I am quite sure that without you her life will be worthless and I would not be surprised if she chooses to do something strange in case you don't accept her love.

Another thing about her is that she comes from a well to do family; about her personality you will know more as time goes up.

I am very anxiously awaiting your reply.

Your friend,
Rita.

Naseem's letter was also on the same subject, but Naseem recommended Rita as his wife. All the teenage affairs amused Dev a great deal, that two girls to whom he hardly had spoken twice were intestated in his marriage, Dev's parents had never spoken of getting their son married and these two unknown characters should be so much interested in his personal life.

Thinking of this Dev burst into a roar of laughter. The next day being a holiday Dev and his friends all decided to go for a drive. On the morning they all set out, little dreaming of what was ahead of them.

A car full of friends, singing and chattering, moved on with Dev at the steering. Dev was given a sudden jolt from a boy and he lost the control of the steering and Dodge went and collided with a bus. Dev was killed on the spot with some other boys too.

Mukesh, when he returned to the hostel after Dev's funeral, found two unfinished letters on his table (Mukesh being Dev's room mate and close friend) addressed to Rita and Naseem which he dispatched to them. Both the letters were written in the same way as:

Dear friend,

I am very happy to acknowledge your letter, I also received one from your friend.

Well, in your letters both of you are proposing the other as my girl, but please may I know the reason behind this stuff.

Taking it seriously to the extent you claim this matter to be, I think I should also explain myself. I feel you and your friend esteem your friendship more than anything else even though you do so, you are ready to break your friendship over a mere boy, well if you are sensible enough, take my advice, forget this silly affair and carry on with your friendship. I know for the time being, you both will be like fish out of water without me and will find it difficult to forget, but also remember time always heals a wound well. (The letters were left uncompleted).

When Rita and Naseem received these letters, with them they also received the terrible news of Dev's death through Mukesh.

Rita and Naseem were left heart broken by Dev's sudden death. Naseem and Rita never met each other after the night they parted without wishing Good-Night.

—o—

Short Story

THE BEAUTY REBELLED

Verma was exploiting Lily's beauty for a base purpose. She rebelled but felt helpless

By R. S. Yadav

WHEN Verma entered the club with Lily, everyone was dazed. The whole atmosphere of the club got electrified. Bearers saluted the couple, friends rushed to compliment and the snobs turned a conciliatory nose. Everyone waited for his turn to be introduced to her. "Hallo, Mr. Verma," echoed a fellow contractor and dashed across the verandah to shake hands with Verma. "When did you arrive from Delhi?" and he cast a side glance towards Lily to be properly introduced.

Verma told him the date of his arrival and coldly introduced Lily. "Mrs. Verma—and this is Mr. Bhatia." His tone clearly indicated that he did not want to encourage Bhatia, the leech of the club. Lily smiled with folded hands. Bhatia awkwardly uttered his "very glad to meet you." Mr. Bhatia now directly plunged into the fireworks of flattery. "But Mr. Verma, you should have at least informed us of the marri-

age. We weren't bad for sending a humble present."

He would have continued but Verma warded him off, "Oh, let it go. It all happened in a hurry. No time to inform anybody." And he entered the bridge-room, leaving the shadowing Bhatia behind. With their entry, the game stopped for a moment. The dealt cards remained on the table and the undealt in their hands. The chorus of greetings rose simultaneously. They rushed to meet him or so to say, to meet Lily as if a diamond has been thrown amongst the tramps. And with a flash the introduction and complimenting was over. A series of toasts were proposed and gulped down the hungry throats of those flies that now buzzed around Lily, with a tremendous noise.

Mr. Asthana was the first to propose one and feasted his heart and eyes over Lily. Mr. Dhelabhai, proprietor of Ambika

Mills was the second and Mr. Topiwala, the managing director of Laxmi Bank the third. The remaining, Mr. Agrwala, Mr. Sunder Singh, Mr. Poonamchand etc., proposed in succession and got done with it. Verma now marked that the very presence of Lily had brought about a change in the flirting Eves of those contractors, so fragile with their fidelity. A spirit of competition was infused in them but their feminine weapons were now too blunt to be effective before Lily's magnetism. Their strokes cut the empty air in vain, only to reduce their countenances into the cold ashes of a dwindling fire. Mrs. Bhatia tried to draw Mr. Topiwala to her sari's unique colour product from Benares but rather too gaudy to look decent on her slipping figure. And Mrs. Sunder Singh struggled to draw Mr. Asthana who sought every chance to have a word with Lily. Her topic was dogs and their breeds. Mrs. Kamani vainly pulled Mr. Agarwal, who looked hungrily for an introduction to Lily, about a picnic on the coming Sunday.

Seeing their efforts fail, the whole leechy lot of contractors fumed and fumbled with annoyance. But they too could not shake themselves off from Lily's charms.

"Lily,—what a wonderful name," Mr. Topiwala was commenting with a romantically foolish smile. "It is just the name suited to a beauty like you."

Retort

A rather stout woman was making herself a nuisance in the big store which was holding its annual sale. Nothing, it seemed, would suit her, and the unfortunate sales girl was beginning to get a little weary.

"Haven't you anything ready-made that will fit me?" asked the customer at last.

"Yes; the umbrellas and the handkerchiefs are downstairs, madam" the girl replied.

Mrs. Bhatia could not bear this and butted in. Isn't the rose a better flower in flavour and appearance?" She let her sari slip from her shoulders as she adjusted her own roses in her bun. But this challenge was well met by Mr. Topiwala whose wits had sharpened in Lily's presence. "I am sorry Mrs. Bhatia, I was commenting about the suitability of names and not the flowers and their botany."

This remark made the rose-like Mrs. Bhatia turn into a cauliflower.

Mr. Topiwala would have continued with his flirtations with Lily but Mr. Asthana gave him a nice slip like an expert footballer who could use a trick or two on his own. "You have hit the moon, Verma, and I could not contemplate a better choice than yours. I shall be pleased if you

will grace a party at my house in honour of your happy union." And he looked at Lily to get some response of appreciation. However, Lily only smiled.

Verma now wanted to get rid of this whole useless lot. But he could not sight the man he had wanted to meet that evening. Mr. Rana of Jai Bharat Industries had not come yet. However, he had not long to wait as the noise of a limousine filtered in and his car pulled up under the porch. Mr. Rana entered. The whole atmosphere now changed to reverence rather than competition it was a moment before. Rana was the immediate target of everyone, who flourished on contracting business. He was going to let out contracts worth several lacs for the new factories of his industry, that were to come up in a year or two.

Mr. Rana strolled up to the group who were now half out of their seats. His eyes singled out Lily in a moment and rested there till Verma caught his eye and came up with his greetings. "How are you, Mr. Rana?" "Fine, how about you?" "Splendid." Then he turned about to introduce Lily. "This is Lily Verma."

Rana extended his hand with a super confidence. Verma hinted Lily to go for it. Lily was forced to shake hands with him. People looked significantly at each other. This meant something: A toast was also proposed. But this time it was a different affair. Most of the

contractors and their Eves had to gulp it down their throats.

"Five lakhs worth of contracts already in hand and only a month gone. Not a bad business," Verma muttered in his room, looking out of his rear window at the westerly seaside panorama. His tone was that of a contractor and his admiration devoid of any human feelings. Lily sat gravely before her dressing table, without being touched by this remark. Verma mused further. "Yet there is no fun till we get that fellow Rana with us." He did not turn to see that Lily had not started dressing up yet. Lily only looked at her unhappy eyes that were forming shaded rings under them. She felt like an ox fastened to an oil mill, with its eyes covered, seeing nothing and unable to feel anything, who had just to go round and round till he crumbled to the floor. She made no movement to follow the earlier instruction of Verma to dress up and go alone to Rana's place to present certain documents. Verma turned and looked at Lily still in that unprepared state.

"Why, Lily? You aren't dressing up yet. Its time you reached there. He might leave if you delayed."

But Lily was feeling a tornado of protests rising in her. She had borne, earlier engagements with Rana at their home, but this was the limit. So long as it was confined to entertaining him at their parties, it was all right. But this.....she shivered at the

very thought and remained unmoved.

Verma repeated his command, this time in a sterner tone.

Now Lily revolted, "I don't like going to his place. I loath his very sight." And she found herself trembling at the end of the speech.

This had Verma stumped completely. He could not believe it.

"What?" he echoed with a strange voice. But Lily maintained her silence, choked up to her nostrils.

"Don't be silly, Lily. You know what is at stake at the moment. Myself and Kamrani are running neck to neck for these contracts and if we lose it a year's business is gone. Verma expected this outburst to make some impression. But Lily refused to do anything about his expectation.

"I told you once, I am not prepared to go. I don't want to see that wolf anymore."

Verma was now up in flames. "Lily," he shouted with sternness he had so far never known. "I am going to tolerate no nonsense. I am giving you another five minutes and you shall dress up to go with Peetamber. You better remember what you were and what you shall be if you slip out." He then banged the door after him and was gone to call Peetamber for getting the car out of the garage. She could hear his hurried steps rushing down. Lily's mind boiled up in a

sudden rage. She wanted to fling it at Verma. Yet there was that strange fear that had driven her to this position of a puppet, playing in the hands of a building contractor. True that Verma had not taken any advantage of her himself but this trading with her had been too much to bear. He had beaten other contractors hollow in his game and he stood to gain considerably by it. But this further selling of her soul, nay, now the body too could not be tolerated. Even then, what was she to do but submit?

The threat which Verma held was only her poor mother and a rakish brother who were existing on her earnings alone. And that, too, on the mercy of Verma. And the more she thought of slipping out the more she found it impossible, for Verma now held the strings in his hand. He had given her comfort and a name in society, a glamour and the sparkle for which she had a craving from her childhood. Yet, there was something she held more precious than all this.

For a moment she thought that she was happier in that Delhi restaurant where she served as a waitress, with her small job and heavy tips. One had only to throw away a few smiles and the job was done. The manager was also a cousin of her's. The risks and demands there were small. Only it was hard to make the two ends meet. If it hadn't been for her mother, she could tear this web now and run to safety. Again Verma came to her mind. She wouldn't have

mindful if Verma had tried to take advantage of her: She could have consoled herself with a poor girl's fate and the payment of one's obligations. That was the way of the world she was driven to. But this bartering with her body and soul? She could not come to digest—

Verma had ordered the car now and it was in the porch. He dialed his accomplice in the game, the secretary of Mr. Rana, and enquired about the state of affairs there. "Mr. Kamalani is having a hard time of it," he whispered over the phone. "I shall let you know the moment he quits," and he hung up.

In a few minutes Lily found herself pushed into the car and, driven away towards Rana's house. Peetamber was the only witness to this inhuman drama Lily was thrown into. "Go now and don't be sulky with those eyes" were the last words of Verma when he banged the door after her. "We aren't to spoil a deal. And you know that."

She remembered her last struggle too. She had pleaded that she loathed this barter. She would not mind if he took advantage of her. But this... this was monstrous... Yet, in spite of all that she was there in that car driven down to Rana's house.

Lily was gone, yet Verma felt uneasy. There was something which Lily had left behind to brood about. For the first time he realised that Lily was a

woman, helpless and human. She was beautiful and harbouring something for him. Otherwise a woman would not say that he could take advantage of her and she would not be averse to the thought. He had forced her to do a thing that he could not ask her to do if he had been a little human.... In ten minutes she would be at Rana's.... she measured. His uneasiness grew further. He started pacing up and down his drawing room, pulling heavy puffs at his cigarette. It finished too soon. He lighted another and that too gave way. "Why not ring up Rana's secretary again and know the latest?" He thought and grabbed the phone in a fit of nervousness. This time the other end sounded gloomy. "I fear Kamalani seems to have hooked up something. I would soon be able to tell you something definite. Let the papers come to me.... By the way, I have seen your Mrs. drop in. She is with him now,"

A cold sweat broke out on Verma's forehead. Rana would surely play foul, Verma had no doubt, if he could smell the advantage. He stood transfixed for a moment. The phone then announced that Kamalani had got it. Verma banged the receiver on its seat and rushed out. He hailed the first taxi that came his way and asked him to touch the impossible. However, the driver drove the needle to its human limits and the taxi was flying in a moment.

Lily vaguely watched the fleeting lights playing hide and seek

with her discoloured face as she sped along the long winding road. That snake-like track was taking her to that edge of life from which there was no return possible once she slipped the heights. Suddenly she became conscious that Peetamber was watching her through the mirror. She hurriedly gathered herself. Peetamber too put his eyes down to his job. But the long silence that ensued then could not restrain him from asking, "Are you feeling unwell, Bibiji?"

"No, Peetamber, I am all right."

Silence again filled the gap in which their feelings were interacting.

They crossed a bright mercury lamp.

"Should I drive you to a doctor, Bibiji?"

"No," Lily replied vaguely. But Peetamber's sympathy had started her mind to work frantically in a different direction, she had never so far thought. There were certain things emerging out of her brooding.

"Stop the car there, for a minute," she found herself ordering Peetamber, pointing at a shady elm tree that formed a dark corridor over the road.

The car came to a halt at the indicated spot. Lily came out of it and stood by the door. Then she strolled a few paces before she turned her attention to Peetamber again.

SAME TERMS!

Customer: "I hear my son has owed you for a suit for three years."

Tailor: "Yes, sir, have you called to settle the account?"

Customer: "No, I'd like a suit myself on the same terms."

"You have a mother at home, Peetamber?"

"Yes, Bibiji."

"Anybody else?"

"Yes, a sister."

"Will you be happy with two?"

Peetamber now looked sharp at Lily. He had the wind already and now he was sure. The tide had turned.

"Yes, Bibiji. Why not?"

Lily now found her hopes to a new height. "Then let us hurry. I must leave a letter at Rana's."

Peetamber now put the car on its wings.

Rana was surprised to find Lily in such a hurry. And the letter added further to it. The only explanation Lily provided was she was expecting Verma there. And since she had to meet some of her friends urgently, she was leaving some papers and would be home for dinner.

T W I L I G H T O F L O V E

He laboured under a misunderstanding
and she bade him farewell

However, Rana awaited Verma to arrive.

The taxi almost crashed through Rana's gates. Verma dashed out from it and banged at Rana's drawing room. A creaking door brought Rana face to face with Verma. Verma scanned his face for the signs of Lily and uttered "Is Lily....." The rest was drowned in the expression on Rana's face. He had sensed something in his eyes.

"No, only a letter," and he handed out the envelope to him.

Verma looked at him distrustfully and tore the envelope open. The contract documents were packed up in it. Rana added up the rest.

"There are two trains out from Bombay now, one at ten fortyfive and the other at eleven. Your car seems to have made for Victoria Terminus."

Verma sped in the taxi towards V. T. His tension relaxed but for an anxiety to be there in time. His watch showed ten minutes to the train departure.

Lily had taken the purse out. She counted some money and passed it on to Peetamber. Peetamber rushed towards the ticket window....

Verma sat tense between the two closed doors of the taxi. The passing street lamps shot at him like directed bullets, piercing his very conscience. Stran-

gely, he was thinking, "There won't be much of a clatter and din if he declared Lily by his side. Mother would take it through his eyes and the rest would hardly care...a huge mercury at the traffic island brightened his thoughtful face. The rattling noise of some local trains reached his ears. The taxi was swinging in towards the station.

"Two tickets for Almora, Bibiji." Peetamber extended his hand to give them to Lily, unaware of any other element except the two, who were the fugitives.

Suddenly there was another voice...

"Make it three, Peetamber," Verma's voice filtered in as if a fresh gust of wind came from the Himalayas. Lily turned sharp and faced Verma. He was smiling repentantly. Only he added.... "Our honeymoon is long overdue. I shall wire it to mother on the way."

Peetamber and Lily looked amazed at him. The bright lights from the platform had started dancing in his eyes and her image was imprinted in between. Lily turned away to hide her tears while Verma reissued his command—

"Hurry up, Peetamber, the train has only a few minutes to leave."

And Peetamber was running up to the window.

THE little girl who sat beside her 'big' grandfather in the shop opposite his house fascinated Indar's adolescent mind. Her sweet face, her mop of black hair, stirred a strange emotion within his young heart.

That shop was supposed to deal with dolls; dolls, yes; but bananas hung down in bunches, buns and biscuits filled various glass containers, soda bottles stood knee-deep in rectangular water-troughs. Dolls of course were the main commodity sold during Dassara season, but at other times, there were sold all sorts of things, the shopman being a seasoned hand.

He was known as Khanna, an acrimonious, formidable man.

He would sit on his haunches all day at his cash-chest briskly pushing on sales. Until eleven at night when he closed the shop his cantankerous voice could be heard haranguing some one or arguing, or chasing his purposely hovering clientele.

"What do you think I am? How dare you loiter here? You think I can't see through your game? You're mistaken. I can tackle ten of you at the same time?"

The only softening influence in that shop of cigars, explosive aerated waters and acrid words was the little girl who sat beside the shopman with her mop of hair all about her face. It was, in fact, her sweetening presence

that drew a number of customers to the shop, and the shopman knew it.

Indar himself went again and again to buy something or other at the shop for the pleasure of seeing her. And on many a moon-lit night he had also stood by his window-sill gazing at her tiny face intently, as if to count the number of amber beads in the string that rustled on her bosom as she tripped rapidly and lightly, going back and forth from moonlight to shadow.

That string there over her neck seemed to be entwined in his heart as the sweet sound of her name "Indubala" which resounded in his ears.

"How much is that doll?" Indar asked one day, pausing between sips of an iced-drink, pointing to an old one, lying in a corner.

"Twelve rupees," Khanna said. "It would have cost more had it been a bit new."

"Oh, but for how much did you buy it?"

"Why do you want to know all that?" demanded Khanna slightly irritated. If it had been anyone else, he would have shouted. "If you really want to buy the thing, do so. If not, don't stand here asking me a dozen questions."

But Indar occupied a unique position. He was known to be a good customer, paid down a lot of cash everyday, besides having a running account of

several months and deserved respect for his fat purse.

Indar next asked, "Would anyone buy that doll for that price?"

Khanna was in a jovial mood and replied. "Oh, certainly, if a customer like you were to cast his eyes on it."

Indar felt simply elated and looked at the girl for her approbation.

Now someone else seemed to compete for Indar's honour. He was another youth about twenty who came in a fancy T-shirt, rolled up jeans and Hawaii sandals. Besides, the newcomer sported a pair of large dark glasses which gave him, he felt, a debonair look. He sped down the street on a scooter, assumed a tone of bluster while asking for his packet of Simla. In a word, he fancied himself the centre of attraction whenever the shop girl happened to look in his direction.

"Oh she's impressed by my gait, takes me to be a big guy, eh? I suppose."

But Indar concluded that the girl did feel impressed by the new-fellow's gait. It flashed across his mind that there was some significant exchange of looks even between them.

One day he actually saw the new-comer conversing with his girl while in the act of buying something.

A stab of jealousy. Indar went straight up to the shop and thrusting aside fellow ordered for ten packets of Simla.

Khanna was surprised but nevertheless felt pleased with the purchase. He politely enquired when the young master took to smoking as he never remembered to have sold cigarettes to him. But Indar replied with hauteur that it was nobody's business to question him and throwing the cash made his exit.

The little girl who looked on ruefully was not unaware of the cause and indifference behind all those acts of her beloved.

Indar then practically stopped frequenting the shop, never even greeted the girl when he accidentally looked at her from his house. Then one day while passing by the shop, he asked how much he owed to them. Next day, he cleared his account to the pie and never again stepped on its threshold.

Days passed. The shop soon fell on evil days, now that the little girl no longer occupied her seat beside her grandfather. The old man too seemed to have lost his fiery nature and looked wan and weary of life. His one thought was as to when on earth he was going to make over his child to some good man.

As to the little girl, she was not to be seen at all outside. Where she hid herself or what she did the live long day God only knew.

And Indar sitting in his bachelor's flat would stare distraught at the wall opposite his house. Everywhere seemed to loom large before him the pale profile of a familiar face with its tender

mouth and eyes which seemed to be filmed over by some great sorrow..... That haunting look of her seared him and sapped his strength.

It was not for nothing that the wise said 'Love was like a snake.'

A month was by no means a long interval but a great change seemed to have come over Indar. Somehow in the distant lodging of a friend he felt as if he was in a lost human world. All his resentment seemed to have resolved into one of remorse, of regret for what he had done in haste. Perhaps he was wrong in suspecting Indubala.

She being a slip of an innocent girl. Yes, she was.

No sooner the realization dawned on him, than he resolved to go to her house and make it up with her. He would even repent for his hasty assessment of her character.

That day, the evening came on rather abruptly as Indar started towards his old abode. Just then an old neighbour of his brought him a small piece of paper wrapped in a bigger paper.

It was a letter from Indubala. It read:

"Dear Indar,

Perhaps I am wrong in addressing you as 'dear' as you no longer deem us to be your equal in birth or status in life to call you so. Yes I am a poor girl, a mere 'shop-girl' as you have remarked to our neighbour before departing and I shall never aspire to be yours.

There is one more thing. Please preserve this in your memory. We never sell ourselves to fill our stomachs. For our sake you need not stay away from your room. You may come back as I am leaving tonight for my native place."

Indubala.

Indar could not even wait till he had read the letter completely.

The cart at the door was ready. Indubala came out of her house, cast one last look at the opposite abode wherein had lived her heart's desire and turned to get into the cart.

A lone tear trembled in his love-lorn eyes.

Outside the twilight lost its colour and faded away, its place was taken by the night that poured in from all sides.

The cart creaked and jolted as it rolled on rapidly. Indubala sat as one dazed. Suddenly she was brought to her senses by the stopping of the cart with a jerk. The bullocks panted as foam oozed out of their mouth.

The cartman shouted. "Who's that senseless man that stands across the way?"

Indubala gaped! The person of her dreams stood there before her. "Indar!" A pang of anguish shot through her whole fragile frame.

Indar broke the silence.

"I've come back, beloved. Yes, I've come back to you for ever. Please do not go anywhere."

"But I must go tonight," the girl said firmly.

"Go, if you will but not tonight" pleaded Indar.

"I know I hurt you badly by suspecting you wrongly. Let me repent for this one night at your forgiveness."

"My forgiveness! Will it mean anything at all to you?" the girl asked in great bitterness.

"Please do not torment me any further. Already there is not the smallest part of my soul left unbruised."

The cartman interrupted them from outside. "Mother, we should proceed. If there is any more delay you'll not get accommodation in the night mail."

Indar went near the cart and held the girl's hand and exclaimed, in a bewildered tone. "Fever! How your hands are burning! That's why you look so pale?"

"Never mind that. I must be off tonight" persisted Indubala.

"With this fever! Do you think I'll allow you to go in this state?"

With these words he himself got into the cart and asked the cartman to retrace his path.

He then gently drew her close to him. All of a sudden he felt that a complete transformation had come over Indubala's face. Love free from misgiving shone there.

A silent tear rolled down Indar's troubled eyes in thanksgiving.

ARTICLE

PROBLEMS OF OUR DEMOCRACY

By A. V. MATTHEW

INDIANS have now to recognize the decisive role of democracy in establishing the basis of contemporary Indian culture. It will be helpful to begin by regarding the democratic view of world, not only as a set of intellectual propositions, but also as imparting a civilized way of life. The requirements of civilization cannot be satisfied by maintaining several retrograde forms of thought and many apologetics of culture. Many people have a frame of mind which cultivates much dogmatic indifference and carelessness of truth; in its extreme form, this would mean the complete cessation of all man's relations with reality.

India of today is very different from the India which we knew so well prior to our securing freedom from foreign domination. There are several valid reasons for the transition which modern India has made from autocracy. As democrats we hope to achieve in the democratic culture that which

the total force of civilizing influence will be able to achieve in individual and social life. The practical object of our democracy is to supply a rational justification for liberty, equality and fraternity.

At the same time, impartial judgment will appraise the present situation in India, which though hopeful, is one wherein the national standard is menaced at every turn by the downward trend of several retrograde features. No Indian is to think to avoid the pernicious effects on India of Communist doctrines and practices by indifference and avoidance of responsibility for combating its evils. The people of India must see through the game of mischief-mongers and anarchists in the Communist Party who play on public sentiment and who subvert the central idea of democracy. The result is the challenge of communism will not be merely superficial or negligible, but great and far-reaching. The problem for all Indians

is to avoid the threatening catastrophe by meeting the urgency of the crisis that is its forerunner.

We are also to discover fresh reserves of leadership in men of patriotism and efficiency, and with a personality which, as in the case of our popular Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, displays and develops itself through life. In politics, we Indians are to expect to be guided by men who have no object in view, but the public welfare. No politician, statesman or administrator is expected to give the world the appalling example of misuse of talents, unsustained by political ethics.

All Indians are happy that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the greatest statesman of our generation, is now fully safeguarding the liberties and aspirations of India for which he has ever stood, and for which he has been prepared to fight long and suffer much. He has proved himself, beyond doubt, worthy of the trust reposed in him by his countrymen who now are playing ardently for his long life.

All the visions of tomorrow's India include improved educational methods. It cannot be said that India has already got everything that a country could want for levelling up our standard of education. We cannot expect a quick solution overnight of all our educational problems, although financial aid for educational schemes does not seem destined for curtailment with our Central and State governments.

Our educational system must set the moral standard and uphold the spiritual ideals of our nation. Then only shall we be able to give our educational issues a turn towards the goal we wish to reach. Our government and our educationists are to attempt to turn the attention of our students to values, as opposed to things.

Every economic plan, if it is to be a success, should include an extensive programme for raising the material and cultural standard of the people, by providing more and better food, higher wages and better working conditions. The world today needs, more than ever before, enthusiasts brooding over the oppression of the poor, fancying themselves commissioned by God to liberate them.

In order to ensure a planned development of cottage and small scale industries and thereby to provide a minimum standard of living and more employment to our people, the central and state governments are now adopting all necessary measures for developing the cottage industry in India. In a country like ours which has not the means or the wealth to develop the enormous machine power like the Western countries the future of our industrial progress will depend largely on the development of our cottage industries. In the absence of a rehabilitation of our village industries, it would be difficult to establish a just agricultural economy in India.

The more the dangers that threaten India turn out to be, due to the present Chinese aggression against us, the more union among our people, determined energy, self-reliance and pluck must be developed. till the dangers are overpowered. We have to admit that the problems created as the result of China's unjustifiable policy towards our country are far from simple. All political parties in the country should combine among themselves, relax the interior tension and realise our national unity. Such a rapprochement is not a mere party affair, but a national issue, on which there can be no two opinions.

The difficulty of dealing with India's linguistic States problem seems to be assuming day by day a new and more uncertain character. It is true to say that there is now a deeper cleavage among the people of our country, regarding the formation of linguistic States, than is actually necessary and that this cleavage is liable to divert into speculative by-paths energies which might have been devoted to our country's practical problems. Enthusiasm for linguistic States must never involve a confusion of diagnosis which completely ignores the special characteristics of national unity. What India now urgently requires is a fellowship of kindred minds which are inspired with the vision of an ideal, unified nation, as also a higher order of social, political and economic life, in keeping with the principles of democracy and Gandhism.

ALL RIGHT!

He : "I don't see how we can be married, dear. I'm not making expenses."

She : "That's all right. Just marry me; I'll make plenty."

Whatever one may think of Gandhism, it is just as well to have practical experience of its message which is not one of despair, or disgust, or escape. The great thing for us Indians is to recognize that the advocacy of the ideals and principles laid down by Gandhiji is a necessary plan of cultural and democratic campaign. There is enough scope in Gandhism for the evolution of both human character and human personality.

We Indians are to be effectually penetrated by the influence of all the Great Religions, and are to uphold inflexibly an absolute code of social, political and economic justice as also firm faith in the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man, without belief in both of which man is unable to create a perfect society, or to deal satisfactorily with God, with himself or with his environment. A great deal of care must therefore be exercised by us in India to prevent falsifying or ignoring both our religious and national ideals. Our democracy must not be dulled and frustrated by restraining forces which accept evil as good.

THE INTRUDER

Her late husband's brothers were after her life and she lived in constant terror of the shadow of the assassin.....

BIMLA was reading a novel but her mind was wandering. Now and then she looked at the door which was securely locked. An Alsatian dog was lying on the floor with its eyes wide open and silently watching its mistress.

Her heart was in her mouth. Every sound outside the house—in the lonely street—struck fear in her heart. Her mother had gone to attend her sister's funeral and it would take another three to four days to return. She was alone and afraid of intruders. She had good reasons to be so. Ever since she became a widow—that was six months ago—she was in constant terror. She had been married to Dev only for six years and enjoyed life and happiness. Dev was one of three rich brothers and they all lived together. But being the eldest son, he had a large

share of patrimony than the other two.

Though the brothers lived together in their father's house, there had been considerable ill-feeling. The brothers' wives often openly quarrelled over trifles out of jealousy and spite. Of Bimla the other two women were always busy concocting tales against her. She was extraordinarily beautiful with a dazzlingly fair complexion. In addition she was educated up to college. Her husband was less qualified than herself but Bimla was obedient and docile. She had a love affair with her college mate, Misra, who was very handsome and intelligent. Other college students used to call the pair Romeo and Juliet.

They had decided to marry after a tempestuous spell of romance. They had tasted of

the forbidden fruit and pledged eternal loyalty and devotion. But calf love should never be taken seriously.

When Misra completed his course, his parents married him off to the daughter of a relation. When Bimla learned of this, she raged and fumed and was even off her mind. Her mother understood the situation quickly and thought that her daughter's marriage to some young man the only honourable way out. Dev was a widower but he owned considerable property. He had been looking for a suitable match and when he set eyes on Bimla he told the broker that he could not help loving her and that he must marry her at any cost. When he met her mother during the negotiations he informed her secretly that he would defray the entire expenses of the marriage that she might have to incur. He knew that she was very poor and that she had been expecting her daughter to take up some job.

The marriage did not turn out to be very successful; however. Bimla, for her part, could not bring herself to love her husband. He was middle-aged and not very pleasing in his appearance. At first the bride felt repelled but came to the wise conclusion that she must render obedience to him. Dev was satisfied and thought all modern girls were like that—cold, sullen and with no heart.

He was, however, disappointed and sad because he had no issue. His two brothers were greedy,

JUST HALF

The big crowd gathered on the beach and watched the man apply artificial respiration to the rich girl he had just rescued. Her parents broke through the crowds, joyful at seeing their daughter alive and well. "Mama," said the old man. "Give that chap ten rupees. He saved her life."

"But Papa," protested the girl, "I was half dead."

"All right," Papa said. "Give him five rupees."

brutish and cunning. They wanted to grab Dev's property and were very glad that Bimla had not become a mother. When she was on a visit to her mother's house, she had the shock of her life to receive a telegram that Dev had suddenly died of pneumonia. She raced back to her husband's home only to find that his dead body had been cremated with unusual speed. She noticed that the other members of the household were unusually silent and unsympathetic and inferred with her innate shrewdness that her husband had been deliberately left to die without any medical aid.

Sensing trouble, she left for her mother's home at once. She knew that if she was removed from the brothers' path they could get hold of her husband's property and share it between

themselves. It was worth three lakhs and they didn't like the idea of letting the money go to an outsider.

Nor was she safe in her mother's home, situated as it was opposite to a big maidan. The two brothers had engaged an assassin to get into Bimla's house and make short work of her. They gave him a large sum—a thousand rupees—with a promise of thrice that amount if he accomplished the deed. Bimla guessed at all these designs but could not openly accuse the brothers nor had she the courage to go to the police. The brothers were very rich and influential and the police might not immediately believe her.

To add to her confusion and nervousness her mother and gone to Banaras suddenly to attend her sister's funeral. She racked her brains for a way out. Two nights ago the dog barked furiously and jumped at the window. Someone had been attempting to break in and when she switched on all the lights the intruder had run off. The servant maid who used to sleep with her was down in her home with chicken-pox.

The young woman was in jitters and her pretty face was pale as death. It was half an hour past midnight and Doggie began to bark again. She began to tremble when she heard a knock at the front door. When it was repeated several times and heard her mother's name called, she made bold to ask who the visitor was.

"It is Misra and nobody else, Bimla. Will you open the door? I have come here in the midst of my professional tour and wanted to see your mother—and of course yourself."

Yes, it was Misra no doubt. She opened the door, switching on the light and stared hard at him. Then she bolted the door in great fear with trembling hands.

"It is Providence that must have brought you at this time," she remarked. "Even though you have done me wrong I am glad you had come to my aid."

She led him in, telling him in detail of her marriage, of her life in her husband's home, of his brothers' sinister designs on her life and her property. Finally she burst into tears over her miserable plight. He came near and placed his arm on her shoulder. "Give up all fears, Bimla. It was not of my own choosing—my bride, I mean. She died last year, leaving a son of three. I still thought you were unmarried and helping your mother by taking to your career. Now I see you are free and what can prevent two lovers—a widow and widower though they may be—from marrying and starting anew?"

He didn't wait for her reply. Her yielding lips as he sought them for a long exquisite kiss seemed to give him the answer.

—O—

SHORT STORY

FRIEND IN DISTRESS

BY
V. RANGNATHAN

He had a problem of the heart and discussed it frankly with his friend and his wife.....

IT was a pleasant surprise to see the bold hand on the cover I received just then. In an instant I knew it was from Raju. I wanted to see what he had written after such a long time. It was already getting late and I was hurriedly dressing to go to the Office. The children had all left for school and my wife devout by habit, was handing me the afternoon tiffin packet.

Amidst all her worries in running the house, Rukmani never forgets me for a moment. Prompt in all her small services to me, I do not quite understand how she maintains her composure and the invariably sweet smile all these years we have been married.

"Rukku dear, how you love me!" I murmured in her ears overcome with affection.

She withdrew and with mock annoyance said, "Nonsense! what

has come to you suddenly this morning? Is it not time for you to be at the Office?"

She smiled one of her bewitching smiles, modest but at once intoxicating. The dimples in her cheeks looked so natural and inviting. Stirred by the chime of the wall-clock, I reluctantly collected all my files and rushed out.

Arriving at the office just in time, I pored over the sheets and my hand by years of experience started scribbling. All this time my mind had been wandering over the past. What had Ragu to say after all these years of silence?

* * *

Ragu and I were classmates. During the four short years of our stay in the College we became thick friends. Whether Art was long or not, time was definitely fleeting, I realised on

one day we parted after the B.A. Examinations.

Ragu did not attend my marriage. He had to be at Calcutta the same day for an interview with a firm. When he next met me, I was a husband as well as a father. He was so very jovial and free that even Rukmani, shy and reserved by nature, came out of her shell and joined in our company. He was very much pleased at the chubby little infant girl of ours. He caressed her so fondly as if she were his own.

Suddenly it occurred to me that he might unconsciously be answering the urge of fatherhood. I winked at my wife and she giggled though lightly.

I asked him when he proposed to marry. This brought out the wifeman in my wife and she started tossing a volley of questions. He smiled and said he had not thought of marriage yet.

* * *

Four more years rolled by and I had become a father of two more children, boys. For all these childbirths Rukmani still looked attractive and I had no complaint against life.

It was, I remember, a Sunday. Having got up late I was sipping my coffee over the newspaper. Rukmani was standing beside me. A car came and stopped in front of our house. My daughter ran in to announce the arrival of her dear uncle Ragu. Accom-

panied by my wife, I went to the door to welcome him.

Rukmani brought some drink for him and I asked the children to go out and play for some time.

Ragu stared at me for a while and exclaimed, "Boy! He is really a big family man now! I never knew you were capable of that". I turned to see Rukmani blushing.

Prompted by his joke, she asked, "What about you? Don't you feel like emulating your friend?" she added good-humouredly. Wicked girl!

I was taken aback by his reply. He was in love! I could not believe my ears. I had never had the occasion to know this side of him.

"Say, how did you manage?" I roared. Rukmani laughed at my naked curiosity.

For a few minutes he was silent. Then he said he was staying in a village near Madura for sometime to ascertain the prospects of opening a depot for the goods his company manufactured. One day, he added, he quite accidentally saw a simple and yet attractive girl by the river side.

"Plainly clad and modest, she is to me the ideal Indian woman", he remarked.

He understood she was a widow's only daughter and her name was Laxmi.

"The name truly becomes her. I can't imagine a comlier girl by this name" he said. "Not only that", he proceeded. "I can't also think of any other name to adequately describe her".

The girl's life hitherto had been, I understood, quiet, though her mother used to murmur at times that she did not know how she was going to wipe off the debt her late husband had incurred.

"Have you proposed to her already?" I enquired.

"Of course, not", he instantly replied. "How do you expect me to be hasty? I would like to allow things to take their course". But he said there was a tacit understanding between themselves.

* *

Three more years elapsed and I had not seen Ragu. I thought being a promising Sales organiser he was too pre-occupied to write to me. Occasionally I remembered him amid all the strain of office work. I was afraid I was going to forget him slowly. I wrote to him a letter and understood from his company that he had been transferred again to Calcutta six months back. I did not understand how he could have failed to see me on his way up.

* *

On receipt of his letter that morning I hoped he might be

seeing me in the near future. But the letter had somehow been hanging heavily on me. I do not believe in intuition in men. Nevertheless, I thought the letter must convey something serious. I could not attend to my work further. I felt my head slightly aching. I took leave for the afternoon and went to the Canteen.

I hurried through my lunch and opened the letter nervously and started reading. The world around me seemed to reel.

"Heavens have their own way", he had started. "My love had become an episode of the past. A few days back, I was surprised to get a letter from Laxmi; for that was her first one and I learnt it was going to be her last too, to me. You know that conservative old mother of hers never liked her daughter to write to me until we marry. Laxmi had been very obedient and she had written to me only after her mother's death". I dried my eyes and proceeded.

From then on he should have been feeling rather shaky in his hand and with some difficulty I made out the rest of the letter.

"Laxmi's mother died of no particular disease than that of old age. The girl did not know what to do. Some of her neighbours sent word to the widow's brother a merchant at Madura. He rushed in the evening and did what is to be done when one is dead. He ascertained from Laxmi what the widow's debts

were. He somehow cleared them and took her to his house.

"Laxmi was very grateful to her uncle for the generous help and protection he had offered her. But it was a shock for her when he talked to her of the marriage between her and his only son, a lame man. She did not know what to say. She wanted some time. She had to decide whether to marry this man and thus prove her gratitude to her uncle or.....or what else could she do?"

"She says she had been bounden by duty and not by heart. She has returned the ring I gave her, begging me leave to cherish my memory in her heart. This, she thinks, should be the best gift, I, her one-time lover, could give her."

Ragu had not blamed her. He had said, "I know she could do nothing else under the circumstances. She was an unsophisticated and timid girl and could not bring herself to tell her uncle about our love. I only curse the sadistic gods who intently arranged things in my life in this fashion wherein I was left with no choice of mine. I had taken some leave and had been planning to go to Madura to seek her hand in marriage."

Now that it was all over and there was no point in his going there, he wanted to meet me and my wife soon.

I did not know how I reached home. Rukmani was at once

surprised and greeted me with one of her wicked smiles.

"Mischievous man, I am in no mood for play now", she said teasingly.

Poor Girl! she had mistaken my sudden return for one of my contemplated amorous errands in the free afternoons. But on seeing me at closer quarters she realised I had received a blow somewhere somehow. She led me to a chair and turned on the fan. I was a little relieved at the touch of her exquisitely feminine hands. I handed over the letter to her and as she came to the end of it small pearls of tears rolled down her cheeks. But in no time she dried them with the end of her saree and became the composed woman, I had always known. Without a word she returned the letter to me and went to the kitchen. She came back after a few minutes with a cup of tea. I do not know whether the tea had its effect on me or not but Rukmani's unspoken affection and understanding relieved my pain considerably.

She brought out a paper and a pen and I started trying to console my friend. What else could I do? He must weep and pine in his heart till his passions subside, before I could do anything to him. Until then I have for him only some kind words which alone make this world sometimes worth living.

—o—

ARTICLE

PHOTOGRAPHY AND ITS USES

By N. Swaminathan

TO attempt to assess the importance of the part played by photography in the war would be as difficult as to catalogue its enormous number of applications. Its value as a vital factor in the war effort cannot be overestimated.

Without the practical applications of photography many activities in the air, land or sea would not be possible. The camera gives a fuller record of what is visible than the keenest sighted observer can supply. Its discoveries reach and are interpreted by the staffs concerned in a few hours, when weeks or months would be needed for the reports of agents to reach their destination. Great decisions depend on the work of the long range reconnaissance aircraft and the photography they obtain. This is after all one phase of photography's part in the war.

Still there are other phases equally vital, but not immediately associated with the fighting forces. They play a prominent role in war equipment, factories, to record in experimental and production stages the various munitions of war and more particularly for detecting faults by x-ray photography. The early detection by this means of interior and otherwise invisible flaws in metal for aeroplane construction has undoubtedly saved many valuable lives.

When a new water supply or drainage system is provided, the underground system is photographed detail by detail before it is flooded, for afterwards the photographs will be the only guide to remedy a fault.

In government departments it is used for preparation of progress photographs of construc-

tion, installation etc. Covering the work from the foundation to final stage of completion, these photographs serve as immediate guidance to workmen and as future reference in the event of any fault which may be found after completion.

To disseminate information on a subject that could be studied by a number of people simultaneously it is widely used. For example photographs are prepared and issued describing in pictures the training of men in gunnery, bomb-manning and blood-transfusion service etc.

The educational value of photography is limitless. In the shape of prints, lantern slides and cine films a wide variety of farming problems connected with crops, livestock and machinery are made easy of understanding.

"An outstanding application in the war has been the invention and development of the autograph system. This form of international communication is now firmly established throughout the world. An outstanding advantage over this form of communication is the possibility of repetition if the mails are lost, through enemy action or other causes. The entire shipment which is sent by air in the form of small rolls of film can be immediately reproduced from the originals at the point of origin and mailed over again.

In addition to the growths of airgraph system microfilm photography has been utilised in many other directions. This

making of miniature negative has with its accuracy and economy of storage space proved invaluable to banks, solicitors, libraries etc., for recording documents liable to destruction by causes known. The originals are photographed on to 35 or 16 m.m. cine film. The rolls of film can be stored in safety in a small space and the tiny negative enlarged back to full size as and when required for reference.

The microgram service, as it has become known is also employed to an enormous extent for the expeditious transmissions of official documents.

Miniature camera technique is also proving its extreme value in mass radiography. Many men and women in services and in factories are having miniature x-ray photographs taken of their chest structure to diagnose possible tuberculosis, which can be promptly dealt with. Special x-ray outfits have been evolved for dealing with this matter and by use of the miniature film 500 to 600 x-ray chest exposures can be made in a day.

In Navy, photography finds practical use in the special photographic unit which is devoted to the analysis of gunnery which is now bound up very considerably with photography. The camera is used to analyse every shot in practice and exercises and frequently in actual warfare to detect how much faults are due to human error and how much to other factors.

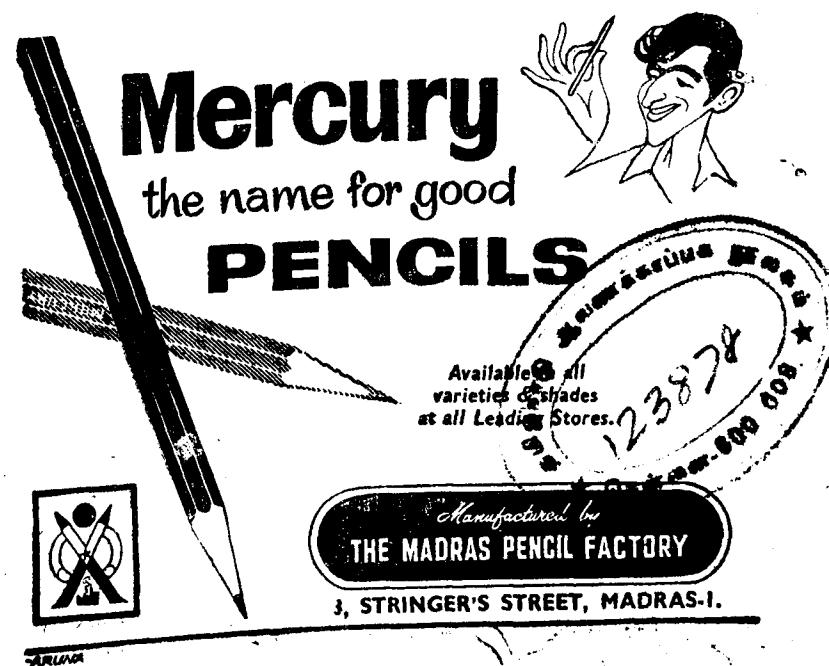
In Army much is devoted to propaganda. Photographs and

photographic informations are used very extensively for operational purposes and these have been supplied in nearly every case by Air Force who have secured their information on photographic — reconnaissance flights. All campaigns in different theatres of war are very adequately recorded in detail by photographers working frequently in front line. The Army photographers rank as technical sergeants and share the same risks as the fighting men.

Finally the enormously important achievements of the photographic reconnaissance units of Air Force, with the extension and intensifications of strategic bombing of enemy industrial objec-

tives, the value of the photographic work done by "Spitfires" and "Mosquitoes" is greater than ever before.

Most of the photographs are taken automatically at regular intervals during the reconnaissance flight, so that the pictures overlap and subsequently examined as stereoscopic pairs, which still further disclose enemy dispositions. On the pictures obtained by the photographic reconnaissance units practically every move of the three units depends. Photography has become the eye of the fighting forces and upon it will fall the considerable amount of the credit for the victory to come.



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INDIA MAGAZINE

101

THE LAST HOUR

Was it the knock of destiny for her?
The bird of love had already
flown out.....

BY MADAN MOHAN

"HOW can I bring myself to part with you, dearest?" asked Chandrika, caressing the cheek of her lover. "Can't you stay for another month at least?"

"It is already too late," replied Malik gently disengaging himself from her arms. "You see, dear, my father is a stubborn man and none of us will dare disobey him. He has wired that my marriage has been fixed and that my presence is urgently required. I am leaving for Delhi by the morning train."

She looked thoughtful and sad. She knew that he was telling her lies to escape from her spell. Her career as top film actress was at an end almost. She was now getting only minor roles. This young lover of hers over whom she was crazy was evidently tired of her. There was a time when he had

crushed her in his arms with fierce and ardent love. He had been one of her regular worshippers. She was past thirty then and he was barely twenty—studying in college.

He had seen her films and used to write to her letters gushing with sentiment and admiration. On the pretext of getting her autograph, he waited outside her house every evening and sent in a fine bouquet of roses as she arrived from the studios. She had seen from her car and was struck by his handsome face, curly head and large brown eyes. He was delicate and winsome like a prince. There was no doubt that he was of an aristocratic family.

She gave him an interview during which she was struck by his personality and engaging manners. When he met her next time

at her own invitation he declared his love for her in unmistakable terms. She pressed him to stay to supper and when she led him upstairs to her bedroom to show him her album of photos representing her progress in films from minor roles to stardom, he told her with wild enthusiasm how he had seen most of her pictures and even sang some of her songs. They went over a photo where she figured in a love scene—the hero pulling her towards him for a fond embrace. Malik and Chandrik raised their heads and looked at each other with the love light in their eyes. She brought her cheek close to his. That was a signal for his desire to flame up and he threw his arms round her neck. She pulled him down to the floor and locked him in an embrace.

That romance started three years ago. He boasted of his affair to his friends in the college and one or two jealous fellows secretly posted anonymous letters to his father who wondered why his son was failing in every examination. But to Chandrika never had love been more glorious then when she was in the arms of this young fellow.

Her own private life was full of tragedy though there were some years of happiness. Her school life was marked by gaiety and freedom from care. Her father loved her as his pet and her mother, too, was devoted to her. But she finished schooling; she wanted to pursue her studies in college. Her mother it was who opposed the continuation of her studies. The parents had

become old and so she must be married in good time. That was her view. They married her to a man named Vas who was earning three hundred rupees a month.

But Vas was a spendthrift though he loved his wife. He was recklessly extravagant and constantly running into debts which he couldn't pay. He had already sold away all his wife's jewels. When creditors began to harass him he left one early morning and threw himself on the railway track before a running train.

The young widow found herself stranded on the streets and was starving and helpless. Her parents had died and her only brother was working somewhere in a plantation in Borneo. Barua, an old man who had been her neighbour, befriended her. He engaged her to run his household (he had lost his wife long ago) and to teach his daughter.

Chandrika was grateful to Barua for extending his hand of friendship in distress and was ably keeping house for him. Once the old man sent his daughter to his sister's house which was in a distant village and Chandrika found herself alone. When he entered her bedroom in the night with a sheepish grin she knew she was trapped. She hissed at him and tried to run away but he forced her. He proved too strong for his age.

The next morning the old man expressed his penitence and apologized for the wrong done to her.

He said that the temptation and the impulse had been too strong for him and gave her a pledge never to come near her again. She wept and wept and left his house in the evening. With the help of an old actress she entered films as an "extra". Slowly she pushed her way up and her fortune and fame were steadily rising. She owned a big house, a car and two servants and she adopted a high style of living.

But love came her way in the person of Malik and she lost her head and neglected her work in studios. Moreover, it was a painful realisation that the years were creeping on her. Her body began to sag slightly. There were dark shadows under her eyes as she got up and she had great difficulty in hiding the strands of grey hair. Though she looked desirable still she knew that she was losing in the game. New faces in the screen made a greater appeal and only secondary roles (like an elder sister or a mature matron) were being assigned to her. Her fan mail which had been carried in bags everyday from the post office had virtually ceased. When she had lost her hold on the fans how could she retain her hold on that handsome Romeo, Malik?

This then was her last kiss, her last embrace and her final farewell. She knew it in her heart of hearts and was aware that he had had quite enough of her. It was not his fault, she admitted to herself, he was far younger than herself.

When he opened the door and bade good-bye she simply nodded her head, put on her clothes and shut herself up in the bath-room. She turned her mind on another problem—something that immediately affected her. Her income had dwindled but her debts were piling up to an incredible extent. How could she answer her creditors? How was she going to spend the evening of her life without anyone to love or look after her?

She finished her bath and changed her dress when she heard a knock at the door. She was sure it must be some insistent creditor out to make a scene. Only when the knock was repeated half a dozen times did she open the door. She was surprised to see two visitors—the old man had who once molested her and his daughter. He could hardly stand and his body was shaking and his daughter supported him. Chandrika didn't have the heart to shut the door on them. She asked them to come in and sit on the sofa. His daughter spoke for him: "Oh Chandrika, my father says that unless you forgive him a wrong done to you he can't die in peace. In compensation for that wrong, he wants to offer you here and now one third of his property which is considerable and I am to inherit the two thirds. I beg of you to accept his offer and let him die in peace."

Chandrika signified her assent with mingled feelings.

SHORT STORY

A SECRET TO SHARE

When she told her lover of her secret he was stunned and thoughtful. But he had something to share with her too.....

By L. R. Dhawan

SAVITA went along the bazaar, swinging her hips in a stylish manner. She was dressed in a blue sari and a red blouse and her hair was tied into a pony tail. A pair of fine gold rings hung from her ear-lobes. She looked grand and exquisite, full of vigour and youthfulness. A plastic handbag swung from her right hand and on her left was an attractive wrist-watch. Many men turned their heads to admire the new face.

Who was this glamour girl? She had come and settled in the city only six months ago. She had a most sophisticated appearance and even glamour girls in films could copy a point or two from her every time. Several men ran after her and even knocked at the door of her small residence in the suburb. She turned on them her most bewitching smile but gently shoved

them aside. "We shall meet some other time," she would say and quickly close the door behind her. Her mother, Shanta, heaved a heavy sigh of despair. "We want a Guruma watchman to keep out these callers, Savita," she would say. "Only we don't have the means to engage a man."

The daughter looked serious and thoughtful. "Which reminds me, mother, that we have only six hundred rupees left out of that two thousand. We may run short very soon."

"I am more deeply worried than you, my daughter," Shanta said. "It is time you had a heart-to-heart talk with Ramchand and indicate your consent if you are so inclined. I won't seek to influence you. I know where to draw the line even if I can exact your absolute

obedience. But it is wise to make up your mind one way or the other."

Savita embraced her mother fondly and said, "I know Mother is a darling and will make any sacrifice for her daughter. You see, I am going out now."

She was going through the bazaar to reach the central park where Ramchand would be waiting for her. Of the half dozen richest men in the city Ramchand was one, and he had fallen in love with her hopelessly. He had pots of money to waste. There had been some women in his life but he dropped them one after another. He thought that none of them had the qualifications to become his wife. He had a knack for getting away before there was any trouble from any dame.

He had been waiting for Savita impatiently for more than an hour in the park. He had met her in the same spot one evening five weeks ago and he was courting her since then. She knew a few facts about his wealth and extravagant ways. So she did not resent his attentions. She encouraged him but was elusive. He took her in his car to the beach every evening which was fifteen miles away. On the sands they sat for three to four hours chatting or watching the eternally restless waves.

As soon as he saw her coming towards him in the park, he unceremoniously hustled her and

led her towards the car standing a hundred yards off.

"Get in quick. There is something to tell you about," he urged her in a coaxing voice. But he did not talk to her until he reached the shore. He parked the car near a statue which was spouting water from its mouth and took her to a canteen where they ate bun and butter and ice-cream. Then they sought a secluded corner on the beach. She lay flat on her stomach and he was sitting very close, gazing at her ivory-white neck and lovely glossy head.

"Come on now, Ramchand," she said smiling. "What is on your mind?"

"I don't know how to put it to you, Savita," he said with a sad expression. "Things have been going wrong with me since I set my eyes on you. I am getting absent-minded and misplace files, letters and papers. I have not had a wink of sleep for several days. I have lost my appetite too."

"Then the best thing is to banish myself out of your sight," she retorted, laughing. "From tomorrow you won't be seeing me, I assure you."

She half rose to go but he detained her. "You are mistaking me, dear. I am saying all this to emphasise that I can't get on without you even for a moment."

"We are meeting daily, are we not?" she asked with a mocking expression.

"Stop tantalising me, honey, I beg of you. Have you talked to your mother about me and have you obtained her consent to my proposal? You said there is a secret to share with me. I promise you I won't change my opinion. There is nothing that will take away my love for you. I have already told you about my weakness for women and vices. I know and I feel that you alone can reform me."

She patted him on the arm. "Ramchand, I know you are devoted to me. But I don't think we can marry, and remain happy. I think it is but proper that you should know all about me. Supposing somebody else tells you the secret about me afterwards, serious misunderstanding will arise. I am not an innocent girl. Five years ago when my father and my only brother died of small-pox we had no means of livelihood. We were famished for food and the landlord had given us notice to quit."

"Next door there was one Kapur, an old man past fifty. He understood our plight, paid off our debts and asked the landlord to cancel his eviction notice. He asked me to assist him in his correspondence. He was secretary of an orphanage and was making a fat sum out of it. He persuaded me to stay late in the nights as he wanted to dictate urgent letters. I was quite an innocent girl then and was only giggling when I

thought he was playing with me. The devil had actually seduced me. I knew nothing about these matters and sort of liked what he was doing to me. My mother discovered the horrid truth when I was five months' pregnant.

"She is a very strong woman with a will of her own which nobody could resist. The next night when I was working in his room she came in armed with a dagger and asked the old man to answer for his crime against me. He had a wife and daughter in his village. He was terribly afraid of my mother's menacing attitude and after much argument agreed to pay me off at once with three thousand rupees by way of compensation. We went to another town where I was delivered of a female child which survived only for a month."

"That is the truth about me, Ramchand, and if you still care to marry me—an unwed mother—you are welcome."

Ramchand bent low and kissed her full on the mouth. "You see, Savita, I was born of an illicit union. My mother had a rich lover and since he had no issue he left me all his property. Shall we get married next week, darling?"

Their lips met again in a passionate kiss and they took a solemn oath.

SHORT STORY

By G. BHUPENDRAKUMAR

HIS BETRAYAL

She had a father who was selfish and a husband who was callous. And Destiny mocked at her.....

"YOU are sweet and charming, Kamini," he whispered as he kissed her tenderly on the cheek.

"Sekhar, you always want me to remain in your arms. Can love be a substitute food for the human body?"

He strained her in his arms again and only after another long fierce kiss did he release her.

She adjusted her sari and blouse properly, ran a comb through her hair, looked in the mirror to satisfy herself that everything was all right about her and slowly walked towards the kitchen.

She lighted a stove and placed a vessel of water over it. She sat on a stool and stretched her legs at ease. She heard him whistling a merry tune. From the room adjacent to the kitchen

she heard a snore in a low key. It was her mother who was sound asleep after so many restless nights. She was suffering from blood pressure and constant worry had only accentuated her trouble. Any other woman would have collapsed long ago under such an intolerable burden of worries. Her father had suddenly died one morning of a heart attack. He had been a broker earning a moderate income but he gave little to his wife for the maintenance of the family. He had been unfaithful to his wife and ran after women of loose character. He spent on them most of what he earned. What was worse, he borrowed heavily to win their favours. He dressed himself in the finest clothes and used scents of the highest and rarest quality.

Kamini's mother was a woman of angelic patience. She

was aware of her husband's wickedness and sin. In the early stages she remonstrated with him but he paid no heed to her. If she was insistent he would absent himself for several days from home. For the sake of peace and for the sake of Kamini's continued education the mother kept quiet. She received a monthly pittance from her elder brother and managed the household. It was her hope that Kamini would earn her livelihood after completing school.

Early one morning Kamini's father came in and slept for a while. Both mother and daughter were glad that he had returned home. He got up late and as he was cleaning his teeth with a brush he felt a pain in the chest and tottered back to bed. A doctor was sent for and he pronounced that life was extinct.

Kamini and her mother almost melted away in sorrow and tears over this tragedy. The latter was faced with the greatest crisis in her life. After consultations with her brother she sold up the house left to her husband, cleared off some outstanding debts and enabled Kamini to continue her education.

After two years she completed her studies and qualified herself as a stenographer. She got a job in a mercantile firm and was able to please her superiors. She got a salary of Rs. 130 and both herself and her mother were able to get on well on this sum.

She often met a young man on her way to office, who caught

her fancy. He was working as an insurance agent and looked very affluent. He always touched his hat whenever he met her. He introduced himself as Madan. He was suave in his talk and polished in his manners. Kamini who was usually shy and reserved with men responded generously, talking to him freely and going with him to restaurants and picture houses.

That was how she fell in love with him. She gave him the first kiss when there was a tumultuous love scene in a Hollywood film where a young woman meets her lover on a mountain side and clings to his neck.

Madan used to boast of other conquests. Instead of being angry, she was eager to be loved and petted by him. On the pretext of seeing his room, she surprised him late one night and surrendered to him.

But he was not very communicative about himself. She did not know much about his antecedents, his parents, their place of residence and all that. When she told her mother about him, the old woman was anxious to know about these particulars but he was evasive. It was plain, however that Kamini was head over heels in love with him and told her of her resolve to marry him. She wrung her consent to an immediate simple ceremony. Madan was eager but pleaded that none of his relatives could attend the marriage. He, however, promised to take Kamini to his own town beyond Delhi soon.

The wedding was a very simple affair lasting over just two hours in a temple with only two purohiths officiating. Madan moved his belongings to his bride's residence. There was a spell of heavenly happiness for them. He had told her that his monthly income touched a cool thousand and that there would be no necessity for her to work after the marriage. The first thing she did after her wedding was to send in her resignation as a typist. She wanted always to be in his arms and kiss him all over until the hunger in her heart was satisfied.

He went out early in the morning with his valise and came back late in the nights to find his wife all tremulous with excitement and looking forward to new thrills and pleasures. As time wore on he had a fishy look about him. After about five months he suddenly slipped out of her life and vanished without a word.

Kamini broke down in sorrow and distress. So was her mother when an intense search proved futile. They discovered that he was not working for any insurance company at all and that he was an adventurer. They broke open his trunk box and made another shocking discovery. There were some old letters which proved beyond doubt that he had already a wife and children and the wife implored him to send her money for main-

tenance. That was enough for Kamini. Her love changed into hatred. She had been betrayed and reduced to utter poverty and misery. She had no more desire to see him. She could not get back the job she had so thoughtlessly kicked off.

After an intense effort she secured an employment on a low salary in a drug store. But they were half-starved. Her mother had fallen ill, denying herself many things and worrying over her daughter's sad fate. She became worse and was bed-ridden. The poverty and wretchedness at home were beyond description.

It was during this period that she met Sekhar. He was a frequent visitor to the drug shop and got into talking terms with Kamini. He had lost his mother, wife and children in disastrous floods that inundated his village and had come to the city to forget his sorrow. Kamini's proprietor, too, knew all about his family and she used to listen to his accounts.

She invited Sekhar one day to her house to take tea and see her ailing mother. At one glance he understood her dire distress and poverty and helped them with his money of which he had plenty. He came every evening and talked. Though he was fifteen years older than herself, Kamini gave him her love and forgot her rascally husband.

ARTICLE

WORSHIP OF SASTA

A Unique Festival in Kerala

By A. S. Pai

THE annual worship of Sasta is considered to be the most delightful and unique among the festivals of Kerala. On the remote hills of Sabarimala in the erstwhile central Travancore is the famous pagoda confining in it the deity of Sasta or Ayyappan as he is popularly called. This pagoda, situated on an eminence of 2000 feet above the sea level, is not often easily accessible although the modern means of transport have started peeping into this region. The access to the gate of the pagoda on the East is led by a flight of steps. Therefore this temple is also known as 'Pathinettampati'. The pagoda is comparatively small in size and fully covered by fine copper plate.

During the famous Makaravilakku festival in the month of December there is an influx of votaries to Sabarimala from all parts of Kerala and the neighbouring states. The Malayalees, the Tamilians, the Andhras and the Kannadigas who assemble here in countless lots forget dis-

parity of region and languages. The rich and the underling, the capitalist and the proletariat, the landlord and the peasant—all forget their sectarian antagonism and differences for the moment. The path to Sabarimala takes a sinuous course through the thick deciduous forests and the taxing journey of the pilgrims often last for days. Yet their enthusiasm and fervour are not chilled by the ordeal of the journey.

The birth of Sasta is one of the most interesting romances of Hindu mythology. According to the Epic, the devas (Gods) and asuras (Demons) were churning Palazhi, the sea of milk, with a mountain serving as a mighty churn and a snake doing the part of a rope. By constant and vigorous agitation they got the sweet and pleasing ambrosia capable of conferring eternal youth and beauty on those who consume it. Unfortunately the demons were the recipients of ambrosia. The disappointed Devas lodged a complaint with Vishnu, the head of the trinity,

and urged him to recover the nectar from the demons before they consumed it and became immune to death. Vishnu, therefore, assumed the guise of a beautiful damsel and began enticing demons. Under the spell of her charms the demons requested her to distribute the ambrosia among them. Adept Vishnu asked them to shut their eyes and declared that she would marry whosoever opens his eyes last. No sooner did the lustful asuras close their eyes in a competitive spirit to win her over than the disguised Vishnu quietly made away with the nectar and gave it to Devas. Shiva, the third among the trinity was anxious to understand how Vishnu could hoodwink the asuras. With a view to allaying his curiosity Vishnu appeared in the guise of the charming girl for a second time. Shiva was so much attracted by her voluptuous beauty that he instantaneously fell head over ears in love with her quite oblivious of the truth that the girl before him was none other than his colleague Vishnu. Sasta was born of their embrace. He is, therefore, known as Hariharasuthan, the son of Hari (Vishnu) and Haran (Siva). The temporary couple left their offspring in the woods from where the childless Pandalam Raja picked and brought him up. Later on Sasta embarked on popularity by slaying the ferocious Mahishasura, the demon with buffalo's head. Sage Agastya is believed to have requested Sasta to remain at Sabarimala to shower his bless-

ings on the people and there he remains to this day.

The Makaravilakku festival falls generally in the second week of January. A votary who intends to participate in the festival has to observe stern discipline for 41 days from the middle of November. Following a solemn oath of fidelity, the devotee wears a necklace of beads, abstains from meat-eating and drink, refrains from sexual thoughts, grows beard and indulges in regular prayers. The outcome of such disciplinary and pious life is to acquire bodily and mental control so as to enable him to bear the tedium of the journey with greater ease.

By the beginning of the second week of January, votaries make preparations for the pilgrimage. They, at the very outset, tie up a head load consisting of two sections. In one of them are stored the offerings to Sasta and in the other, materials such as rice, vegetables, pickles and coconut required for their own consumption. An important item among the offering is a sizeable coconut filled completely with ghee. The votaries invariably carry with them woollen rugs and blankets to shield their bodies against the piercing winter.

The majority of the pilgrims choose to go in small groups led by the most senior man called 'periasamy.' Seniority is reckoned by the largest number of trips he has made to Sabarimala. The subordinates have to obey

the instructions of 'periasamy' scrupulously and they should not resort to abusive or unpolished language. It is with such commendable code of behaviour that the Ayyapans (votaries) march towards Sabarimala.

At an intermediate station called Erumeli, the enthusiastic Ayyapans celebrate an interesting function which is emblematical of Sasta's hunting expedition to kill Mahishasura. Each group blacken their faces and bodies and carry over their shoulders a long bamboo stick on which is slung a blanket containing currysutts and bananas. Some of them carry bows and arrows and some others equip themselves with branches of trees. Then to the vigorous and stentorian orchestra of drums, trumpets and cymbals the Ayyapans begin to dance uttering hymns in praise of Sasta. The procession gradually moves to the Erumeli temple where it terminates. They camp at the temple during the night and continue the journey the next day.

Votaries leaving Erumeli have to pass through a number of odd places like Peruthode, where they offer fried rice and molasses to the rocks on the bed of the stream, Azhutha, where the government transport system terminates, Mukkuzhikkal, where the evergreen canopy of thick forests begin, Matakuthavalam, which is a resting place and temporary shopping centre, the soothing banks of Puthusseriyar and the panoramic valley of

of Karimala. When the never ending cavalcade of devotees reach the picturesque littoral region of Pampanadi (river Pampa) they set up temporary huts thatched with green leaves and branches of the wood. It is surprisingly pleasurable to observe the miraculous transformation of this regular arena of wild elephants into an extensive township with lakhs of men, thousands of queer looking dwellings, of retail shops busy catering to the needs of the votaries and the medical stalls to provide first aids.

The Pamban Vilakku (illumination) in honour of Sasta constitutes one of the most alluring and rare scenes at night. The devotees set afloat on the waters of the Pampa, myriads of tiny domes over which are lit pieces of camphor. Some ingenious and craft minded people manipulate small chariot-like structures of bamboo, decorate them fully with lit domes and then float them on the surface of the river. The venerable Pampa flowing continuously filled with the melody of natural music is further glorified by millions of such twinkling luminaries.

The devotees then proceed to their final destination, Sabarimala, after enjoying a sumptuous feast. Before ascending the 18 stairs they break the ghee coconut brought by them as an offering to Sasta. Ornaments for the deity arrive at night from the Pandala palace where they are kept for safe custody.

Short Story

MAIDEN'S DESIGNS

By Padma Rajan

She was too clever for him and he saw through her sinister designs when it was too late.....

"SEETA dearest, I cannot help loving you even though you have betrayed me and done me the most grievous wrong. During all these five years we were supremely happy in each other's arms. At any rate, that was the most exquisite time of my life. I don't know how you felt. When you said that you could not live without me I was a fool to believe you.

"I shall narrate here the circumstances of our association from the beginning. When I came to your house as a lodger your mother, yourself and your two little sisters, Para and Swarna, were treating me with much affection and solicitude. You all called me Dilip and made much fuss over me.

"I too reciprocated those feelings of cordiality and warmth. My job was new but I did not

feel very lonely in the city because your lively presence did a lot to cheer me up and drive away my clouds of gloom.

"My salary was not much but I was careful in spending. A pretty girl-Tulsi-was waiting for me in my village. I had told her mother that I would bring five thousand rupees even if it took years, and would marry her daughter at any cost. She was poor and Tulsi was her only child and she wanted to see her married to the right type of man who could be relied upon in rough wind and fine weather. She made me swear before her family deity that I would keep my word and marry Tulsi as early as possible. She allowed me to take a photo of Tulsi and blessed me before starting for the city.

"I came to the city with a feeling of exaltation and a sacred task to fulfil. Every evening

after finishing my work in the office I did part-time work in a watch-dealer's shop as a typist. After attending to the correspondence there, I would take a frugal meal in the hotel and come to your house.

"I admit you were all most considerate about my health. The upstairs room which I was occupying was breezy and comfortable. There would be loud noise downstairs and I knew there were even quarrels among you but you would stop all that and welcome me as I entered.

"Slowly, bit by bit, I understood the nature of your family and position. There was not much food in the house to go round. The tenant downstairs was paying you Rs. 35 and I was paying you Rs. 25 for the single room upstairs. With sixty rupees your mother had to feed herself and the three daughters. In these days with prices soaring up to dizzy heights a householder has to do tight rope dancing. I knew your mother was in difficulties. So whenever she wanted small loans I was ready to accommodate and would refuse to take back that money.

"Once as I went up to my room late, it was dark. I thought someone was exploring the pockets of my coat which I had left behind that day as it was very warm. The next moment you threw your arms round my neck, pressed your moist rosy lips against mine. You whispered to me not to speak loud, and

made me understand that you were hiding in my room after a quarrel with your mother who was thinking that you had gone out to some friend's house in a huff.

"As I felt your soft breasts pressing against my chest I shivered in happiness. Here was the love-god aiming his flowery arrows of love at me, and I succumbed to temptation then and there. You spent half the night in my bed-in my arms-and I forgot my promise to Tulsi's mother.

"From that time on you stole into my room every night and I had a suspicion that you did it all with your mother's full consent and approval. Naturally you all began to look upon me as the head of the family. Anticipating your needs I gave you three-fourths of my salary and put the balance in the bank.

"Thus it was a mad whirl of pleasure for us. You revelled as much in my kisses as I did in yours. Only your mother pretended there was nothing happening between you and me. She was always harping on the early necessity of marrying you to some decent fellow.

"Every night as you crept into my bed in the dark and nestled close to me you gave me solemn assurances that you would always be mine whatever happened. Then I told you with innumerable sighs about my helpless position-how I had given my word that I would marry

DOWN THE SLIPPERY PATH

By J. R. Dwarakanath

She had a tale of sorrow to tell and the visitor squeezed her hand in sympathy.....

Tulsi and nobody else. You coaxed out of me all the details about my undertaking and the news about my savings for the purpose.

When I finished my narrative you broke out of my arms and looked very annoyed. After much argument and persuasion you slipped into my arms again but exacted a promise from me that I would never write to Tulsi's mother so long as I was with you.

"From that day you were domineering and assertive. You would now and then check the contents of my purse and scrutinise my items of expenditure. You would take out the photo of Tulsi and direct at it your undisguised looks of hate and jealousy."

"Only after six months had gone I realised the sinister nature of your designs. When I went to office one morning the boss sent for me. In his room was seated a visitor whom I knew to be a very old and respectable resident of my village. His name was Moti Babu. The boss asked me to listen to him. I was shocked at the news he brought and the accusations implied in what he said. He said a girl named Seeta had written to Tulsi's mother that she was betrothed to me and that she might as well look elsewhere for an eligible bachelor for the hand of her daughter. She also informed that Hari (myself)

would not be writing to her at all. The mother and daughter were shocked and heart-broken, and committed suicide by hanging on the same night.

"The whole village was gushing with anger at me over this outrage. You see, my boss having connections with a family there dismissed me on the spot. Gone was my mainstay. He told me that it would be a sin to keep in his office such an unprincipled rogue as myself. I was stung with a sense of shame.

"I was unemployed. So I wanted to go to my room and ensure the safety of Rs. 4500 which I had saved all these five years. Only the previous week I had withdrawn this sum from the bank and had quietly planned to go to the village in fulfilment of my promise.

"When I went to my room I was shocked to discover that my little box containing my hard-won savings had disappeared. When I tackled you about it yourself and your mother denied having seen it. You stormed and threw my things out. You knew that I was unemployed—a broken reed. I did not go to the police for fear that the unsavoury details of our affair would come to light.

"Tonight I am going to join my dear Tulsi and in the land of shadows I shall meet Tulsi's mother and apologise to her for my errors. Good-bye—Hari."

"It is only three o'clock and the cold seems to freeze my very blood," said Prasad, consulting his wrist watch in the flare of a match stick. In that tiny flame, the face of a beautiful woman scantily dressed was illumined. She might be twenty-five. Her eyes were large and sparkling, her mouth was small with rosy red lips and she had an attractively ample bosom. She was lying in the lap of the man who was on the wrong side of forty. "Don't go now," she coaxed him. "At five o'clock if you stand outside this house taxis will go by. You can hire one and go home. If you pay five rupees more to the old woman Mantha who is in charge of us, she will be satisfied."

"That is a sensible suggestion," he said, preparing to

stretch himself on the bed with one arm round her neck. "Somehow I don't get sleep. When I go home it will be far worse. My wife is a paralytic patient. The left side of her body is useless and lifeless. She had a stroke ten years ago. I have engaged an old retired nurse to attend on her. My two daughters also minister to her needs. But my wife is always shouting and moaning in pain. What is to be done?"

"Oh poor man!" she said, stroking his cheek with her fingers. "You must have suffered a good deal. That is fate and nobody can avoid it. What did you do whenever you needed a companion, and you are such a full-blooded man?"

"Twice or thrice a week I would surreptitiously visit such

houses as this. But always I returned home with a feeling of guilt as if I had done some grievous wrong to my wife. I was pretty well disgusted with myself and the women I had slept with. There is nothing compared to the happiness of a life with one's wife."

She sighed audibly and moved away from him. "Yes, men have only contempt for us. When they first approach us they praise us to the skies. Some of them who are very rich make glittering propositions. 'Am I prepared to run away with him? He will provide me with a grand bungalow and place a car at my disposal. The only condition is that I must be his mistress for ever. Five hundred rupees or even more a month will go into the bank to my credit. What more do I want?' I just shrug my shoulders and say to him, 'I shall consider this proposition in about ten days and let you know.' That man would usually vanish after a week. I guess he has gone in search of fresh pastures. I don't believe in the professions of these men. They have a cheap gibe that women are fickle-minded. But in my experience it is the men who change their minds like weather-cocks."

"You are an admirable woman, Pushpa—an exception to the rule. Most of the women I have met were pretty like dolls but they were stupid and vulgar with coarse voices. I have had nothing but contempt for them. They had an eye only on my

purse and always asked for extra cash to be paid without the knowledge of their owner or master.

"But you are so different, Pushpa. I am not in the least exaggerating. There is about you some subtle attraction which irresistibly draws me here every night for a whole month. You have some culture and polish that I see in every word and gesture." He kissed her moist lips and went on. "I am very eager to know your story. Won't you tell something about yourself?"

She spoke after a long pause. "Prasad, I appreciate your fine compliments and for the first time I am going to break my rule and take you into my confidence. I feel and know that you will never give away my secrets.

"My days of childhood and adolescence were full of the sunshine of happiness. My father was a very rich landlord and my mother was doting on me as I was her youngest of three daughters. I had two brothers besides and we were a well-knit happy family. I was put to school where I shone very well with distinction.

"When I was nineteen and out of school my father passed away. He left us insolvent. His landed property was saddled with debts and the creditors laid claims to them. We were forced to struggle for necessities. My brothers earned low wages as clerks and he had to be fed. It was lucky

that my elder sisters were married before father's death and my brothers-in-law gave us some help.

With one of my sisters I went to her husband's house to be of some assistance to her. My brother-in-law had also promised my mother that he would secure a job for me. My mother went to live with my brothers in a small portion of a house. Thus the family was broken up and I was sad at the turn of events.

"My brother-in-law had a brother Gokul who was studying for law. They were rich people with high traditions. My brother-in-law's mother looked down upon us as being inferior to her family in status and expected that we must be ever grateful to them for the alliance made. My sister Pratiba was terribly afraid of her mother-in-law and though she was very fond of me she would not talk to me boldly in her presence.

"Things would have gone on very well if something had not happened to me. This Gokul and I fell in love. He was all appreciative of my figure and would not bat an eyelid whenever he saw me. He would whisper to me when there were people in the next room. I slept in a room adjacent to his own and he would come on tiptoe there and thrust money into my hands and urge me to send it in a cover to my mother and brothers. Thus he touched my heart in the softest

spot. After some time he got very bold and embraced me in my bed and kissed me all over. At first I silently resisted but he was so very handsome and the delirium of delight made me intoxicated and together we plunged into the vortex. Every night it was sheer delight to nestle in his arms and enjoy uninhibited love.

"But every thing has its own end. In less than four months of this clandestine affair I became pregnant. Gokul's mother was the first to detect my condition and ordered me out of that house. My sister put in a gentle plea that Gokul and myself could be married but neither her husband nor her mother-in-law paid any attention. They denounced me and sent me out.

"When I went to my brother's house they were most indignant and felt outraged. They thought their future would be in jeopardy with a sister who would become an unwed mother. They asked me to get out. My mother alone wept but she was helpless.

"I wandered through this city which I reached after a long journey, determined to commit suicide. It was this Mantha, owner of this house of ill-fame, who saw me, and took me here. I gave birth to a still-born baby. You know, what I am now."

Prasad said nothing but he squeezed her hand in sympathy.



NATURE'S CURE!

By B. BHASKARA RAO

Before old men marry again they must pause and think of the consequences. Otherwise incidents may happen as in the case of Sundari...

PROPRIETOR Prakash married Sundari a year ago. Sundari is the second wife of Prakash who is now aged 50. Sundari is a very beautiful young woman and she has got everything and a bungalow but she is not happy.

Prakash is the proprietor of a company dealing in the business of all machinery and Prakash improved his business by his own efforts and earned profits.

It is 7 O'Clock in the night. Prakash returned in his car to his bungalow from the office. "Sundari....." Prakash entered into the bedroom with a packet in his hand.

Sundari is in the sofa reading a novel.

"Sundari! Can you tell what is in the packet?" Prakash asked Sundari and sat in the sofa.

"How can I tell?" Sundari said without caring for the packet.

"No.. You can..... I want you to know."

"I have just told you that I do not know what the packet contains. Why do you worry me, Prakash?" Sundari replied bluntly.

"I know, Sundari... I know you do not want me to be married with you. Even a beggar is better than me." Prakash threw away the packet on the table and left the room.

Sundari stood and without knowing what to do threw herself into the cot and began to weep.

After a while Prakash again came into the room and found Sundari weeping. His heart melted away. Prakash sat near

Sundari and gently touched her cheeks to console her.

"Sorry, Sundari. I hurt you unnecessarily; you know since how long you are unkind towards me though I have not done any harm. I do admit that I am aged, but I thought that you would gradually love me as a dutiful wife. All my expectations are proved to be otherwise. All right... I don't mind all that. But I beg you, Sundari. Past is past. Please try to love me as a housewife. I want you to be cheerful always..."

Prakash took Sundari in his arms, but Sundari half-heartedly obeyed his will.

After a week Sundari had slight fever, but she did not tell this to Prakash. Two days passed. Prakash himself noticed that Sundari had fever and he requested Doctor Manohar to attend on his wife.

Doctor Manohar examined Sundari and when anxiously questioned by Prakash, Doctor Manohar said... "She requires complete rest. The complaint is due to mental worry."

When the doctor was getting into his car, Prakash in a pitiable voice asked him.

"Kindly tell me Doctor whether my wife will recover from sickness or not."

"You need not worry. She will recover within a fortnight," Dr. Manohar said starting his car...

Sundari began to recover from her sickness after 10 days.

Dr. Manohar took special care of her and prescribed all the latest and costly medicines.

Sundari felt a sort of pleasantness at the sight of the young Doctor Manohar. Manohar is a tall, charming personality. Sundari used to think "How lovely is Doctor Manohar."

Doctor Manohar came in his car to visit Sundari. She was in her bedroom. Dr. Manohar asked—

"How are you feeling, Sundari?"

"Not too bad Doctor—" replied Sundari smilingly.

She sat in the sofa and the Doctor examined her looking into her face.

Doctor Manohar did not previously notice the beauty of Sundari since he was treating her as a patient. He could now think how lovely she was. When he touched her arm to examine her he felt a shock. He noticed that she was feeling shyness.

"I am sorry, Sundari. I am not in a good mood now" Manohar suddenly turned his face.

"Don't mind, Manohar. I am very grateful to you I have recovered from my sickness under your able treatment."

Sundari stood and replied smilingly.

"Thanks, Sundari".

Doctor Manohar proceeded to his car.

After the Doctor left, Prakash came and informed Sundari that

he was going to Bombay to finalise a business contract and that he would return within five days. He also told her that there was improvement in her health and felt glad.

The other day Prakash left for Bombay. Sundari is alone with the servant maid in the bungalow. She spent the day as usual and that evening she did not feel ill.

Sundari longed for the presence of Doctor Manohar.

As usual Dr. Manohar came in his car and Sundari invited him to her room.

"How is it, Sundari? Are you feeling well?"

Doctor Manohar enquired sitting in the sofa.

Sundari also sat by the side of Dr. Manohar. She looked like an angel.

"Tell me, Sundari. I find you are all right".

Dr. Manohar pressed for her reply.

"It is Nature's Cure, Doctor... To tell the fact your presence gives me delight. I am infatuated....."

Sundari pretended shyness.

Dr. Manohar became terribly excited in joy. He could not control his passion and he took her in his arms without waiting any longer.....

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B. Venkatavaradan,
Publisher.

Astrological Forecasts for March 1961

PLANETS AND YOUR FORTUNE

The following predictions are based on the movement of the Nine Planets in the 12 Rasis according to Gochara as also that of Uranus, Neptune and Pluto which are upagrahas. The positions of the planets from Janma Rasi (Moon's Place) are taken into account in forecasting the effects. Those running a favourable Dasa or Bhukthi will experience the evil effects in a lesser degree and those running malefic Dasa or Bhukthi will experience the evil effects in a greater measure.

By T. V. RAMAN

Planetary transits during the month: Venus transits to Mesh on 2-3-'61. Mars continues its stay in Mithuna. Rahu, Pluto and Uranus transit within the sign Simha. Neptune stays in Thula. Jupiter and Saturn are in Makara. Kanya and Mercury continue their stay in Kumba. Sun stays both in Kumba and in Meena rasis during the month.

MESHA

(Aswini 4, Bharani 4, Kirthigai 1.)

Mars, Lord of the Lagna, is in 3rd hidden house. Hence take care of your health. Neptune in the 7th house will keep you dignified and prosperous. Jupiter though in 10th house attains "Neecha Bhanga Raja Yoga" which will result in distinct improvement in your job or business. Saturn in the 19th in a movable sign incites changes in your official career. The lot of students is quite enviable. The period is propitious for speculative activities. Persons engaged in politics, social ser-

vice and cultural activities will come across opportunities for display of talents and will be suitably rewarded.

Lucky days: 3rd, 12th and 17th.

Household women should restrict diet and try to obtain more rest. The family finances will be good. Women in jobs will have lucrative period and desired change. Period is excellent for women engaged in politics, social service and cultural activities.

Lucky days: 7th, 15th and 24th.

VRISCHIKA

(Krihigai 3, Rohini 4, Mrigasirsha 2)

Venus, Lord of the Lagna, is hidden in the 12th house. Hence take great care about your health. The position of Rahu, Pluto and Uranus too is bad in as much as they will cause irksomeness at home. The position of Jupiter and Saturn in the 9th house will keep you extremely lucky and prosperous. The conjunction of Kethu, Mercury and Sun in 10th house will cause minor disappointments in your profession or business but will wither away after the middle of the month. Persons in employment should be tactful. Business men and speculators will make headway. Persons engaged in politics, social service and cultural activities will find the period extremely lucky.

Lucky Days : 8th, 16th and 24th

Household women will have to surmount obstacles and handicaps in household affairs. Women in jobs will have good time. Period is lucrative for those engaged in politics, social, service and cultural activities.

Lucky days : 12th, 17th and 23rd.

MITHUNA

(Mrigasirsha 2, Arudra 4, Punarvasu 3)

Mercury, Lord of the Lagna, though in 9th house, is afflicted with Kethu. Further Mars occupies Janma. Hence take care of abdominal and chest ailments. Neptune in the 5th house will keep you prosperous and dignified. The position of Jupiter and

Saturn in the 5th house is no doubt adverse but the evil effects are minimised since Saturn occupies own house and Jupiter attains "Neecha Bhanga Raja Yoga." Those in jobs will have to put up with blame and overwork. Business men will have to resist handicaps and impediments. The month is not good for all others.

Lucky Days : 14th, 19th and 27th.

Household women should take special care about their health. Students will have to remain meek and humble. Those in jobs will have somewhat testing period. Persons engaged in politics, social service and cultural activities will have to wait for eventful period.

Lucky Days : 13th, 18th and 24.

KATAKA

(Punarvasu 1, Pushya 4, Aslesha 4)

The Janma rasi is hemmed between malefics. Hence special care has to be taken about your health. The presence of Rahu, Uranus and Pluto in the 2nd house is likely to cause unpleasantness at home and setback in finances. The latter part of the month will be much better than the former part due to the position of Sun in the 9th house. Venus in the 10th house will keep you well in your office or business. The progress of students will be retarded. Those engaged in politics, social service and cultural activities will have to face enmity and opposition.

Lucky Days : 3rd, 14th and 25th.

Household women should take care about their health. Those studying will have to face handicaps and impediments. Women in jobs will pull through. Those engaged in politics, social service and cultural activities will have to resist opposition and enmity.

Lucky Days : 6th, 16th and 24th.

SIMHA

(Makara 4, Pooram 4, Uthira 1)

The presence of Rahu, Uranus and Pluto in Janma is not desirable on point of health. The presence of Saturn and Jupiter in the 6th house will help in the liquidation of your debts, disappearance of your enemies and financial gains. The position of Venus in the 9th house will keep you lucky despite other evil factors. Mars in the 11th house indicates financial gains. Those in jobs or in business will manage well. Persons engaged in politics, social service and cultural activities will be held to blame.

Lucky Days : 8th, 16th and 27th.

The month is not good for household women. The progress of students will be somewhat affected. Those in jobs will have to put up with overwork and exertion. Those engaged in politics, social service and cultural activities will have to remain calm and composed.

Lucky Days : 5th, 6th and 24th.

KANYA

(Uthira 3, Hastha 4, Chitra 2)

Mercury, Lord of the Lagna is hidden in the 6th house and is afflicted with Kethu. Hence risks through stale food or venomous bites may be possible. Neptune in the 2nd house will keep you well in office or business. The progress of students will be affected. Those in jobs will have to face minor botherations and handicaps. Persons engaged in politics, social service and cultural activities will have the desired openings and will come to limelight.

Lucky Days : 8th, 14th and 27th.

Household women will have to take special care of their health, also child's health. The progress of students will be affected. Those in jobs will, however, manage well. Women engaged in politics, social service and cultural activities will have to wait for some time.

Lucky Days : 7th, 19th and 29th.

THULA

(Chitra 2, Swathi 4, Visaka 3.)

Venus, Lord of the Lagna, is in 7th Kendra. Hence your health will be splendid. Jupiter and Saturn in 4th house will cause minor confusion in household affairs. Venus in the 7th house can be counted upon for luck. Mars in the 9th house will keep you prosperous. The presence of Rahu-Pluto-Uranus in 11th house will result in financial gains. Those in jobs or in business will have good period. Per-

service and cultural activities will come to prominence.

Lucky Days: 12th, 18th and 23rd.

Household women will find difficulties in the management of household affairs. Those studying will make good progress. Women in jobs will have fine period. Those engaged in politics, social service and cultural activities will earn name and fame.

Lucky Days: 1st, 15th, and 21st.

VRISCHIKA

(Visaka 1, Anuradha 4, Jyeshtha 4.)

Mars, Lord of the Lagna, is hidden in the 8th house. Hence rest, diet and obtain more rest and amenities. The conjunction of Sun, Ketu and Mercury in the 4th house will cause unpleasantness in household affairs. The position of Rahu, Uranus and Pluto in the 10th house will keep you well in office or business. The period is adverse for those engaged in politics, social service and cultural activities.

Lucky Days: 4th, 13th and 21st.

The month is not good for household women. Progress of the students will be retarded. Those in jobs will have to reconcile with overwork and other handicaps. Women engaged in politics, social service and cultural activities, will be put to blame and hard work.

Lucky Days: 7th, 16th and 29th.

DHANUS

(Moola 4, Poorada 4, Utharada 1)

Jupiter, Lord of the Lagna, though in 2nd house, is debilitated. Beware of eye complaints. The presence of Jupiter and Saturn in the 2nd house will keep your finances good. Venus in the 5th house will keep you dignified. A journey is probable. Neptune in the 11th house indicates gains. Those in jobs will have somewhat trying period. Persons engaged in politics, social and cultural activities will have to resist handicaps and impediments.

Lucky Days: 9th, 17th and 26th.

Women in jobs will have to resist opposition and enmity with calmness and fortitude. The month is adverse for women engaged in politics, cultural activities and social service.

Lucky Days: 4th, 13th and 21st

MAKARA

(Utharada 3, Sravana 4, Dhanishta 2)

The presence of Saturn in Janma and debilitated Jupiter will result in abdominal and other complaints. The conjunction of Sun, Mercury and Ketu is not conducive to good finances. Venus in the 4th house will keep you happy despite Mars in the 6th house. The progress of students will be somewhat affected. Those in jobs will be overburdened with work. The lot of business men is not good and hence they

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should confine to routine programmes. The period is adverse for those engaged in politics, social service and cultural activities.

Lucky Days: 5th, 13th and 26th.

Household women should take care of their health. The lot of the students is not good. The period is adverse for women in jobs. Women, engaged in politics, social service and cultural activities, will have to lay low for the time being.

Lucky Days: 9th, 17th and 23rd.

KUMBHA

(Dhanishta 2, Sathabhishta 4, Poorattadhi)

The presence of Sun, Kethu and Mercury in Janma is not so conducive to good health. Venus, Lord of luck, is hidden in 3rd house, which is not bright. Neptune in the 9th house will keep you lucky in spite of other adverse effects. The period is not good for students. Business men and speculators may meet with financial loss. Those engaged in politics, social service and cultural activities will be held to blame.

Lucky Days: 9th, 16th and 24th.

The month is not good for household women. Take care of your health, child's health as also that of your partner. Students should

lie low for the time being. Those in jobs will have to face reverses. Period is not propitious for women in politics, social service and cultural activities.

Lucky Days: 7th, 16th and 21st.

MEENA

(Poorattadhi 1, Uthirattadhi 4, Revathi 4)

Jupiter, Lord of the Lagna, is placed in 11th house but in the debilitated sign. Hence guard your health. Venus in the 2nd house will keep your finances well. Mars in the 4th house will result in unpleasantness at home and risks through accidents. Jupiter and Saturn in the 11th house indicate financial gains. The conjunction of Kethu, Mercury and Sun in the 12th house will result in wasteful expenditure. Those studying will manage well. Persons in employment will have lucrative period. Business men and others in speculative activities will have financial gains. The period is excellent for those engaged in politics, social service and cultural activities.

Lucky days: 6th, 12th and 19th.

Household women should take special care about health. Students will make headway. The month is excellent for women engaged in politics, social service and cultural activities. Those in jobs will thrive remarkably.

Lucky days: 7th, 11th and 26th.



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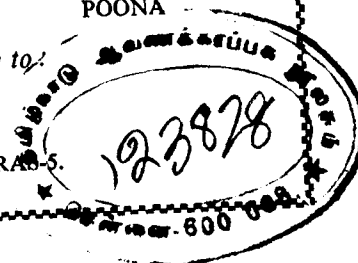
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