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KRISHNA KANTA'S WILL



(37)

ANNA KANTA'S WILL

BY

KIM CHANDRA CHATTERJEE

AUTHOR OF "THE POISON TREE"

EDITED BY MIRIAM S. KNIGHT, WITH
INTRODUCTION, GLOSSARY AND NOTES BY
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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.



presenting to the English public another of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's tales, I have gladly to express a hope that the spirit of the original has been preserved.

My most grateful acknowledgments are due to Mr. Blumhardt for his very able sketch of the author's life and literary works, well as for his generous assistance in revising my translation, and in supplying a glossary and Notes which remove all obscurity from the text.

M. S. KNIGHT.

INTRODUCTION.



NKIM CHANDRA CHATTERJEE was unquestionably the greatest novelist that India has ever produced. No other writer has done so much to improve the style, and to raise the tone of Bengali literature. His severe criticisms on the worthless and ephemeral productions of so many of his fellow-countrymen, his fearless exposure of the faults and shortcomings of Hindu social life, and of the evils arising from a corrupt and superstitious form of Hindu religion, have brought about a complete revolution in the history of Bengali literature.

He was himself a vigorous author. His works display a wonderful power of description, and delineation of human life and character, which render them so deeply interesting and instructive, more especially to those who have had personal experience of everyday life amongst natives of Bengal. His earlier productions, commencing with "Durgesanandini" in 1865, were novels,

historical and social. Three of these novels have already been translated into English—viz., “Durgesanandini,” by Charu Chand Mookerjee (Calcutta, 1880), “Bish-brikhya” or, “Poison Tree,” by Mrs. M. S. Knight the translator of the present work (London, 1884), and “Kopal-kundala,” by H. A. I. Phillips (London, 1885). This last has also been translated into German by C. Klemm (Leipzig, 1886).

As a proof of the high estimation in which his works are held by natives of India also, it may be noticed that two of his novels have already been translated into Hindustani, and one into Hindi.

Towards the close of his life Bankim Chandra appeared as an advocate of a reformed system of Hindu religion, and a teacher of the sublime philosophy of the Bhagavadgîtâ. His “Krishna-charitra,” or Life of Krishna, which was first published in 1886, is by many considered to be his finest work. In it he represents the Hindu deity as the model of a perfect nature, and points out the gradual introduction into the great epic poem of the Mahâbhârata of the many popular superstitions, and degrading

counts of the life and character of Krishna, which are so entirely at variance with the ordinary conceptions of that deity, as contained in the more ancient Hindu sacred writings.

Bankim Chandra was also an able exponent of literary, intellectual and scientific research. He regards himself a perfect master of the English language, as well as of Sanskrit. He had studied the scientific works of modern times, and endeavoured to make them popular amongst his fellow-countrymen by the medium of a monthly periodical, entitled "Bangadarshan," which appeared in 1872, and, under his able editorship, has proved to be one of the best conducted and most successful of Bengali magazines. He has also written a book of poems, called "Kavitâ-rerakâsh" (Calcutta, 1878), exquisite in style, of remarkable originality, and abounding in poetic imagery.

Little is known of Bankim Chandra's private life, as his biography has not yet appeared. He was one of four sons of Jâdab Chandra Chatterjee, was educated at the Hughli College, studied law at the Presidency College at Calcutta, and was one of the first graduates of the Calcutta Univer-

sity. He held an appointment under Government as a Deputy Magistrate and Collector, and obtained the title of Ray Bahadur, and the distinction of the Order of a Companion of the Indian Empire. This talented author, whose varied works are familiar to every student of Bengali literature, died in May, 1894, at the age of 57.

It is needless to say anything of the story of "Krishna Kanta's Will." The carefully prepared and literal translation of this novel, for which we are indebted to the pen of the translator of the author's "Poison Tree" alluded to above, will tell its own tale.

This translation is from the latest edition of the work, published in 1892.

The story is written with much dramatic force, tragic indeed, but enlivened by passages of humorous description. The moral lesson intended to be conveyed is obvious—in fact, the chief aim of the author in all his works appears to have been to promote the amelioration of Hindu society, and to teach the vital importance of a reliance on religious principles in the affairs of life.

J. F. BLUMHARDT.

OXFORD, *February*, 1895.

KRISHNA KANTA'S WILL.



PART I.

CHAPTER I.

IN the village of Haridrâ dwelt a great *Zemindâr*. His name was Krishna Kanta Râi, and he was a very wealthy man. The profit from his *Zemindâri* amounted to nearly two lakhs of rupees. This wealth had been accumulated by himself and by his brother, Râm Kânta Râi, working together. The brothers were warmly attached, and at no time had it entered into the mind of either that the other could deceive him. The estates had all been bought in the name of the elder brother, Krishna Kanta Râi. The brothers messed together. Râm Kânta Râi

had one son named Gobind Lâl. After the birth of this son it came into Râm Kânta's mind that the brothers' joint possessions stood in one name, and that for the security of his son proper legal documents should be drawn out. For, though he knew Krishna Kanta incapable of deceiving him, or of acting unjustly towards him, yet what certainty had he as to what Krishna Kanta's sons might do after their father's death? Yet he could not bring himself to propose having legal papers made out, so he put it off from day to day. Necessity called him away to the estates, and there, suddenly, he died.

If Krishna Kanta had ever desired to cheat his brother's son, and appropriate the entire property, there was now no obstacle in his way. But he had no such evil intention. He placed Gobind Lâl with his own family, and treated him in all respects like his own sons; he determined to draw up a will bequeathing to Gobind Lâl the half-share justly belonging to Râm Kânta Râi.

Krishna Kanta Râi had two sons and a daughter. The eldest son was named Hara Lâl, the younger Binod Lâl, the daughter Shoilobati. In his will Krishna Kantâ

bequeathed to Gobind Lâl half the estate, to Hara Lâl and to Binod Lâl, each three-sixteenths, to the widow and to the daughter each one-sixteenth. Hara Lâl was very unruly; disobedient to his father, and evil-tongued. The provisions of a Bengali will seldom remain secret, and Hara Lâl, becoming acquainted with this disposition of the property, said to his father, his eyes inflamed with anger—

“What is this you have done? Half the estate to go to Gobind Lâl, and to me only three-sixteenths?”¹

“It is quite just,” returned Krishna Kanta; “I have given to Gobind Lâl his father’s half-share.”

“Gobind’s father’s share! What is that? Who is he to take from us our ancestral property? And the mother and sister, we will look after them. Why give a sixteenth to each of them? Say only that they are to be fed and clothed.”

Somewhat angered, Krishna Kanta said, “Hara Lâl, the property is mine not yours, I shall dispose of it as I choose.”

“You must have lost your senses! I will

¹ See Appendix, Note 1.

not permit you to please yourself in the matter."

Yet more angry, Krishna Kanta returned :
 "Hara Lâl, if you were a child I should call in the *Guru* and get him to give you a caning."

"When I was a child I set the *Guru's* beard on fire. Now I will serve that will in the same way."

Krishna Kanta made no further reply ; he tore up his will, and had another drawn out, in which he gave half to Gobind Lâl, five-sixteenths to Binod Lâl, one-sixteenth each to the widow, to the daughter, and to Hara Lâl.

Enraged at this, Hara Lâl left home for Calcutta, whence he wrote to his father to this effect—

"The Calcutta Pandits say that widow marriage is allowed by the Shâstras. I have resolved to marry a widow. If you choose to change your will, giving me half the estate, and will have the new will registered at once, I will give up this design. Otherwise I shall marry a widow very soon."

Hara Lâl thought that his father, becoming alarmed, would change the will, and ass

him a larger portion, but the answer he received destroyed this expectation. Krishna Kanta wrote—

“I no longer recognise you as my son. You may marry whom you will. I shall leave the property to whomsoever I choose. If you effect this marriage, I shall change my will, certainly, but it will not be to your advantage.”

Some time later Hara Lâl sent word that he had married a widow. Again Krishna Kanta destroyed his will, intending to make a fresh one.

In the village lived a good, contented man, named Brahmânanda Ghosh. He addressed Krishna Kanta as Uncle, and was much favoured and supported by him.

Brahmânanda wrote an excellent hand. All these legal documents were written by him. So when Hara Lâl's news came, Krishna Kanta sent for Brahmânanda, and told him to come up to the house after his meal to write a new will. Binod Lâl, who was present at this moment, asked, “Why do you again change your will?”

Krishna Kanta said, “This time nothing will be left to your elder brother.”

Binod. "That is not well. Even supposing him to be in fault, still, he has a son. The child is innocent. What will he have to depend on."

Krishna. "I will bequeath him a sixty-fourth share."

Binod. "In the division of the property what will that represent?"

Krishna. "My income is two lakhs of rupees. A sixty-fourth share will come to more than three thousand rupees. With that sum a *grihastha* can easily get on in the way of food and clothing. I will not give more."

Binod Lâl urged the matter long, but in vain. The *Kartâ* could not be persuaded to change his purpose.

CHAPTER II.

AFTER his bath and meal, Brahmânanda was preparing to sleep, when, to his astonishment, he saw Hara Lâl Râi before him. Hara Lâl advancing, sat down at his side by the head of the bed.

Brahm. "Why, I declare, here is the young master! When did you come home?"

Hara. "I have not been home yet."

Brahm. "You have come straight here? How long is it since you came from Calcutta?"

Hara. "I came from Calcutta two days ago, and have been in hiding here. So there is to be a new will written. Eh!"

Brahm. "So I hear."

Hara. "This time I am to have nothing?"

Brahm. "The *Kartâ* says so now he is angry. But that won't last."

Hara. "It is to be written this evening, isn't it? And you are to write it?"

Brahm. "How can I help that? I can't refuse the *Kartâ*."

Hara. "You are not to blame. Do you feel disposed to earn something?"

Brahm. "In the way of a beating, do you mean? Then why don't you strike me?"

Hara. "Not that. A thousand rupees."

Brahm. "By your marrying a widow, I suppose." [That is, marrying for money.]

Hara. "Just so."

Brahm. "You are too old for that."

Hara. "Well, I have other matters to speak of. Let us begin. Take something in advance."

Thus saying, Hara Lâl put a note for five hundred rupees into Brahmânanda's hand.

Brahmânanda turned the note over and over. "What am I to do with this?"

Hara. "Invest it. Give ten rupees of it to Moti, the milkwoman."

Brahm. "I have nothing to do with milkwomen. Tell me what you want me to do."

Hara. "Prepare two pens. Let them be exactly alike."

Brahm. "Very good. I'm listening." As he spoke, Ghosh Mahâshay took two

reed pens and cut them exactly alike. Then, trying them, he saw that they produced precisely similar writing.

Hara. "Well, you must keep one of the pens in your box. Use it when you are writing the will. Write something now with the other pen. Have you good ink?"

Brahm. "Are there not pens and ink in your house that I should have the bother of taking these?"

• *Hara.* "I have an object in view, else why should I give you that money?"

Brahm. "I thought as much."

Hara. "Well, they may wonder at your taking your own pen and ink. In that case all you have to do is to find fault with the office ink and paper."

Brahm. "I'll find fault with the Government itself if you like, let alone official pens and ink."

Hara. "There is no need to go so far as that. Now to the point."

Then Hara Lâl placed two sheets of general letter paper in Brahmânanda's hand, who exclaimed, "Why, this is Government paper!"

Hara. "Not Government paper. It is

the paper used in attorneys' offices. I know the *Kartâ* has his wills written on this paper. That is why I have got some of it. Now, write on this paper, and with this ink what I shall tell you."

Brahmânanda began to write. Hara Lâl dictated a form of will, of which the substance ran thus: "This is the last will and testament of Krishna Kanta Râi. Whatever property stands in his name shall, after his death, be divided thus—To Binod Lâl, three-sixteenths; to Gobind Lâl, to the widow, to Shoilabati, and to Hara Lâl's son, each a sixty-fourth part; and to Hara Lâl, the eldest son, the remaining twelve-sixteenths—or three-fourths."

The writing finished, Brahmânanda said, "Now the will is written, who signs it?"

"I do," said Hara Lâl, adding the names of Krishna Kanta Râi, and four witnesses to the will.

Brahm. "A pretty stroke of forgery, this!"

Hara. "This is the genuine will, the forged will is the one that is going to be written this evening."

Brahm. "How can that be?"

Hara. "When you go to write the will you must take this one concealed in the pocket of your *pirân*. When there, you must, with this pen and ink, write what they tell you. Paper, pen, ink, and writer will all be the same, so the two wills will, to all appearance, be alike. Then when you have read out the will and got it signed, you must take it back to add your own signature. You must sign it with your back turned to them. Then will be the opportunity to change the wills. You must give this will to the *Kartâ*, and bring his to me."

Brahmânanda Ghosh was deep in thought. He said to himself, "What is the use of my saying anything? A masterpiece of ingenuity, this, to be sure!"

Hara. "What are you thinking about?"

Brahm. "I should like to do it, but I am afraid. Take back your money, I won't be mixed up in a forgery."

"Give me the money," said Hara Lâl, stretching forth his hand. Brahmânanda returned the note. Note in hand, Hara Lâl was going away, when Brahmânanda called him back, saying, "What! going already?"

Hara (returning). "Not yet."

Brahm. "You just now gave Rs. 500, what more will you give?"

Hara. "When you bring me that other will another 500."

Brahm. "Five hundred — rupees! I can't let it go."

Hara. "Then, do you consent?"

Brahm. "What can I do but consent? But how am I to change the will? They are sure to see me."

Hara. "Why should they see? I will change it before you, and you see if you can detect me."

If Hara Lâl was not clever in other respects he certainly had acquired some amount of skill in sleight of hand. He placed the will in his pocket, and, taking a sheet of paper, prepared to write upon it. During this process how the will got from the pocket into the hand, and the paper from the hand into the pocket, Brahmânanda failed to detect. He praised Hara Lâl's dexterity. "I will show you the trick of it," said Hara Lâl, and forthwith began to initiate Brahmânanda in the practice of that unaccustomed art.

It took the elder man some time to acquire

the knack, and then Hara Lâl said, "Now I'm off. When the evening is over I shall bring the rest of the money." And he took his leave.

When Hara Lâl was gone Brahmânanda became terribly frightened. He saw that what he had consented to do was a great crime in the eyes of the law. Who knows but that he might be imprisoned for life. Suppose some one were to find him out in the act of changing the papers! Then why do it at all? But if he didn't he would have to give up the money already received. This he could not possibly do; no, not as long as he lived.

Alas! Vegetable diet! on how many poor Brahmans hast thou inflicted deadly suffering! Vegetable diet for one subject to fever! Then at the sight of a brass dish or a plantain leaf filled with appetising sweet-meats what can a poor Brahman do? Shall he leave it or eat it? I can take my oath that should the Brahman sit for a thousand years before a dish thus adorned, discussing the matter, he could not solve this difficult question, and, not being able to solve it, would, in sheer absence of mind, swallow them up.

Thus felt Brahmânanda Ghosh Mahâshoy. Hara Lâl's money was difficult of digestion ; there was fear of the gaol, yet he could not give it up. His covetousness was great, so also his fear of consequences. Brahmânanda could come to no decision, and so, like the poor Brahman, he turned his thoughts towards feasting on the money.

CHAPTER III.

LATE in the evening Brahmânanda returned from writing the will. He found Hara Lâl waiting for him. The latter said—

“What has been done?”

Brahmânanda was a lover of poetry. With a forced smile he said¹—

“When high my hands I raised, the moon to seize
intent,
They struck the Bâblâ tree, its thorns my fingers rent.”

Hara. “You have not been able to do it?”

Brahm. “There were so many difficulties——”

Hara. “You could not manage it?”

Brahm. “No, I could not. Take your forged will, take your money.” So saying, Brahmânanda took the note for Rs. 500 from the box, and handed it over with the counter-

¹ See Appendix, Note 2.

feit will. Hara Lâl's eyes inflamed, and his lips trembled with anger and annoyance. "Stupid, useless one!" he exclaimed. "What even a woman might do you fail in! I go, but if the least breath of this gets about, you lose your life!"

Brahm. "Don't be anxious on that account. I shall not reveal the matter."

Hara Lâl went thence to Brahmânanda's kitchen. As a child of the house he could penetrate everywhere. In the kitchen Brahmânanda's niece, Rohini, was cooking.

We have special need of this Rohini, so we must say something of her looks and character; but description of charms is not the fashion nowadays, and as to character, it is not safe under existing laws to discuss any but one's own. Suffice it to say that Rohini was in the full glory of womanhood, and of remarkable beauty—the splendour of the full autumnal moon. She had early become a widow,¹ but had many faults unsuited to the widowed condition. For instance, she wore a black-bordered cloth, and bracelets on her arms. I rather think she ate the betel leaf too. Moreover, in cooking she equalled

¹ See Appendix, Note 3.

Draupadi.¹ At soups, acids, curries of small fish or of vegetables, parched grain, &c., she was an accomplished hand. Again, in drawing figures on the floor,² in making ornaments of *Khayer*,³ toys of artificial flowers, and in needlework, she was without a rival. She was the only one in the village who could be depended upon in the braiding of hair and adorning of brides. Having no nearer relative, she dwelt in Brahmānanda's house.

The beautiful Rohini was stirring the pulse in the pan with a stick. At some distance sat the cat, her paws spread out. Rohini now and then cast sweetly fascinating glances at the cat, to see if animals too, like women, could be made to thrill by the snare of lightning flashes from the eye (as a snake fascinates a frog). The cat, taking these sweet glances as an invitation to eat the fried fish, was gradually advancing, when Hara Lal came tramping in. The cat, frightened,

¹ See Appendix, Note 4.

² Referring to the practice of depicting all kinds of pictures on the floor with white pigments on a particular day in the month of Pous.

³ *Khayer*. The resinous gum of the mimosa catechu.

gave up her desire, anxious to escape; Rohini, leaving the stick in the pulse, and wiping her hands, drew her cloth over her head, and stood up. Nervously working her fingers, she asked, "When did you come?"

Hara. "Yesterday. I've something to say to you."

Rohini with a thrill of delight asked, "You will eat here to-day, won't you? Shall I put some fine rice on to boil for you?"

Hara. "Yes, yes, set it on if you like, but never mind about that. Do you remember what happened to you one day?"

Rohini looked silently on the ground. Hara Lâl resumed, "That day on which, coming with a troop of pilgrims to bathe in the Ganges, you lagged behind. Do you remember?"

Rohini, holding four fingers of the left with the right hand and looking down. "I remember."

Hara. "The day when you lost your road and found yourself in a plain?"

Rohini. "Yes."

Hara. "Night had come on, and you

were all alone on that plain. A band of villains came upon you. You remember that?"

Rohini. "I do."

Hara. "Who was it that rescued you on that occasion?"

Rohini. "You did. You were going somewhere on horseback along that plain"

Hara. "To my sister-in-law's house."

Rohini. "You saw the danger I was in, and rescued me, and sent me home in a palanquin. How should I not remember? I can never repay that obligation."

Hara. "You can repay it to-day. More than that, you can purchase my goodwill for life. Will you do it?"

Rohini. "What do you say? I would give my life even to help you."

Hara. "Whether you do it or not, to no one must you reveal the matter. You must not let a single soul know what I am going to tell you."

Rohini. "Not while I live."

Hara. "Swear it."

Rohini obeyed.

Then Hara Lál explained about the real

and the counterfeit wills, and ended with, "You must steal the real will and put this counterfeit will in its place. You go freely about our house. You are clever, and can easily accomplish it. Will you do it for me?"

Rohini shuddered. "Theft! If I were to be torn in pieces I could not do it."

Hara. "Just like women—worthless things! a mass of words only. I understand now that never in this world will you repay that debt."

Rohini. "Anything else you bid me I will do. Tell me to die and I will. But that treacherous deed I cannot do."

Hara Lâl, unable to persuade Rohini, offered her the notes for Rs. 1,000, saying, "Take this money as your reward beforehand. You must do the thing."

Rohini would not take the notes. "I was not looking for money," she said. "If you gave me the whole of your father's possessions I could not do it. If it were possible I would have done it simply at your bidding."

Hara Lâl sighed deeply. "I thought you wished me well, Rohini. Outsiders are not like one's own people. If my wife were

living I should not have needed to be coaxing you. She would have done it for me."

Rohini laughed.

Hara. "What are you laughing about?"

Rohini. "Talking about your wife brought to my mind the subject of widow-marriage. You are going to marry a widow. Isn't it so?"

Hara. "I have the desire, but where can I find a widow to my taste?"

Rohini. "Well, whether it be a widow or a married woman—I mean a widow or a maiden—it is just as well to get married and settled. We should all be delighted."

Hara. "See, Rohini. Widow-marriage is allowed by the Shâstras."

Rohini. "So people are saying now."

Hara. "You also can marry. Why not do so?"

Rohini pulled forward the cloth on her head and turned away.

Hara. "We are already connected with you in the village, but there is no degree of relationship to prevent it."

At this Rohini pulled her cloth completely over her, and, sitting down near the oven, began to stir the pulse.

Much cast down by this, Hara Lâl turned to go. When he reached the door Rohini said, "You may as well leave the paper. I'll see what I can do."

Overjoyed, Hara Lâl placed the false will and the bank-notes near Rohini. She exclaimed, "Not the notes, only the will."

Leaving the will, Hara Lâl took the money and departed.

CHAPTER IV.

THAT evening at eight o'clock Krishna Kanta Râi was sitting on his bed in his sleeping chamber, a pillow supporting his back, pulling at his *hukâ*, and gently nodding over that one physic of the world, that best among intoxicants—the fumes of opium. As he thus nodded, in fancy he saw his will suddenly become a mortgage deed put up to sale. Hara Lâl had bought his entire estate for three rupees, thirteen annas, and two and two-thirds of a cowry. Then he thought that some one told him the will was not a deed of gift but a bond. Instantly it flashed across his mind that Vishnu, son of Brahma, the king of the gods, had come to Mahâdeva and, borrowing a canister of opium from him, had executed this bond, giving him a mortgage on the universe. Mahâdeva, under the stupefying influence of *gânjâ*, had forgotten to foreclose the mortgage. Just

then Rohini came gently into the room and said, "Thâkur Dâdâ! what, sleeping?"

Krishna Kanta, still nodding, replied, "Who is that? Nandi? ¹ Tell your master to foreclose at once."

Rohini saw that Krishna Kanta was in one of his frequent bouts of opium-smoking. She laughed and said, "Who is Nandi? Thâkur Dâdâ."

Krishna Kanta, without raising his head, replied, "It is quite correct what I said. He (Nandi) has eaten up the milkmaid's butter at Brindâban, and has not paid yet."

Rohini burst out laughing, which startled Krishna Kanta. Raising his head, he looked at her and said, "Who is that? Aswini, Bharani, Krittikâ, Rohini?" ²

Rohini. "Mrigashirâ, Ârd୍ରâ, Punarbâsu, Pujyâ."

¹ The name of Mahâdeva's attendant. Krishna Kanta is still rambling in thought in the realms of mythological fancy.

² In his half-stupefied condition he arrives at Rohini's name only by the mental process of running through the names of the lunar mansions, Rohini being one of them. Rohini, humouring him, goes on with the list, which is taken up again by Krishna Kanta.

Krishna. "Asleshâ, Maghâ, Purbaphalguni."

Rohini. "Thâkur Dâdâ have I come to learn astronomy from you?"

Krishna. "Then what do you want? Some opium?"

Rohini. "Is it likely I've come for that? Why, you would sooner part with life than opium. Uncle sent me, that's why I have come."

Krishna. "What for? Opium?"

Rohini. "No, Thâkur Dâdâ, no. I don't want your splendid opium. My uncle says that the will that was written to-day has not your signature."

Krishna. "What's that? I remember perfectly that I did sign it."

Rohini. "No, uncle says that he remembers that you did not sign it. Well, why should we remain in doubt? Why don't you open it out and see?"

Krishna. "Certainly; hold a light then while I look." Thus saying, from beneath his pillow, Krishna Kanta took a key. Rohini held a light that was standing near. Krishna Kanta first opened a small despatch box, and out of it took a special

key with which he opened a drawer, and, after some search, took out the recently made will. Then he took his spectacles from the box and tried to fix them on his nose, but in the process the opium fumes repeatedly made him nod, so he was long about it. Finally, the spectacles duly fixed, Krishna Kanta glanced at the will, and, laughing, said, "Rohini, you think I am old and wandering? See! there is my signature."

Rohini. "Heaven forbid! You are not old. You are obliged to call us your grandchildren, but that counts for nothing. Well, I'm off. I'll go and tell uncle."

In the dead of night Krishna Kanta's sleep was suddenly broken in upon. Waking, he perceived there was no light in his room. He always kept a light burning through the night, but now he saw it was extinguished. At the same time a sound entered his ear as though some one were turning a key; also it seemed as if some one were stepping about the room. The person came to the head of his bed, put a hand

under his pillow. Krishna Kanta was heavy with opium. He was neither asleep nor awake, and so could not quite comprehend anything. He was not quite sure that there was no light in the room. Now half asleep—now half awake—even awake—his eyes would not open. When he did manage once to open his eyes, the darkness did indeed strike him, but Krishna Kanta then fancied himself in gaol for giving false evidence in Hari Ghosh's lawsuit. The gaol was very dark. After awhile, suddenly, a sound as of the turning of a key fell gently on his ear. "What!" thought he, "has the key of the gaol dropped down?" Instantly he roused himself, felt about for the tube of his *hukâ*, but could not find it. From habit he called out "Hari!"

Krishna Kanta did not sleep in the inner apartments, nor in the outer rooms. He had a room between the two, and slept there. There also slept his *Khânsâmâ*, a man named Hari. No one else. It was to this attendant Krishna Kanta was speaking when he called out "Hari!"

He called to him a second time, and then,

still heavy with opium, he dozed off. At this time the genuine will vanished from his room. The counterfeit will had been substituted for it.

CHAPTER V.

EARLY next morning, Rohini was again sitting cooking, when, once more, Hara Lâl peeped into the room. Fortunately, Brahmânanda was not at home, else who knows what he might have thought? Hara Lâl slowly approached Rohini, but she did not look particularly at him. Hara Lâl said, "Look this way—the pot won't burst."

Rohini looked and laughed. Hara Lâl asked, "What have you done?"

Bringing the stolen will, Rohini gave it to Hara Lâl to look at. He read it over, and saw that it was indeed the genuine will. The villain's face lit up with glee. Holding the will in his hand he asked, "How did you manage it?"

Rohini began the story, but took care not to tell him the truth. She made up some false account and, as she narrated it, took back the will from Hara Lâl's hand to show

him how she had found the document lying in a writing case. As she ended her story she suddenly got up and went away, will in hand. When she returned, Hara Lál, seeing her to be empty-handed, asked, "Where have you left the will?"

"I have put it by."

Hara. "What is the use of that? I must be going now."

Rohini. "Now, must you? What is the hurry?"

Hara. "I must not stop here any longer."

Rohini. "Then go."

Hara. "And the will?"

Rohini. "Will remain with me."

Hara. "How is that? You will not give me the will?"

Rohini. "It is all the same whether you keep it or I."

Hara. "But if you won't give it to me, why have you stolen it?"

Rohini. "I stole it for you, I keep it for you. When you marry a widow I will give this to your wife. If you take it you will destroy it."

Hara Lál understood and said, "That ..

can't be, Rohini, whatever money you want, I will give you."

Rohini. "A lakh of rupees would not suffice. What you said you would give is what I want."

Hara. "That can't be. If I commit a forgery, or steal, I do it for my own rights. You have committed a theft, but to benefit whom?"

Rohini's countenance fell at these words. She remained with downcast eyes.

Hara. "Whatever I have become, I am Krishna Kanta's son. The person who has committed a theft I can never make my wife."

Rohini, suddenly rising, threw back the covering from her face, and, looking straight at Hara Lâl, said, "I am a thief! You a saint! Who told me to steal? Who bribed me to do it? Who was it deceived me, seeing I was but a simple woman? The greatest of swindles, the falsest of lies, which the commonest rustic would not have deigned to utter, you, the son of Krishna Kanta Râi, have been guilty of. Alas! alas! I unworthy of *you*! Never unfortunate woman met so base a swindler as you are! Were

you a woman I would have shown you the besom. As you are a man—go in honour.”

Hara Lâl felt he had got his deserts. Dismissed—in honour—he went out with an embarrassed laugh. Rohini also felt that each had been served aright. Tightening the knot of her hair, which in her anger had become loosened, she resumed her cooking, tears starting to her eyes.

CHAPTER VI.

OH! *Kokil!* Sweet harbinger of spring! Sing out thy joyous lay; it ill becomes me to object, still would I counsel thee to choose aright thy times for song. It is not well to sing alike in season and out of season. See! after much search, I had found pen and ink, and after yet more labour, had collected my ideas, and had sat down to write in full detail the story of Krishna Kanta's will, when from the sky comes kuhu! kuhu! kuhu! You have a fine voice, I admit, but that alone does not give you the right to call to any one you choose. However, with me, whose hairs are grey, and whose pen runs smoothly on, your calling matters little. But, see! when a man in youthful prime, worried with money matters, sits poring over his accounts, and racks his brain in vain attempts to set them straight, maybe, you, from the broken office wall, call out kuhu!. How is he then

to balance his accounts? When a lovely woman, grieving at the loss of her lover, sits down, the long, long day over, maybe at nine o'clock, to take her simple fare of rice, and has just taken up the cup of boiling milk, straightway you call kuhu! She leaves the milk untouched; or perhaps, her thoughts far off, she mixes salt with it and drinks it up. In truth there is some enchantment in your voice, else, when you were sitting singing in the *bâbul* tree, and the widow Rohini was going to fetch some water, carrying the *kalsi* on her hip, then—but first of all let me account for her going to fetch water.

It was thus: Brahmânanda Ghosh was a poor man. He could not afford to keep many servants. Whether that is an advantage or a disadvantage I can't say; whichever it is, he who keeps no women servants is free from four things—cheating, false reports, wrangling, and dirt. The gods have embodied these four things in the maidservant. Especially where there are many female servants the house is a veritable battle-field of Kurus,¹ or like an oft-repeated killing of Râban. One, brandishing her

¹ See Appendix, Note 5.

broom, parades about the house, like Bhîm of old, the Pandava prince, who, arming himself with his club, was wont to stalk across the field of battle. Another is always scolding, even as the Kuru king, Durjyodhan, with Bhisma, Dron, and Karna, were ever hurling execrations at their foes. One, like Kumbhakarna, sleeps six months straight on end, and, on awaking, eats up all there is. Another is like Sugrib, who, twisting his long neck about, was always bent on killing Kumbhakarna.

Brahmânanda was free from these troubles and annoyances, but the bringing of water and the scouring of dishes fell on Rohini. She went of an evening to fetch water when her other work was done. The day after that on which the events already narrated took place, she went at the usual time, with her *kalsi* on her hip, to fetch water. There was a large tank belonging to the zemindâr, called Bâruni, the water of which was very good. It was there that Rohini was accustomed to go for water, and to-day also she was wending her way thither. She always went alone; she had not the habit of going in company with light women, lightly laugh-

ing, carrying light *kalsis*, lightly filled with water. Her *kalsi* was heavy as was her walk. Then Rohini was a widow; yet in no sense like a widow. The red of the betel nut was on her lip and bracelets on her arms. She wore a bordered garment, and her splendid tresses of jet-black hair fell in bewitching snake-like curls around her shoulders, the brass *kalsi* on her hip swaying slowly with the swaying of her walk. As a swan dances on the wave, so, gently, with the motion of the body, danced the *kalsi*. The two feet very slowly, like flowers falling from a tree, pressed the ground softly, the merry *kalsi* keeping time therewith. Swaying from side to side like a sail-burthened ship, the beautiful Rohini, with slow and measured steps, came to fetch water from the tank, lightening up the paths as she went, when from the boughs of a *bakul* tree the spring cuckoo piped his note.

“Kuhu! kuhu! kuhu!” Rohini looked all round. I could swear that if that bird, sitting on the bough, had seen that upward-thrown, agitated, tremulous, roguish glance of Rohini's, that small bird, pierced by such an arrow, turning topsy-turvy, with its feet

gathered up, would have fallen down plump ; but that was not in the bird's destiny—it was not included in the endless chain of cause and effect, or it was not a merit arising from the bird's actions in a previous birth.

The stupid bird again called, “ Kuhu ! kuhu ! ”

“ Be off with you, Black-face ! ” exclaimed Rohini, and went on her way ; went on, but she did not forget the cuckoo. My firm belief is that the cuckoo had sung out of season. When a poor widow is going alone to fetch water, it is not good to call after her, because the voice of the cuckoo brings painful thoughts into the mind, such as : “ I have lost something, and through that loss my whole life is wasted ; I shall never find it again ; something has gone ; some one has left me ; there is something unattained ; something I shall never get.” It seems to say, “ I have lost a jewel somewhere ; some one calls and makes me weep ; my life is spent in vain ; my cup of happiness has not been filled ; I have tasted nothing of the unceasing joys of life ! ”

Again “ kuhu ! kuhu ! ” Rohini, looking round, saw the blue, clear, boundless sky,

silent, but yet in harmony with that cuckoo-strain. She saw the newly swollen mango buds, golden white, peeping out from masses of dark leaves, cool, sweet-scented; only the humming of the bees blending with the cuckoo-song. She saw on the banks of the tank Gobind Lâl's flower garden, where flowers were blooming in clusters on clusters, thousands upon thousands, rows upon rows, on every bough, with every leaf—everywhere were flowers blooming: white, red, yellow, blue, small and large; in some the honey bee, in some the humble bee—all in harmony with that cuckoo-song. On the air their perfume came blending with that cuckoo-strain in sweetest harmony. And in that flowery wilderness, standing in the shade, Gobind Lâl himself. His dense black hair fell in ringlets on his splendid shoulders, beautiful as the *champak* flower, and exceeding the tree in beauty; a lovely flowering creeper swayed over that noble figure—how blent in unison! he, too, in sweetest harmony with that cuckoo-song. From an *asoka* tree the bird again called "kuhu!" Then Rohini descended the steps of the tank, and, reaching the lowest

one, floated her *kalsi* on the water, sat down and wept.

Why she wept I do not know. How can I tell what passes in a woman's mind? But I much suspect it was that wicked cuckoo that caused Rohini to weep.

CHAPTER VII.

IN taking the tank Bârunt for a subject I have got into difficulties : I cannot rise to the description of it. The tank was very large. It lay like a blue mirror framed by a border of grass. Beyond the grass frame was another frame, that of the flower garden. On the four sides of the tank stretched Gobind Lâl's flower garden ; the trees and the walls of the garden seemed to continue endlessly. This frame was very brilliant, enamelled with flowers of varied hue—red, black, green, rose, white, yellow—and studded with gems of many sorts of fruits in their leafy sheaths. Here and there the white summer houses glittered, each like an enormous diamond in the rays of the setting sun. And overhead the sky : that also enframed the garden, that also was a sort of blue mirror. This blue sky, this frame of garden, this frame of grass, the flowers,

the fruits, the trees, the houses, were all reflected in that blue water mirror. Now and again the cuckoo's voice. All this can in some way be described, but what Rohini was thinking of in connection with that sky, the tank, and the cuckoo's song I cannot explain. This was my meaning in saying that the telling about this tank had thrown me into difficulties.

I am in a difficulty, and so also was Gobind Lâl. He also, from behind that mass of flowering creepers, had seen Rohini descend the ghât steps and sit alone, weeping. Gobind Lâl came to the conclusion that it was some girl from the village who was crying in consequence of some quarrel with a boy. I cannot trust so much to his conclusions. Rohini still wept.

I know not what Rohini was thinking of, but I fancy it was something in this strain. "For what fault was I destined to become a widow while still a child? In what am I a greater sinner than others that I should be permitted none of the joys of earth? For what fault am I, still young, condemned to pass my life like a piece of dried wood? Those who have all the joys of this life—as, for instance,

that Gobind Lâl Babu's wife--in what are they more virtuous than I? For what former merit is this happiness their reward? Why am I destined to have none? But, never mind! I don't grudge other people their happiness—but why are all paths closed to me? Why should I continue this joyless life?"

There! I told you Rohini was not good. See how her bad temper comes out in a trifle like this! Her faults indeed were many—should the sight of her tears excite sympathy? No, not at all. And yet, why judge so harshly? We should weep with others in their grief. The gods do not withhold their rain even from the thorny field.

So grant a little pity to Rohini! Look at her there, still sitting on the steps, her hands pressed to her temples, weeping, her empty *kalsi* on the water, dancing in the breeze.

At last the sun has set, gradually black shadows fall on Bâruni's blue water, at last darkness has come. The birds have all flown to the trees. The cows have all turned homewards. The moon rises and sheds her soft light on the darkness. Still

Rohini sits weeping on the ghât, her *kalsi* floating on the water. Then Gobind Lâl turned homewards from the garden. As he went he perceived Rohini still sitting on the steps.

That a woman should sit so long alone, weeping, troubled him. He reflected that, whether she were of good or of bad character, she was still one of God's creatures. I, also, am one of His creatures, therefore she is my sister. If I can end her trouble why should I not do so?

Gobind Lâl, slowly descending the steps, approached Rohini. He stood beside her in the brilliant moonlight like a lovely statue. Rohini, startled at seeing him, stood up. He also was surprised at recognising Rohini. He said, "Rohini! Why are you sitting so long alone, weeping?"

Rohini remained standing, but did not speak.

Gobind. "Will you not tell me your trouble? I may be able to help you."

That Rohini, who could speak so bitterly to Hara Lâl, stood dumb before Gobind Lâl. Not a word did she speak, but, like a sculptured figure, enhanced the beauty of the

steps. Gobind Lâl saw in the clear water the reflections of that radiant statue, of the moon and of the golden flowered trees. All was beautiful; hard-heartedness alone not beautiful. The Creator is merciful, man unmerciful. Gobind Lâl felt the influence of Nature; his thoughts might have been expressed in the words of the poet—

“The book I read is Nature's;
 There simple truths appear,
 And though she change her features,
 Her dictates still are clear.”

Again he spoke to Rohini. “If you are in any trouble let me know about it, to-day or to-morrow, If you cannot speak of it yourself let me know through one of the ladies of the family.”

Rohini at last summoned courage to speak. She said: “One day I will tell you. Not to-day. One day you must hear what I have to say.”

Gobind Lâl, assenting, went towards the house. Rohini springing into the water, *kalsi* in hand, began to fill it.

“Bok, bok, goll, goll,”¹ went the water as it gurgled into the *kalsi*, which seemed as though it objected to be filled. I have noticed that empty vessels, whether human or of earthenware, generally do object to be filled, and make a great hubbub over the process.

The *kalsi* being filled, Rohini ascended the steps, draped her wet garments gracefully about her, and walked very slowly home.

Then “chhollot-chhollot, thonâk, jhinik, thininikie-thin.” In language such as this a conversation ensued between the *kalsi*, the water in the *kalsi*, and Rohini’s bracelets, in which Rohini mentally joined.

Rohini’s mind. “What about the stealing of the will?”

Water. “Chhollot!”

Rohini’s mind. “It was a bad piece of business!”

¹ The Bengali language is particularly rich in onomatopoeic words. The sound of the water as it fills the jar is cleverly reproduced in these unmeaning words. So also, later, we have a close imitation of the water tossing about in the jar whilst carried on the hip of Rohini, and of the jingling of the bangles on her encircling arm.

Bracelets. "Thin — thin — no — yes, indeed!"

Rohini's mind. "What resource is there?"

Kalsi. "Thonok—dhonok—dhon—I am the resource—with the help of a rope." ¹

¹ See Appendix, Note 6.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN good time in the morning Rohini finished cooking, served Brahmánanda's meal, and, herself fasting, closed the door of her sleeping chamber, and lay down—not to sleep, but to think.

Oh! ye students of the Vedas, leave for a while your customary lore and listen to my simple speech. There is a daughter of the gods named Benevolence, and an ogress named Malevolence. These two beings roam about in the human heart, and are constantly at war with each other. As two tigresses fight for a dead cow, or two jackals for the body of a dead man, so do these two for the living man. To-day in that lonely sleeping chamber these two spirits wrangled for Rohini.

Sumati (Benevolence) said: "Is it right to ruin so good a man?"

Kumati. (*Malevolence*). "I have not given the will to Hara Lâl. What ruin have I caused?"

Sumati. "Return Krishna Kanta's will to Krishna Kanta."

Kumati. "Bah! When Krishna Kanta shall ask me, 'Where did you get this will? and how came another will, a forged one, to be in my drawer?' then what shall I say? A fine thing this! that would be sending both me and my uncle to gaol."

Sumati. "Then why not fall weeping at the feet of Gobind Lâl, and tell him the whole matter. He is compassionate, and will certainly protect you."

Kumati. "That is all right. But Gobind Lâl must necessarily tell Krishna Kanta all about it, otherwise the change of will cannot be rectified. If Krishna Kanta sends us to the police station how can Gobind Lâl protect us? Rather take this other advice. Keep silence until after Krishna Kanta dies, then, as you suggest, I shall go to Gobind Lâl, fall at his feet, and give him the will."

Sumati. "Then it will be useless. The will found in Krishna Kanta's house will be received as the genuine will. And should

Gobind Lâl produce this will he may be accused of forgery."

Kumati. "Then remain silent. What is done is done."

Then Sumati had no more to say—she was defeated. The two spirits made a compact, and in friendly mood set about another piece of work. They brought before Rohini's mental vision the beautiful, god-like form of Gobind Lâl standing majestic on the border of the tank, bathed in moonlight splendour. At this figure Rohini gazed and gazed until she wept. Rohini slept not that night.

CHAPTER IX.

THENCEFORTH Rohini daily took her *kalsi* to the Bârunî tank for water. Daily the cuckoo sang; daily the vision of Gobind Lâl appeared among the flowering trees; daily both peace and war reigned between Sumati and Kumati. Contentions between these two powers man can endure, but from their concord many calamities arise. Then Sumati would assume the form of Kumati, and Kumati would do the work of Sumati, so that it became impossible to distinguish one from the other, and people would give way to Kumati, thinking it was Sumati. And so it was that either Kumati or Sumati contrived to depict the form of Gobind Lâl more deeply day by day in the heart of Rohini. A dark background, a shining picture. Daily the picture became brighter, the background darker. Then in her eyes the world—but let it be, what need have I to

start afresh the same old story of Rohini's unhappiness? In the secret depths of her heart Rohini soon developed a strong passion for Gobind Lâl. Kumati was again victorious.

Why, after so long a period, this calamity should have come about I can neither understand nor explain. Rohini had seen Gobind Lâl from her infancy, yet her heart had never been drawn towards him. Then why now—so suddenly? I know not, but simply state things as they happened—that wicked cuckoo's calling, that weeping by the tank, the time, the place, the thoughts, and then Gobind Lâl's compassion at that particular time. Again Rohini's unjust conduct to Gobind Lâl, who had never wronged her. By a combination of all these causes, extending over some little time, it came to pass that Gobind Lâl found a place in Rohini's mind. I know not what is to come of it, but relate facts just as they occurred.

Rohini was very intelligent. She at once perceived the matter might be one of life or death to her. If Gobind Lâl should have the slightest suspicion of her feeling, never

again would he even allow her shadow to fall on him. He might get her sent away from the village. She must not breathe a word of it to any one ; so, with much effort, Rohini kept the matter hidden in her heart.

But as hidden fire burns outwardly, so it was with Rohini. The burthen of life became painful to her. Day and night she longed for death.

Who can reckon the number of people who long to die? I believe there are many, whether among the happy or the wretched, who heartily wish for death. The joy of this earth is not joy, it is full of pain. No happiness can be called happiness. No joy is complete; therefore many people desire death, and the sorrowful, saying they can no longer bear their burthen, call upon Death.

They call upon Death, but to whom does death come? Calling does not bring it. The happy, they who do not wish to die, the beautiful, the young, the hopeful, they in whose sight the earth is a garden of delight, to them Death comes. Of such as Rohini it comes to no one. For one thing man's power to summon Death is weak. The prick of a needle or half a drop of poison can

destroy man's perishable life and cause this restless drop of water to mingle in the ocean of destiny; but though inwardly desiring death, scarcely any one will use this needle or drink the half drop of poison. One here and there may do so, but Rohini was not of the number, she could not do it.

But on one point Rohini was quite determined—the forged will should not pass. There was a simple plan for this: to tell Krishna Kanta, or cause him to be told, that his will had been stolen and bid him read the one lying in the drawer. There was no need to say that Rohini had stolen it; it does not matter who stole it; if the least suspicion were roused in Krishna Kanta's mind, and he were to open the drawer and look, he would discover the forged will, and cause a new one to be made. Gobind Lâl's property would be saved, and no one would know who had stolen the will. But in this there was one danger. On reading the false will Krishna Kanta would see that it had been written by Brahmânanda, and her uncle would get into trouble. Therefore the forged will that lay in the drawer must never be seen by any one.

So Rohini, though now anxious to undo the terrible injury she had inflicted upon Gobind Lâl to gratify Hara Lâl's greed, was prevented from doing so by the necessity of protecting her uncle. At length she resolved that in the same way that she had stolen the genuine will and substituted the false one, she would abstract the false will and put the true one in its place.

So, in the dead of night, the beautiful Rohini, taking the true will and summoning all her courage, went alone to the house of Krishna Kanta Râi. The private door was closed, so Rohini went on to the main entrance, where doorkeepers, sitting on their *charpoys*, with half-closed eyes and throats, were humming a favourite chant all out of tune. The doorkeepers asked her who she was. She answered, "Sakhi," giving the name of a young maidservant of the house, which satisfied them. So without difficulty Rohini passed into the house and took the already known path to Krishna Kanta's room. The mansion being supposed to be well protected, Krishna Kanta's door was not closed. Listening intently as she entered, Rohini observed that Krishna Kanta's snore

was steady, uninterrupted, so noiselessly the will-stealer stepped into the room. The first thing she did was to extinguish the light, the next to get possession of the key, and again, as before, feeling in the darkness, she opened the drawer.

Rohini was extremely cautious, her finger touches delicate. Nevertheless the key in turning made a click. That click awoke Krishna Kanta. Not quite identifying the sound, he made no movement, but listened.

Rohini noticed that the snoring had stopped and knew that Krishna Kanta must be awake. She stood still and silent. Krishna Kanta called out, "Who is there?" but no one answered. It was no longer the same Rohini. This Rohini had become thin, distressed, dispirited, even frightened; she uttered a sigh, and that sigh reached the ear of Krishna Kanta, who called repeatedly, "Hari! Hari!"

If Rohini had liked she could have seized this opportunity to escape, but if she did Gobind Lál's rights would not be secured. She thought to herself, "How is it I am not as bold to-day to do a good action, as I was the other day to do an evil one? Well, if I

am caught, what does it matter?" So Rohini did not try to escape.

Krishna Kanta's repeated calls to Hari obtained no reply. Hari had gone to seek his pleasure elsewhere, he would soon return. Then Krishna Kanta, drawing a matchbox from beneath his pillow, suddenly struck a light and saw a woman standing near the chest of drawers. He lit the lamp from the match and said, "Who are you?"

The woman approached, saying, "I am Rohini."

Krishna. "At this hour of the night! and in darkness! What can you be doing here?"

Rohini. "Stealing."

Krishna. "Cease joking. Say why I see you here in this condition. I shall not easily believe you come to steal, but you have the appearance of a thief."

Rohini. "Well, then, what I came to do, I will do before your eyes. Watch me, then do as you think fit. I am caught, I cannot escape, I will not try."

Thus saying, Rohini returned to the drawer, opened it, took thence the false will, putting the true one in its place. She then tore the forged will into pieces.

Krishna Kanta screamed out, "Ha! ha! what are you tearing?" but in vain. Rohini burnt the fragments of the will in the flame of the lamp.

Krishna (angrily). "What is that you have burnt?"

Rohini. "A counterfeit will."

Krishna (shuddering). "Will! will! Where is my will?"

Rohini. "Your will is in the drawer. See for yourself!"

Krishna Kanta was astonished at this young woman's steady self-possession; he thought, "Has some divinity come to play a trick upon me?" He then opened the drawer and saw that a will was lying in it. He took it out, put on his spectacles, and on reading it found it was indeed the will he had drawn out. He again asked, "What was that you burned?"

Rohini. "A counterfeit will."

Krishna. "A forged will! Who has forged a will? Where did you find it?"

Rohini. "Who did it I cannot say. I found it in that drawer."

Krishna. "How did you guess there was a false will in that drawer?"

Rohini. "That I cannot tell you."

Krishna Kanta reflected for some moments, then said, "Do you think that I, who have looked after this property so long, cannot see through the small cunning of a woman like you?" This forged will is Hara Lâl's doing. I suppose he has paid you to put it in the drawer in place of the true one. Then, being caught, you have torn up the false one. Isn't that the case?"

Rohini. "No, that wasn't so."

Krishna. "Then what was it?"

Rohini. "I will say nothing. I have entered your room like a thief. Do with me as you will."

Krishna. "I have not the slightest doubt you came to do something wrong, or else why should you come in this way, like a thief? I shall punish you suitably. I will not send you to the police, but will have you turned out of the village to-morrow with your head shaven and butter-milk poured over it. For to-night you shall be locked up."

Rohini was made secure for the night.

CHAPTER X.

NEXT day at early dawn Gobind Lâl was standing at the open window of his bedroom. It was not quite dawn, a little of the night remained. As yet the *kokil* had not tried his first notes from the clump of flowering shrubs in the little court of the house, only the *doyal* had begun to sing. The cool breeze of dawn had arisen. Gobind Lâl had opened the window and was standing in front of it to inhale the fragrance of the jasmine, gardenia, and other sweet-scented flowers borne in upon the cool, refreshing air. Just then a girl of slender figure came and stood beside him.

Gobind. "Why, what brings you here?"

"And what brings you here?" replied the girl. We need scarcely say that she was Gobind Lâl's wife.

Gobind. "I have come to get a little fresh air.¹ Can't you bear even that?"

"Why should I?" she answered. "Do you want to be eating already? Does not eating the household food suffice you that you must be peering about the fields and *ghâts* to breathe [*lit.* to eat] the air?"

Gobind. "What is there that I have eaten so much of in the house?"

"Why, you have only just this minute received [*lit.* eaten] all this scolding from me."

Gobind. "Don't you see, *Bhomrâ*, that if a Bengali were unable to live upon a diet of scolding, the entire race of the people of this country would by this time have died of indigestion. Food of this sort is readily assimilated in a Bengali's stomach. [*i.e.*, he soon gets to take a scolding from his wife as a regular thing.] Shake your nose-ring again, *Bhomrâ*. Let me see you do it again."

¹ This is expressed in Bengali by the idiom "to eat the air," as, a little further on, "to receive a scolding" is "to eat a scolding." The whole point of this playful banter between husband and wife hinges on a play on the verb "to eat," as expressed in its ordinary and its idiomatic meanings. Its force is necessarily much lost in an English translation.

Whether Gobind Lâl's wife's real name, as given by her parents, was Krishna Mohini, or Krishna Kâmini, or Ananga Manjari, history does not say. From want of use it had dropped out of sight. Her pet name was "Bhramar" or "Bhomrâ." She was dark-complexioned, and hence had got the name of Bhomrâ.¹

To show her objection to this banter about her nose-ring, Bhomrâ took it out, and, hanging it on a hook, began to pinch her husband's nose, then laughed gently in his face, thinking she had done something very grand.

Gobind Lâl also gazed at his wife with a deep, unsatisfied love. Then the first rays of the sun appeared in the eastern sky, and earthly objects were reflected in its gentle rays. The tender light fell full upon the face of Bhramar as she faced the east. The tender morning light falling on the lovely face of that bright, pure, soft, glowing picture, lit up her merry, playful eyes and bathed her cool bright cheeks. Smiles and loving looks, Gobind Lâl's affection, and the

¹ This is the Bengali word for the large black bee, which accounts for her nickname.

air of dawn, all were blended in that morning light, all found expression in her countenance.

Now there arose great chattering and confusion in the house among the newly risen servants. Then sweeping of the rooms, sprinkling of water, scouring of metal plates, and other household noises could be heard. Suddenly those sounds all ceased, to give place to various ejaculations, such as "Good gracious!" "What will happen next?" "What a dreadful thing!" "How bold!" "How brazen!" mingled with giggling and screams of laughter. Whereupon Bhramar came out of her room.

The servants as a body did not much heed Bhramar for several reasons. First, on account of her youth; then she was not herself *grihini*, there was her mother-in-law and her husband's sister. More than that, Bhramar was more of a merry child than a disciplinarian. On her appearance the whole troop of women increased their noise.

No. 1. "Have you heard about it, young mistress?"

No. 2. "No one ever heard of such a dreadful thing!"

No. 3. "How brazen! I'll go and give the creature the besom."

No. 4. "Only the broom! If you tell me, mistress, I'll cut off her nose and bring it."

No. 5. "One can never tell what another person is up to. How could we imagine, mistress?"

Bhramar laughed, and said, "Tell me first what has happened and then each of you do as you like."

Then the clamour broke out afresh.

No. 1. "Have you not heard? The whole village is in a turmoil about it."

No. 2. "It is a case of 'a dove's nest in the tiger's lair.'"¹

No. 3. "Let me charm the poison out of her with this broom."

No. 4. "What shall we say, mistress? 'The dwarf has tried to reach the moon.'"

No. 5. "You cannot tell a cat's nature when it is drenched.² A rope round the neck. A rope round the neck."

¹ A proverb denoting extreme temerity.

² A proverb denoting the assumption of a tone of virtuous innocence by a villain, when in a fix, just as the mild and helpless look of a half-drowned cat conceals its real cruel nature.

Bhramar. "Your necks."

Then with one voice the maids exclaimed, "What is our fault? What have we done? We know well that we are sure to get the blame for anything that happens, no matter who did it. We have to work our bodies to death to get our food, simply because we can't help ourselves." And with this two or three covered their eyes and wept. A wailing arose as though one of them had lost a son. Bhramar was vexed, but she could not help laughing, and said, "You deserve a rope round your necks because you have not yet told me what it is all about. What has happened?"

Then again all round about were shouted four or five different versions of the story. With much pains Bhramar extracted from that endless chatter the essence of the matter, that during the previous night a theft had been committed in the Kartá's sleeping chamber. One said, "Not a theft, but a robbery." Another said, "A burglary." A third, "No, only four or five thieves came and carried off a lakh of rupees in Company's paper."

Bhramar. "What then? What woman's nose were you wanting to cut off?"

No. 1. "Mistress Rohini's. Whose else?"

No. 2. "That wretched one is the source of this ruin."

No. 3. "Wasn't it she who brought the band of dacoits with her?"

No. 4. "It serves her right."

No. 5. "Let her work to death in gaol."

Bhramar. "How do you know that Rohini came to steal?"

"Why, she has been caught, and is locked up in the guard-room of the *Kachari*."

Bhramar went to Gobind Lál and related all she had heard. Gobind Lál shook his head thoughtfully.

Bhramar. "Why do you shake your head?"

Gobind. "I don't believe that Rohini came to steal. Do you believe it?"

Bhramar. "No."

Gobind. "Tell me why you don't believe it. People say so."

Bhramar. "Tell me why you don't believe it."

Gobind. "I'll tell you that some other time. Tell me first."

Bhramar. "You tell me first."

Gobind. "You first."

Bhramar. "Why should I speak first?"

Gobind. "Because I wish to hear."

Bhramar. "Must I speak truly?"

Gobind. "Speak the truth."

Bhramar was on the point of telling Gobind Lâl, but could not bring herself to do so. In shamed silence she bent her head.

Gobind Lâl understood; he had done so from the first; knowing the difficulty he had put these teasing questions. Bhramar firmly believed that Rohini was guiltless. She believed in her innocence as firmly as she did in her own existence. But she had no reason for this faith beyond the simple fact that Gobind Lâl had said he believed Rohini was innocent. Gobind Lâl's faith was Bhramar's faith; Gobind Lâl knew that well enough, for he knew Bhramar. That is why this little dark one loved him so.

Laughing, Gobind Lâl said, "I will tell you why you are on Rohini's side."

Bhramar. "Why am I?"

Gobind. "Because she does not say you are black, but rather of a bright brown colour."

Bhramar with an angry look said, "Go away!"

Gobind Lâl, with the words, "I am going," was moving away, when Bhramar pulled his garment, asking, "Where are you going?"

Gobind. "Can you tell me where I am going?"

Bhramar. "I can this time."

Gobind. "Tell me then."

Bhramar. "To save Rohini."

Gobind Lâl replying, "Quite right," kissed Bhramar. The sympathetic heart divines sympathy in another, therefore Gobind Lâl kissed Bhramar.

CHAPTER XI.

GOBIND LÂL put in an appearance at Krishna Kanta Râi's principal *Kachari*. Very early in the morning the Kartâ was attending to the duties of his court. Seated on a cushioned throne, smoking a golden *huka*, he was as it were a god among mortals. On one side were heaps of bundles of memoranda, ledgers, receipts, balance sheets, rent papers, cash books, &c., and on the other the Nâibs, Gomashtâs, Kârkuns, Muharrirs, Tahsildâr, Âmins, Pâiks, and tenants. In front, her head bent, her face veiled in her drapery, Rohini.

Gobind Lâl was a favourite nephew. Entering the court he asked, "What has occurred, uncle?"

At the sound of his voice Rohini slightly opened the veiling scarf and glanced at him. Gobind Lâl scarcely paid any heed to the answer given by Krishna Kanta; he

was thinking, "What does that look mean?" and concluded, "This anxious look is a petition."

What petition? What could it be but for deliverance from her trouble? He remembered the conversation they had held on the steps of the tank. He remembered saying, "If you are in any trouble, whether to-day or to-morrow, let me know." Now Rohini was indeed in trouble, and by this sign she was appealing to him. He thought, "My desire is to help you, for I see there is no one in this world likely to do so. But it is not easy to rescue you from the people into whose hands you have fallen." Thus musing, he repeated his question to his uncle, "What has happened, sir?"

Krishna Kanta had already related to his nephew the whole matter, but Gobind Lâl had been so absorbed in interpreting Rohini's glance that he had not heard. At this second question the old man thought, "What has happened? I think the boy is bewitched by the woman's lovely face," and again told the whole story. At the end he said, "This is that good-for-nothing Hara's doing. I imagine this woman has been bribed by him

to bring the false will and steal the true one. Then when caught, being alarmed, she tore the false will in pieces."

"What does Rohini say?"

"What would she say? She says it was not so."

Gobind Lál turned towards the defendant. "If not so, how was it, Rohini?" he asked.

Without raising her head Rohini answered through her sobs, "I am in your hands, do with me as you will. I will say nothing more."

"There! you can see what a bad lot she is!" remarked Krishna Kanta.

Gobind Lál reflected that all in this world are not evil, there may be some good as well as evil persons. Aloud he asked, "What order have you given about her? Are you sending her to the police?"

Krishna. "What have I to do with police courts and police? I am the police court, I am the magistrate, I am the judge. Besides, would it exalt my manhood to send this wretched woman to gaol?"

Gobind. "Then what will you do?"

Krishna. "I'll have her head shaved, butter-milk poured over it, and have her

winnowed out of the village.¹ She shall not return to my domain."

Gobind Lâl again asked the unhappy woman, "What do you say, Rohini?"

Rohini. "What does it matter?"

Gobind Lâl was astonished at this reply. After thinking awhile he said to Krishna Kanta, "I have a request to make."

Krishna. "What is it?"

Gobind. "Let this woman go for a little. I will be surety for her, and bring her here at ten o'clock."

Krishna reflected. "It is as I thought. I see the boy has some object in view." Aloud he said, "Where will she go? Why should I release her?"

Gobind. "It is necessary to get at the true story. She will not reveal it in the presence of so many. I will take her indoors and question her."

Krishna reflected. "I will shave the heads of the whole lot of her people. The boys of this generation are shameless! Wait, you scamp, I shall know how to deal with you." Aloud he said, "Very good." And

¹ The greatest indignity that can be inflicted on a Hindu woman.

addressing a cash-keeper, added, "Oh, you, send some one with this woman to the young mistress's rooms, and take care she does not escape."

The cashier took away Rohini, and Gobind Lâl departed. Krishna Kanta thought, "Durgâ! Durgâ! What has come to the boys?"

CHAPTER XII.

ON entering the women's apartments Gobind Lâl found Bhramar sitting in silence with Rohini. Bhramar had wished to say something kind with respect to this unfortunate affair, but in fear, lest even a show of sympathy should make Rohini weep, she had not ventured to do so. At sight of Gobind Lâl his young wife felt relieved from a difficulty. Going quickly to a distance she beckoned to her husband, who joined her, when Bhramar, speaking low, asked, "Why is Rohini here?"

Gobind. "I have something to ask her privately. Afterwards she must submit to her destiny."

"What will you ask her?"

"What is in her mind. If you fear to let me talk alone with her, then listen from behind the screen."

Bhramar was much perplexed. Bending

her head in shame she darted away, and reaching the kitchen, she took hold of the cook's hair from behind, and pulling it, said, "Mistress cook, while you are cooking tell me a pretty story."

In the meantime Gobind Lâl questioned Rohini. He said to her, "Will you tell me all the details of this matter?"

Rohini's heart was bursting to tell him, but she was of that race who, yet living, allowed themselves to be burnt on their husband's funeral pyre—the Aryan women. She answered only, "Have you not heard all about it from the Kartâ?"

Gobind. "The Kartâ says that you came to change the true will for a false one. Was that so?"

Rohini. "Not so!"

Gobind. "Then how was it?"

Rohini. "What will be the good of telling you?"

Gobind. "It may be for your good."

Rohini. "Will you believe my story?"

Gobind. "If it is a likely story, why should I not believe it?"

Rohini. "It is not a likely story."

Gobind. "I know what I may think worthy

of belief, but how can you know? Occasionally I even believe improbable stories."

Rohini thought, "Otherwise, why should I be sitting here to die for you? Well, I am prepared for that, nevertheless. I will put you to the test." Aloud she said, "That is because you are magnanimous. But what is the use of telling you this wretched being's troubles?"

Gobind. "To give me a chance of helping you?"

Rohini. "What help can you give me?"

Gobind Lâl thought, "I never came across such a woman, but she is distressed, one can't easily give her up." Aloud he said, "If I can, I will plead with the Kartâ for you, and he may let you go."

Rohini. "And if you do not plead for me, what will he do to me?"

Gobind. "You heard."

Rohini. "He will turn me out of the village with a shaven head covered with curds. I cannot understand it at all. If I am so disgraced it will be a mercy to drive me out of the country. If I am not driven out I shall go of my own will. How can I show my face here again? The curds are

no great punishment, they are easily washed off. But this hair" (which was to be shaven off), and Rohini looked at her wealth of black wavy hair—"this hair—yet, at *your* bidding, I would bring a pair of scissors and cut it all off myself to make a rope to bind your lady wife's hair."

Gobind Lâl was distressed. With a deep sigh he said, "I understand, Rohini; you feel the stain to be your punishment. If you cannot be saved from that you care not what other punishment attends it."

Then Rohini wept. In her heart she uttered a thousand blessings upon Gobind Lâl for his comprehension of her real feeling. Aloud she said, "Since you comprehend me, then I ask you, can you possibly save me from this disgrace?"

After some thought Gobind Lâl replied, "I cannot say. If I hear the real truth, I may be able to say whether I can or not."

Rohini. "Ask me what you wish to know."

Gobind. "What was that you burned?"

Rohini. "A false will."

Gobind. "Where did you get it?"

Rohini. "In the Kartâ's drawer."

Gobind. "How did it get in there?"

Rohini. "I put it there. The day the true will was written, I came at night and stole it, putting the false one in its place."

Gobind. "But why? What made you do it?"

Rohini. "It was at Hara Lâl Babu's urging."

Gobind. "Then what did you come to do last night?"

Rohini. "To put in the true will and steal the forged one."

Gobind. "Why so? What was in the forged one?"

Rohini. "To the elder Babu three-fourths, to you a forty-eighth share."

Gobind. "Why did you come to change it? I did not urge you."

Rohini wept. With much difficulty she checked her sobs to say, "No, you did not ask me to change it, but you gave me what I had never had—what I shall never have again in this life."

Gobind. "What is that, Rohini?"

Rohini. "You remember on the steps of the Bâruni tank?"

Gobind. "What was it, Rohini?"

Rohini. "What was it? I can't tell you. Please say no more about it. There is no physic for this disease. I shall never be cured of it. If I had had poison I would have taken it. But I would not do so in your house. There is only one help you can give me. Let me go, let me depart in tears. If I am found living after that, then you may cut off my hair, pour curded milk on my head, and exile me."

Gobind Lâl comprehended. As though reflected in a mirror, he had seen into Rohini's heart. He saw that the charm that had infatuated Bhramar, had also subjugated this serpent. He was neither pleased nor angry. Like the surging of the ocean, so was his heart moved with pity. He said, "Rohini, I think death would be well for you, but you have no right to take your own life. We all come into this world to work, and until that work is done we should not die."

Gobind Lâl began to move hither and thither. Rohini said, "Speak!"

Gobind. "You will have to leave this place."

Rohini. "Why so?"

Gobind. "You said yourself, you wished to do so."

Rohini. "I said so in shame, but why do you say it?"

Gobind. "You and I must not see more of each other."

Rohini perceived that Gobind Lâl understood all. She was at once confounded and delighted. She forgot all her suffering and once more desired to live. Now she wished to stay in the village. Man is very dependent. Aloud she said, "I consent to go away at once, but where can I go?"

Gobind. "To Calcutta. I will give you a letter to a friend I have there. He will buy a house for you ; it will cost you nothing."

Rohini. "What will become of my uncle?"

Gobind. "He will be with you, or I should not have bid you go to Calcutta."

Rohini. "How shall we live there?"

Gobind. "My friend will obtain employment for your uncle."

Rohini. "Will my uncle consent to leave this place?"

Gobind. "Can't you persuade him to do so after what has occurred?"

Rohini. "I can. But who will persuade your uncle? He will not let me go."

Gobind. "I will urge it upon him."

Rohini. "But that will bring yet another stain upon me. It will injure you also."

Gobind. "True. Then Bhramar shall speak to the Kartâ on your behalf. Do you go in search of her. Send her to me, and stay in the house yourself. Be ready in case you are called."

With tears in her eyes Rohini departed in search of Bhramar, gazing at Gobind Lâl as she went. Thus, in disgrace and in bonds, Rohini gave the first indication of her love.

CHAPTER XIII.

BHRAMAR could not be induced to plead with her father-in-law. The thought of doing so covered her with shame !¹

Reluctantly Gobind Lâl went himself to his uncle. Krishna Kanta after his meal sat, half reclining, on his bed, grasping the stem of his *hukâ*, fast asleep. Whilst his nose discoursed sweet music in measured tones and modes of various kinds, his mind, thanks to the opium, mounted on the steed that travels the three worlds, was visiting many places. Rohini's bright face had, I fancy, intruded into the old man's mind, else why

¹ It was not unkindness that prevented Bhramar from interceding for Rohini with her father-in-law. Among the many rules of domestic etiquette which govern the conduct of women in a Hindu household is one which forbids a wife from talking freely with her father-in-law, and it was this feeling of restraint and artificial shame that withheld Bhramar from speaking to Krishna Kanta Râi about Rohini.

did he, swayed by opium, fix her face upon the shoulders of Indrâni? In thought Krishna Kanta saw that Rohini had suddenly turned into Sachi (Indrâ's wife), and had gone to steal the bull from Mahâdeva's cowhouse. Nandi, trident in hand, going there to give the bull his food, had caught her. A struggle ensued, the which Sadâ-nama, Kârtika's peacock, perceiving, at the sight of her loosened locks, which reached down to her ankles in long and sinuous curls, mistaking them for hooded serpents, was about to swallow them up, when Kârtika, seeing his peacock about to commit this outrage, had gone in person to complain to Mahâdeva, and was calling out "Uncle!"

Gobind Lâl, confounded, said, "Sleep on, sir, I have not come about anything very important." He then took up the spittoon and put it right, put the spice-box in its proper place, and the stem of the *hukâ* in his uncle's hand. But Krishna Kanta was a vigorous old man, he did not easily forget. He said to himself, "This scamp has come only to talk again about that bright-faced woman's affair." Aloud he said, "My nap is over, I shall not sleep any more."

Gobind Lâl was in a difficulty. In the morning he had felt no embarrassment in speaking to his uncle of Rohini, but now he felt ashamed because he had talked with Rohini about what had occurred at the Bârunt tank. The old man enjoyed the sport. Seeing that Gobind Lâl could not bring himself to say anything, he started talking about his estate, then family matters, and again a law suit, never once alluding to Rohini. Gobind Lâl could in no way introduce the matter. In the recesses of his mind Krishna Kanta indulged himself in hearty laughter. The old man was very wicked.

In desperation the young man turned to go, when Krishna Kanta, taking compassion on his favourite nephew, called him back, saying, "That woman, for whom you stood surety this morning, has she confessed anything?"

Then Gobind Lâl, finding the road made clear for him, briefly related Rohini's story. The interview on the tank steps he concealed.

Krishna Kanta then asked, "What do you wish should be done to her?"

Ashamed, Gobind Lâl answered, "Whatever you wish, we also wish."

Inwardly laughing, but with a grave face, the uncle said, "I don't believe her tale. She should be turned out of the village with shaven head, crowned with curds. What do you say?"

Gobind Lâl was silent. The wicked old man resumed, "But if you others think she is not in fault, then let her go."

Gobind Lâl, with a sigh of relief, escaped from the old man's hands.

CHAPTER XIV.

ROHINI had gone home to make arrangements to leave the village, according to Gobind Lâl's direction. Saying nothing to Brahmânanda, she sat weeping in the middle of his house.

"I cannot leave this village. I shall die if I do not see him. If I went to Calcutta should I ever see Gobind Lâl? I won't go. This village, Haridrâ, is my heaven, this place is Gobind Lâl's temple. This village is my burial-place and here will I die. Am I fated not to die in my own burial-place? What can any one do to me if I won't leave Haridrâ? Krishna Kanta may drive me away disgraced, I will come back again. Gobind Lâl will be angry? let him be angry, at least I shall see him. They can't put my eyes out. I won't go. I won't go to Calcutta, I won't go anywhere. If I go it shall be to Death's palace—nowhere else."

Thus resolving, guilty Rohini, rising, opened the door, and, like a moth attracted by the flame of a candle, went to Gobind Lâl. As she walked her heart went up in prayer, "O Lord of the world, Protector of the destitute, sole Helper of the sorrowful, I am greatly afflicted, I have fallen into heavy trouble—save me! quench this unbearable fire of love in my heart, let it burn no longer. The more I see him whom I am now going to see, the more unbearable my pain—the more endless my joy. I am a widow. My religion is gone, my joy is gone, my life is gone, what remains to me, Lord? What is there for me to keep? O ye gods! O Durgâ! O Kâli! O Jagannâth! make me good, strengthen my heart; I can no longer endure this suffering."

Then that bursting, stricken heart, filled with boundless love, could not be stayed. Now she thought of taking poison, now of throwing herself at the feet of Gobind Lâl and opening to him all her heart, now of going away, now of drowning herself in the tank Bârunt, now of throwing virtue to the winds, snatching away Gobind Lâl and flying with him to another place. Thus weeping,

thus distracted, she again came up to Gobind Lâl.

Gobind. "How is this? I thought you had resolved to go to Calcutta!"

Rohini. "No."

Gobind. "How so? you only just now agreed to go."

Rohini. "I can't go."

Gobind. "I can't say anything. I have no right to force you to go, but it were better you should."

Rohini. "How can it be well to go?"

Gobind Lâl bent his head. How could he speak openly to her on such a matter?

Rohini, struggling with her tears and wiping them away, went slowly home. Greatly troubled, Gobind Lâl was turning the matter over when Bhomrâ came dancing up to him. "Of what are you thinking?"

Gobind. "What do you think?"

Bhramar. "Of my black form?"

Gobind. "Oh!"

Bhramar (frowning). "What does that mean? Are you not thinking of me? Except me have you anything in the world to think about?"

Gobind. "Have I not? There is a whole

world to think about. I was thinking of another person."

Bhramar, clinging to Gobind Lâl's neck, kissing him, hugging him affectionately, gently, smilingly, asked, "Another person! Tell me who."

Gobind. "What use in telling you?"

Bhramar. "Tell me!"

Gobind. "You will be angry."

Bhramar. "If I will—I will be. Tell me."

Gobind. "Get along! go and see if every one has finished eating."

Bhramar. "I will see presently—tell me, what person?"

Gobind. "What a tease you are! I was thinking of Rohini."

Bhramar. "Why were you thinking of Rohini?"

Gobind. "How do I know?"

Bhramar. "You do know. Tell me."

Gobind. "Does not one person think of another?"

Bhramar. "No. One thinks only of the person one loves. I think of you. You think of me."

Gobind. "Well, then, I love Rohini."

Bhramar. "That is not true. You love me. You should not be fond of any one else. Why were you thinking of Rohini? tell me."

Gobind. "Is a widow allowed to eat fish?"

Bhramar. "No."

Gobind. "If a widow may not eat fish, why does Târini's mother eat it?"

Bhramar. "Oh! she is disgraceful. She does what she ought not to do."

Gobind. "Then I also am disgraceful, for I do what I should not. I love Rohini."

In an instant Bhomrâ gave Gobind Lâl a slap on the cheek, saying very angrily, "I am—Mistress Bhomrâ—Dâsi—in my presence will you speak falsely?"

Gobind Lâl confessed defeat. Placing his hand on Bhramar's shoulder, taking in his hand her sweet face like an open lotus-flower, in soft but yet in grave and troubled tones he said, "Yes, I did not speak truly, Bhomrâ; I do not love Rohini. Rohini loves me."

Sharply Bhomrâ wrenched her face from Gobind Lâl's hold, and stood some distance

away. Her breast heaving, she said, "Wretched, vile woman! let her die, die, die!"

Laughing, Gobind Lâl said, "Why so much abuse already? She has not taken me from you, your sole jewel, the wealth of kings."

Bhomrâ (confounded). "Get away! Why do you talk like that? Is it possible? Still, why did the woman speak so in your presence?"

Gobind. "Just so, *Bhomrâ*; she ought not to have said it; that is what I was thinking about. I had arranged a home for her in Calcutta, I had bidden her go there, had even agreed to pay the cost——"

Bhomrâ. "And then?"

Gobind. "And then she would not consent to it."

Bhomrâ. "Well, may I give her a piece of advice?"

Gobind. "You may, but I must hear the advice."

Bhomrâ. "Hear it."

Thus saying *Bhomrâ* called repeatedly to a maidservant named Khiri.

Then Khirodâ, or Khiri, appeared, fat and

plump-bodied, wearing anklets on her feet, and a silver girdle round her waist—her face full of smiles. Bhomrâ said, "Khiri! can you go at once to that wretched Rohini?"

Khiri. "Certainly; what am I to say to her?"

Bhomrâ. "Speak in my name and say I bid her put an end to herself."

Khiri. "I am to say that? I go," and Khirodâ, or Khiri, jingling her anklets, set off. As she was starting Bhomrâ added, "Come and tell me what she says."

"Very well," replied Khirodâ. Soon after she returned and said, "I have told her."

Bhomrâ. "What did she say?"

Khiri. "She said, 'Tell her to tell me how to do it.'"

Bhomrâ. "Then go again—go and say, At the Bârunt tank—this evening—with a *kalsi* tied to her neck.¹ Do you understand?"

Khiri. "Very good."

Again Khiri went and returned. Bhomrâ asked, "Did you tell her about the tank?"

¹ Hinting that she should drown herself. See Note 6 in the Appendix.

Khiri. "I told her."

Bhomrâ. "What did she say?"

Khiri. "She said, 'Very well.'"

Gobind. "Fie, Bhomrâ!"

Bhomrâ. "Don't be concerned. She won't kill herself. She is infatuated with you, is it likely that she will die?"

CHAPTER XV.

THE day's work over, Gobind Lâl went, according to his daily custom, to stroll in the flower garden on the banks of the Bârunt tank. Walking amongst his flowers was one of Gobind Lâl's principal pleasures. Under each tree he would linger lovingly, but we will not describe every tree. Amid the shrubs there rose a lofty stone pedestal on which stood a white marble figure of a woman, half-draped, with downcast eyes, pouring water on her feet from a jug. All round her on the pedestal stood brightly coloured pots containing plants of geranium, verbena, euphorbia, the Indian chrysanthemum, and rose ; surrounding the base of the pedestal rows of jessamine, gardenia, and other sweetly scented indigenous shrubs perfumed the air, and beyond them many sorts of flowering trees, native and foreign, blue, yellow, red, white, and many-coloured,

delighted the eye. There Gobind Lâl loved to sit. On moonlight nights he would sometimes bring Bhramar to wander in the garden and sit in this spot. At sight of the half-clothed stone woman Bhramar would cry shame on it, sometimes drape it with her scarf, sometimes bring a rich garment from the house to throw over it; sometimes she would pull at the jar in the hands of the statue as if to take it from her.

Gobind Lâl was sitting there this evening admiring the beauty of the mirror-like Bâruni. Presently he saw Rohini, *kalsi* on hip, descending the broad stone-built steps of the tank. People can't get on without water, however well they may manage without everything else. On this day of sorrow also Rohini had come for water. She stepped into the tank, apparently to bathe, and Gobind Lâl, thinking it undesirable to remain in sight, moved away. He wandered long about the garden; at length, concluding that Rohini must be gone, he returned to sit at the feet of the marble beauty that never ceased pouring water from the jar. Again he looked out upon the water. He saw neither Rohini nor any other human being.

No one anywhere—but a *kalsi* floating on the surface.

Whose *kalsi*? Suddenly a doubt arose. Had any one, intending to take water, been drowned? Rohini had come just a short time previously to fetch water. In a flash the conversation of the morning recurred to him. He remembered that Bhramar had sent word to Rohini, bidding her drown herself that evening in the Bâruni tank. He remembered that she had returned for answer, "Very well."

Gobind Lâl came immediately to the ghât. Standing on its lowest step he looked over the whole water. It was clear as glass. Below the steps you could see to the bottom of the tank. He saw Rohini lying like a golden image beneath the water, surrounded by the clear crystal.

CHAPTERS XVI. & XVII.

GOBIND LÂL immediately dived into the water, lifted up Rohini and laid her on the steps. He could not tell if she still lived; she was senseless, her breathing had ceased. He called to one of the gardeners, and with his assistance bore Rohini to one of the summer houses for the needful attention. So, whether in life or in death, Rohini at length entered Gobind Lâl's house. Other than Bhramar no woman had ever entered that summer house. Like a *champak* flower battered by wind and rain that lifeless woman's form stretched upon the couch appeared beautiful in the lamplight. The long and massive tresses of her dark black hair lay straightened with the wet, the water dripping from it like rainfall from the clouds. Her eyes were closed, but the beauty of the eyebrows above them was increased by the deeper black caused by the water. Her

brow, calm, high, untinged by fear or shame, full of unexpressed thought, her cheek even now bright, her lower lip so full of sweetness, even yet shaming the *Rattikâ* (a red seed with a black spot). Tears sprang to the eyes of Gobind Lâl as he said, "Alas! alas! why did the Creator send you into the world with such beauty? and having formed you so beautiful, why did He not make you happy? Why have you gone away thus?" He felt himself the cause of this beautiful woman's self-destruction, and his heart felt ready to burst.

If Rohini still lived she must be saved.

[The rest of Chapter XVI. is taken up with a somewhat lengthened description of the methods usually adopted in reviving the drowned. As this is not likely to interest the English reader it has been omitted. The author represents Gobind Lâl as becoming enamoured of Rohini during this process. The text is resumed at Chapter XVII.]

As soon as Rohini began to breathe Gobind Lâl gave her some physic. It was a powerful restorative, and gradually Rohini

gained strength. Looking round she saw herself to be in an elegantly adorned room. A cool, gentle wind was coming in from the open window. A soft, mild light burned in a crystal lamp at one side, at the other side the living lamp, her heart's keeper, burned. Here Rohini, drinking the restorative held to her lips by Gobind Lal, was recovering life, there life-restoring words entering her ear aroused her faculties. First breath, then consciousness, sight, hearing, then speech, was restored to her. Rohini said—

"I was dead, who has restored me to life?"

Gobind. "Never mind who saved you; that you are saved is enough."

Rohini. "Why did you save me? Have you such enmity towards me that you stand in my way even in death?"

Gobind. "Why should you die?"

Rohini. "Have I not even the right to die?"

Gobind. "No one has the right to commit sin; self-destruction is sinful."

Rohini. "I don't know good from evil. No one has taught me. I don't heed sin or righteousness; for what sin am I thus

punished? If for no sin I am thus afflicted, what worse can befall me if I sin? I will die. Not this time. I fell in your sight and you have saved me. I will do it again where you shall not see me."

"Why should you die?" Gobind Lal asked, in much distress.

"Far better to die outright than to be always expecting death, day and night, from hour to hour, moment by moment."

"On what account do you suffer so much?"

Rohini. "Night and day terrible thirst, a burning heart; before me cool water, but in this life never to touch that water. Not even the hope of it."

Gobind. "It is of no use to talk in this way. Come, I will see you to your home."

Rohini. "No, I will go alone."

Gobind Lal understood why Rohini objected to his accompanying her. How could he persist? She went alone.

Then Gobind Lal in the now vacant room, suddenly falling to the floor, rolling in the dust, gave way to weeping. Hiding his face on the ground, with fear-strained eyes, he pleaded, "O Lord, preserve me from this

danger. If Thou dost not strengthen me, in whose strength shall I escape this evil? I shall die. Bhramar will die. Do Thou shine in this heart and in Thy strength I shall conquer myself."

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHEN Gobind Lâl returned to the house Bhramar asked him, "Why have you stayed so late in the garden to-night?"

Gobind. "Why do you ask? Do I never do so?"

Bhramar. "You do—but to-day—from your look and from the sound of your voice, it seems to me that something has happened."

Gobind. "What has happened?"

Bhramar. "Nay, if you don't say, how should I tell you? Was I there?"

Gobind. "Can't you tell from that look you speak of?"

Bhramar. "Put aside that nonsense! It is not a nice way to speak, that I can tell from your face. But tell me the truth, I feel greatly troubled in mind." As she spoke tears fell from Bhomrá's eye and

Lâl, drying her tears and caressing her, said, "One day I will tell you, Bhramar, not to-day."

"Why not to-day?"

"You are still a child, and such matters are not fit for your ears."

"Shall I be old by to-morrow?"

"I shall not tell you to-morrow. You shall know in two years' time. Ask nothing further to-day, Bhramar."

Bhramar uttered a deep sigh. "Let it be so. Tell me after two years. I had a great desire to know, but if you won't tell me, how shall I hear about it? I feel very much upset."

How was it that the darkness of a heavy sorrow fell on Bhomrâ's mind? As in a spring sky, fair, blue, bright, nothing to be seen anywhere, suddenly a cloud arising darkens the whole heavens; Bhomrâ felt as though in her breast a cloud had arisen and filled it with gloom. Her eyes filled with tears, but she thought, "I am crying without a cause; I am very wicked; my husband will be angry." So, still weeping, she went out of the room, sat down in a corner, stretched out her feet, and began to

read "Annadâ Mangal."¹ I cannot say how much she read of it, but the black cloud in her breast was in no way dispersed.

¹ "Annadâ Mangal," a famous Bengali poem, written by Bhârat Chandra Râi towards the close of the seventeenth century.

CHAPTER XIX.

SITTING with his uncle, Gobind Lâl began to talk on matters of business; he asked some questions about the estate. Krishna Kanta was pleased to observe this disposition in Gobind Lâl, and said, "If you (sons) would look into things a little, I should be glad. How much longer have I to live? If you don't learn about things now, you will understand nothing of the condition of the estate when I am gone; I am old and can't go about anywhere. The whole estate is being ruined for want of proper supervision."

"If you care to send me, I can go. I should like to visit all parts of the estate by degrees."

Krishna Kanta was delighted, and said, "I am extremely glad to hear you say so. At this moment there is a disturbance at Bandar Khâli. The *râyats* are on strike

and won't pay their rents. They say, 'We pay rents, but the Nâib does not credit us with the amounts.' If you like to go there, I shall make the necessary arrangements."

Gobind Lâl consented. It was for this purpose he had come to Krishna Kanta. In this, the prime of his young manhood, his passions had all the force of the sea in motion, and his thirst for beauty was very keen. Bhramar did not satisfy this thirst. Rohini's beauty had arisen in his path as heavy clouds in a burning sky refresh the *châtak's* longing eyes. At sight of Rohini's form Gobind Lâl's mind became restless as the fickle peacock at the sight of clouds when the first rain begins. When he had become conscious of this the young husband swore to himself that even should it kill him he would not be unfaithful to Bhramar. He resolved to forget Rohini in devotion to business; in travel he should certainly be able to do so. It was with this design in his mind that he had sat conversing on business with his uncle. On hearing of the trouble at Bandar Khâli, he eagerly consented to go thither.

Bhramar heard that the second son was

going into the country and insisted that she would go with him. For this boon she entreated on her knees, but her mother-in-law would not let her go. The boat was all ready, and, surrounded by the servants, Gobind Lâl kissed Bhramar and set out on his ten days' journey to Bandar Khâli.

First, Bhramar lay on the ground crying. Then, jumping up, she tore up "Annadâ Mangal," let loose the birds in the aviary, threw all her dolls in the water, destroyed all the plants in the pots, threw the dinner rice upon the cook, spun the servants round by their back hair, quarrelled with her sister-in-law, and after other such violent doings went to bed. In bed she pulled the sheet over her head and wept.

Meantime, impelled by a favourable wind, Gobind Lâl's boat stemmed the waves.

CHAPTER XX.

NOTHING went well. Bhramar was alone. She took up the bedding and threw it on one side, saying it was too soft.

She forbade the servants to bring any flowers: she said they were full of insects. She refused to play card games, telling her companions her mother-in-law would be angry. Needles, thread, wools, patterns, she gave them all away to the village women, saying they made her eyes burn. Asked why she wore soiled garments, she abused the laundress, though the presses were full of clean clothes. Her hair and the comb ceased relationship, and her locks swayed in the wind like a field of thatching grass. Asked why, she would laugh and bunch it up on the top of her head anyhow, so far did she neglect herself.

At meal-times she began to frame excuses, saying she couldn't eat, she had fever. Her

mother-in-law called in a doctor, put her under diet and pills, and entrusted the charge of administering the medicine to Khirodâ. The daughter-in-law snatched pills and food from Khiri's hand and flung them out of window.

By degrees this sort of thing became unbearable in the eyes of Khiri. She said, "For whom are you thus grieving, Thâkurun? Does he for whom you are refusing food and sleep think of you for a single day? While you are weeping yourself to death, he is meditating, with closed eyes over his *hukâ*, on the charms of mistress Rohini."

Bhramar gave Khiri a sound slap. She was always very smart with her hand. Almost weeping she said, "You may say what you choose, but get out of my sight."

Khiri. "Do you think your slaps will shut people's mouths? For fear you should be angry we say nothing; but if I don't speak I shall die! Call Pânci and ask her if Rohini did not come out of the Bâbu's garden that night he was so late."

Khirodâ's destiny was evil thus to talk to Bhramar so early in the day. Standing up, Bhramar rained slaps and cuffs upon

Khirodâ, knocked her down, and dragged her by the hair, and at length burst out crying.

Khirodâ had never been angry at Bhramar's occasional slaps, but to-day it was too much. She got rather angry, and said, "Ha! mistress, what is the use of beating and dragging me? we speak for your own good. People are mocking at your name and we can't endure it. If you don't believe me, call in Pânchi and ask her."

Bhramar, weeping in anger and sorrow, exclaimed, "Ask her yourself. Am I a low creature like you that I should inquire about my husband from that outcast Pânchi? How dare you talk like that to me! I will speak to the Thâkurun and have you turned out with a broom. Go out of my sight."

Khirodâ went away grumbling. Then Bhramar, with tearful eyes and clasped hands, called upon Gobind Lâl, saying, "O preceptor, teacher, instructor in religion, my sole model of truthfulness, was it this you were hiding from me that day?"

In her innermost thoughts, in that hidden spot into which no eye ever penetrates, in that place where there is no self-deception,

Bhramar, searching, found no disbelief in her husband. She did not distrust him. Once only she said to herself, "Should he be unfaithful how I should suffer! If I die all will be over."

To the Hindu woman the thought of death comes readily.

CHAPTER XXI.

Now the maid, Khiri, was thinking, "This is a degenerate age. A bit of a girl won't believe what I tell her!" In Khirodâ's simple heart there was no anger or spite against Bhramar. She indeed wished well to Bhramar, wished her no ill. But it was not endurable that Bhramar should refuse to listen to her gossip. So Khiri, after an indifferent meal, hastily anointing her polished person with oil, threw a coloured towel over her shoulders, and with a *kalsi* on her hip went to bathe in the tank Bârunt.

The first person she met was Mistress Haramani, who served as cook in the big house, and was now returning from her bath. On seeing her, Khirodâ said aloud to herself, "They say, 'A man gets you to steal for him, and then calls you a thief'; you can't do anything for big people, there is no knowing what temper you will find them in."

Haramani, scenting a quarrel, shifted her wet garment from the right hand to the left, and asked, "What is it, Khīrodâ? What has happened?"

Khiri proceeded to unburden her mind. "Look here," she said, "should a wretched woman of the village go to wander about the Bâbu's garden, and we, his servants, not be allowed to tell the mistress about it?"

Hara. "What is that? What woman, then, has ventured to walk in the Bâbu's garden?"

Khiri. "Who else goes? That creature Rohini."

Hara. "Miserable wretch! How long has Rohini been doing that? To whose garden does she go, Khīrodâ?"

Khīrodâ mentioned Gobind Lâl's name. Then the two, looking knowingly at one another, went, with a jest, on their several ways. Presently Râm's mother came up; her also Khīrodâ brought to a stand, inveigling her with a smile, and told her of Rohini's outrageous conduct. These two, also exchanging significant smiles, pursued their way. Thus Khīrodâ, imparting her troubles to Râm's mother, to Shyam's-

mother, to Hâri, to Târi, to Pâri, and to every one she met, at length, hale in body and in cheerful spirits, bathed in Baruni's crystal waters.

She had thus conveyed to all these people the fact that the unfortunate Rohini had walked in Gobind Lâl's garden. One listener soon became ten, the ten became a hundred, the hundred swelled to a thousand. That sun, whose early rays were as yet not hot when Khirodâ first spoke of Rohini in the presence of Bhramar, had not set, when the fact was proclaimed from house to house that Rohini was favoured by Gobind Lâl.

How it grew from the simple garden matter to unmeasured passion, from unmeasured passion to unlimited jewellery, and to how many other matters! I, oh ye ladies of good family, full of artful rumours and scandal-loving—I, a man, and but a poor truth-telling writer, care not to dwell upon at length to you.

Gradually the news reached Bhramar.

First came Binodini, saying, "Is this really true?"

Bhramar, with shrinking face and bursting breast, asked, "Is what true, Thâkurji?"

Thâkurji, contracting her brows like Cupid's flowery bow, and shooting a glance from the corner of her eye, drew her child on to her lap, and said, "Well! how about Rohini?"

Bhramar, unable to reply, drew the child towards her, and, by a device that comes easily to girls, made it cry. Binodini, giving the boy the breast, bore him off home.

After Binodini came Surodhuni, who observed, "I'm saying, if I were you I would give some physic to Gobind Bâbu. You may be ever so nice, still you are not fair-complexioned. A man's heart is not to be got by words alone; he wants also beauty and accomplishments. Well, who knows what is Rohini's design?"

Bhramar. "What design can Rohini have?"

Surodhuni struck her brow: "Unfortunate one! So many people have heard about it. Only you have not heard that Gobind Bâbu gave Rohini jewellery worth 7,000 rupees!"

Bhramar, acutely suffering, mentally consigned Surodhuni to the hands of death. Aloud she said, wringing off the head of one of her dolls, "I know that, I saw the bill.

In it your name was down for 14,000 rupees' worth of ornaments."

After Binodini and Surodhuni came Râmi, Bâmi, Shyâmi, Ramani, Kâmini, Sârodâ, Pramadâ, Sukhodâ, Baradâ, Kamalâ, Bimolâ, Sitalâ, Nirmalâ, Mâdhu, Nidhu, Bidhu, Târini, Nistârini, Dintârini, Bhabatârini, Surobâlâ, Giribâlâ, Brajabâlâ, Shoilabâlâ, and many others, in ones, in twos, in threes, to inform the unhappy, lonely girl that her husband is passionately fond of Rohini. The young woman, the mature, the elderly, and even the girl, all repeated the same story to Bhramar, saying, "There is nothing wonderful in the matter; who would not be led away by seeing the Mejo Babu's handsome form, and why should not he be ensnared by Rohini's beauty?" Some caressingly, some to tease, some in jest, some in anger, some in gladness, some in sorrow, some with laughter, some with tears, let Bhramar know that her future was ruined.

In the village, Bhramar was held to be a happy woman. At sight of her happiness all were dying with envy. This little black thing to be so lucky! Endless wealth, a husband a goddess might long for, a man of

spotless fame among his fellows, on whom worship is bestowed as on the lotus, and in addition to this the graces of the jasmine. The village people could not endure it. So in families and in troops, one carrying a child, one accompanying her sister, one binding her hair, some preparing to do so, some with loose hair, came to give the news, "Bhramar, your happiness is gone!" Not one of them thought of Bhramar as a sorrowful, innocent girl parted from her husband.

Bhramar could endure no more. Closing her door, and rolling in the dust, she lay on the floor and wept, saying, "O Remover of doubt, dearer than life, thou art my doubt, thou art my faith, to-day of whom shall I inquire? What doubt have I? Yet they all say it. Why should every one say it if it be not true? You are not here; who will end my doubts? My suspicions are not removed; then why do I not die? Can I doubt and live? Why do I not die? Come back, lord of my life! Do not cast on me the reproach that I died without letting you know."

CHAPTER XXII.

Now the pain that burned in Bhramar, the same pain tormented Rohini. Since the report was about, how should it fail to reach Rohini? She heard that it was said in the village that Gobind Lâl was her slave—that he had given her jewels to the value of seven thousand. Whence the rumour came Rohini did not hear, nor had she any indication who had set it about. She at once determined that Bhramar must have done so, else why did Rohini's body burn so much? She thought, "Bhramar has burned me severely. The other day I was charged with being a thief, now there is this charge. I will not stay longer in this country; but before I go I will give her a burning in her very bones."

We already know that there was nothing too difficult for Rohini to accomplish. From some neighbour in the village she borrowed a Benares *sari* and a set of gilt jewels.

When evening fell, she wrapped these things in a parcel and took them with her to the women's apartments in the Râi's house. Into the room where Bhramar was lying in solitude on the ground, now weeping, now staunching her tears and gazing up at the ceiling, thither went Rohini and sat down, placing her bundle beside her. Bhramar was amazed. At the sight of Rohini her whole body burned as though she were poisoned. Unable to endure it, she said—

“You went the other night to the Thâkur's room to steal; have you come here now for the same purpose?”

Rohini thought, “I have come to shave your head” (*i.e.*, serve you out). Aloud she said, “Now I have no further need to steal, I no longer beg for money. By the Mejo Bâbu's favour I have no further difficulty about food and clothes, but it is not quite as much as people say.”

Bhramar. “Be off from here.”

Paying no heed to that direction, Rohini repeated, “It is not as much as people say. They say I have received seven thousand rupees. In fact it is altogether three thousand in jewels and this *sîri*. I have

come to show them to you. Why should they say seven thousand?"

Thus saying, Rohini opened the parcel and displayed the Benares *sâri* and the gilt ornaments. With a kick Bhramar scattered the things in every direction. •

Rohini said, "One should not tread on gold" (*i.e.*, spurn it); and quietly picked up each article and wrapped them again in a bundle. In the same noiseless way she departed with her parcel.

I am very sorry about one thing. Bhramar had given Khirodâ a beating, but not a single slap to Rohini; this much grieves me. Had any of my lady readers been present, I have no doubt they would have struck Rohini with their own hands. I honour the rule never to strike a woman; but not so much the command not to strike an ogress or a demon. Yet I can explain how it was that Bhramar did not strike Rohini. Bhramar was fond of Khirodâ, so did not hesitate to beat her. She was not fond of Rohini, and would not raise a hand to strike her. When children quarrel the mother corrects her own child, not the child of some one else.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THAT night, even before daydawn, Bhramar sat down to write to her husband. Gobind Lâl had taught her to read and write; but Bhramar never had much taste for study. Her mind was given to her flowers, her dolls, her birds, her husband, but not so much to study, nor to household work. She would take paper and sit down to write; first would come a smudge, then an erasure with the pen, then another smudge, and again a scratching out,

In the course of several days a letter would not get written; but to-day there was nothing of all this. Crooked, halting letters, whatever came first satisfied Bhramar on this occasion. Letters slightly resembling each other in form were freely exchanged, some letters omitted, compound letters written separately; none of this troubled Bhramar. To-day, in a single hour, Bhramar wrote a

long letter to her husband. It was not that there were no erasures, but that she did not heed them. Duly corrected, this was her letter:—

“You never told me what detained you so long the other night in the garden. You said you would tell me after two years, but my evil destiny has caused me to hear it sooner. Why do I say hear it? I should say I have seen it. The dress and ornaments that you gave to Rohini, she has herself shown to me.

“You suppose, I think, that my devotion to you is immovable, my belief in you boundless. I also thought so. But now I find it is not so. So long as you were worthy of homage, I was devoted to you; so long as you were trustworthy, I believed in you. But now I am no longer devoted to you, I no longer believe in you, I have no further pleasure in seeing you. Please to give me notice when you think of coming home. Weeping, and as best I can, I will return to my father's house.”

In due time Gobind Lal received this

letter. It fell upon him like a thunderbolt. Only from the handwriting and from the style of the corrections could he believe it to have been written by Bhramar. Still many doubts arose. He could hardly believe that she could write him such a letter.

By the same post had come other letters. Gobind Lâl opened Bhramar's letter first. After reading it he remained for many minutes motionless as a pillar; then in an absent manner he opened the other letters. Among them was one from Brahmânanda Ghosh. The poetry-loving Brahmânanda wrote—

“ Upon you the daughter-in-law (your wife) may commit any outrage, but why are we, poor, insignificant beings, to be made to suffer this oppression? She has proclaimed that you gave to Rohini Rs. 7,000 in jewels. And other evil tales she has set about concerning you that I should be ashamed to write. However it may be, my request to you is that you will set things right. Otherwise I will go elsewhere to live.”

Again was Gobind Lâl amazed. Bhramar

set about these reports? Unable to see into the meaning of it all, he that very day gave out that the air and water of the place did not suit him; that he would go home next day, and ordered the boats to be prepared.

On the following day, in a state of great dejection, Gobind Lâl set out on his journey home.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Do not let the object of your affections out of your sight. If you would make firm the bond of love let the cord be short. Keep the beloved one within sight. In absence how many poisonous fruits are grown. Him from whom you parted with tears, thinking, "How shall I live without him?" when you met again, some years later, you merely asked, "Are you well?" or perhaps said nothing to him, inwardly you are divided. Or it may be that in anger or in pride you see him no more. At any rate, if not so bad as that, after an absence things are not as they were before. What goes does not return. What breaks can never be reformed. Waters let loose, are they ever again confined?

Bhramar did not well in suffering Gobind Lâl to go to a distance. Had they been together at this time I think this misunder-

standing would not have occurred. In discussion the truth must have appeared. Bhramar would not have been so much mistaken. She would not have been so angry, and the ruin arising out of this anger would not have befallen.

Gobind Lâl having set out for home, the Naib sent word of the fact to Krishna Kanta. This news, coming by post, reached the Kartâ four or five days before Gobind Lâl was due. Bhramar, hearing that her husband was returning, again sat down to write. She covered four or five sheets with ink, then tore them up, and after two or three hours succeeded in writing a letter. In it she said to her mother, "I am very unwell; if you can have me home for a bit I can return refreshed. Don't delay, if the illness increases I shall not get better. Send tomorrow for me if you can. Don't say anything here about my being ill." This letter written, Bhramar secretly, through the agency of Khirodâ, dispatched a man with it to her father's house.

If instead of her mother others had read this letter they would have divined that some ruse lay concealed within it. But the mother,

hearing of her child's illness, became very much distressed. She poured forth a torrent of abuse upon Bhramar's mother-in-law, a lesser amount upon her husband, and, weeping, determined that bearers should be sent the next day, with a palanquin and attendants, male and female, to bring Bhramar home. Artfully saying nothing of his daughter's illness, Bhramar's father wrote to Krishna Kanta, saying that her mother had become very ill, and begging him to send Bhramar to see her, instructing the servants to the same effect.

Krishna Kanta was placed in a difficulty. Gobind Lâl was coming, and it was not the thing to send Bhramar away, yet if her mother was ill it was impossible to refuse. After some consideration he sent Bhramar home, with the stipulation that she should be absent only four days.

On the fourth day Gobind Lâl arrived. He heard that Bhramar was at her father's house, and that a palanquin was to be sent for her that night. He understood it all, and felt deeply affronted. "So little faith," he thought. "She has thrown me over without consideration and without question-

ing. I will never see that Bhramar's face again. I am well able to exist even without Bhramar."

Thus thinking, Gobind Lâl requested his mother not to send a palanquin for Bhramar. He gave no reason for this prohibition. So, with the mother-in-law's assent, Krishna Kanta made no further attempts to recall Bhramar.

CHAPTER XXV.

THUS two or three days passed. No one brought Bhramar, Bhramar did not come. Gobind Lâl thought, "Bhramar has dared me, I'll make her cry for a bit. She has been very unjust to me, let her weep a little." He wept himself at the sight of their vacant room. He wept as he thought of Bhramar's want of faith in him. To think of quarrelling with Bhramar brought tears. Then, wiping them away, he became angry. In anger he sought to forget her. But how could he forget? Joy goes, memory remains. A sore may heal, but the scar remains. Man goes, his name remains.

Finally, foolish Gobind Lâl thought that the best way to forget Bhramar was to think of Rohini. The brilliancy of Rohini's unusual beauty had not for a single day deserted the heart of Gobind Lâl. He forcibly refused it admission, but it never

left him. There is a story told of a certain demon who took violent possession of a house. Night and day it peeped about, but the exorcist always drove it away. In like manner the demon Rohini constantly sought entrance into the temple of Gobind Lál's heart; he as constantly drove it away. As on the water the reflection of the sun and moon is to be seen where the sun and moon are not, so daily in Gobind Lál's heart is the shadow of Rohini, but not Rohini herself. He thought, "If I could for the time being forget Bhramar I should think of Rohini, else I cannot forget this pain." Many quacks use strong and poisonous remedies to cure small ills; Gobind Lál was ready to use a harsh poison to cure this small evil. Of his own will he was ready to effect his own undoing.

Rohini's existence was at first merely a memory, but afterwards changed into a trouble. From a trouble it became a desire. Gobind Lál sat in the summer house on the borders of the tank repenting this desire. It was the rainy season, the sky covered with clouds. The rain fell, now stormily, now gently, but without ceasing. Evening had

come, the darkness of approaching night added to the darkness of the clouds obscured the steps of the tank, they could not be clearly seen. Gobind Lâl dimly perceived the figure of a woman descending the steps. Rohini's descent of that *ghât* recurred to his mind. The rain had made it very slippery, and Gobind Lâl became distressed at the idea that the woman might slip and fall into the water. So he called from the arbour, "Who is that? Don't go down those slippery steps, you may fall!" Whether the woman understood I can't say, the sound of the falling rain may have prevented her hearing clearly. The woman with the *kalsi* resting on the hip went down the steps and came up again. Very slowly she approached the flower garden, opened the garden gate, came in, came up to Gobind Lâl, who saw Rohini standing before him. "Why have you come hither, Rohini, getting so wet?"

"Did you not call me, sir?"

"No, I forbid your descending the slippery *ghât*. Why stand there in the rain?"

Rohini, gaining courage, stepped into the bower. Gobind Lâl said, "If people see you what will they say?"

Rohini. "They are already saying what there is to say. I have made many efforts to get speech with you about that."

Gobind. "I also have some questions to put about that matter. Who spread the report? Why do you put the blame on Bhramar?"

Rohini. "Every one says so. But am I to talk standing here?"

Gobind. "No, come with me." Thus saying, Gobind Lâl, calling Rohini, went into the garden house. I am not disposed to give the conversation that ensued between these two. I will say only that that night before going home Rohini saw that Gobind Lâl had become infatuated with her beauty.

CHAPTER XXVI.

INFATUATED with beauty! Who is not so with something or other? I am infatuated with the beauty of this variegated butterfly; you are so with the loveliness of that flowery creeper. What fault is there in that? Beauty is made to enchant.

These were Gobind Lâl's first thoughts. Even a righteous man thinks thus when his feet are on the first step of the ladder of sin. But as with gravitations in the external world, so with the attraction of sin in the inner world; at each step the tendency to fall is accelerated. Gobind Lâl's fall was very rapid because his heart had for so many days been parched with the thirst for beauty. We can only weep, we cannot describe his fall.

Gradually the names of Rohini and Gobind Lâl came to be associated in the hearing of Krishna Kanta, to whom it gave

great distress. It deeply grieved him that there should be the slightest stain on Gobind Lál's character. He wished to reprove his nephew, but of late the old man had been ailing, and could not leave his bedroom. Thither Gobind Lál came daily to see him, but, being always surrounded by attendants, he could not in their presence speak of the matter. His illness increased gravely, and suddenly it came into the mind of Krishna Kanta that perhaps Death's messenger had come to settle accounts with him, that the river of life had now, perhaps, reached the vast ocean (of futurity). If he delayed longer he would not be able to speak. Krishna resolved to speak that day. When Gobind Lál came in the old man desired the others to leave him. Gobind Lál, somewhat confused, asked, "How are you feeling to-day?"

"Not very well. Why are you so late to-night?"

Making no reply to that, Gobind Lál took his uncle's hand and felt the pulse. Suddenly Gobind Lál's face fell. Krishna Kanta's life stream was slowly, slowly flowing away. Gobind Lál said only, "I am

coming back," and went straight to the house of his physician. The doctor was astonished. Gobind Lâl said, "Please to bring remedies quickly, *Mahâshoi*, my uncle's state is not at all satisfactory." In great haste the doctor took up a lot of pills and accompanied Gobind Lâl. Krishna Kanta was somewhat alarmed at the sight of the two in his room. The *Kabirâj* felt his pulse. The old man asked—

"Is there any danger?"

The doctor answered, "When is the human frame free from danger?"

Krishna Kanta understood. He said, "What time have I?"

"When I have given you physic I shall be able to say."

The doctor pounded the physic in a mortar and approached the patient to administer it. Krishna Kanta took the vessel containing the medicine in his hand, touched his head with it once, and then threw the contents into the spittoon.

The doctor looked distressed, and Krishna Kanta said, "Don't be troubled. It is not at my age that physic will cure me. In place of physic, call on Hari if you would

help me. Do you invoke the name of Hari, I will listen."

No one called on Hari, save the dying man. All were stunned, frightened, overwhelmed. Krishna Kanta alone was fearless. He said to Gobind Lâl, "The key of the drawer is at my head; take it out."

Gobind Lâl took the key from beneath the pillow. His uncle said, "Open the drawer and take out the will." Gobind Lâl obeyed. The old man then said, "Send for the Âmla, the Mohurir, and ten respectable householders."

Then the Nâibs, Mohurirs, Gomashtâs, Kârkoons, Chatterjis,¹ Mukherjis, Banerjis, Bhattachârjyas, Ghoshes, Bâsus, Mitras, and Dattas filled the room.

Krishna Kanta desired a *Mohurir* to read his will, and when the reading was finished, said, "This will will be destroyed. Write a new one."

"What shall I write?"

"Just what stands there—only——"

"Only—what?"

"Strike out the name of Gobind Lâl, and

¹ This and the following names are designations of different castes of Brahmans.

in its place write that of my nephew's wife, Bhramar. Write that after Bhramar's death the half-share will come to Gobind Lâl."

All remained stupefied. No one spoke. The *Mohurir* looked at Gobind Lâl, who made a sign to him to write. The *Mohurir* obeyed. When he had finished writing, Krishna Kanta signed, the witnesses signed. Gobind Lâl, now become a beggar, also signed as a witness.

In the will not a farthing was left to Gobind Lâl. To Bhramar the half-share.

That night, beneath the *tulsi*-tree, calling upon Hari, Krishna Kanta passed away.

CHAPTER • XXVII.

THE news of Krishna Kanta's death caused much grief in the neighbourhood. One said, "An Indra hath fallen;" another, "A *Dikpál* hath died;" another, "A mountain peak is broken." Krishna Kanta had been a wealthy man, but also one of sterling character. He gave handsomely to the poor, to the Brahmans, and to the Pandits. Therefore many were afflicted at his death.

Above all others, Bhramar. The first thing was to bring her home. In the day following on the Kartá's death, Gobind Lál's mother promptly sent for her daughter-in-law. Bhramar came back weeping for Krishna Kanta. Whether, on her first meeting with Gobind Lál, there would have been a great rupture between them on account of Rohini, I can't tell, but in the grief for Krishna Kanta this matter remained in

abeyance. When they first met, Bhramar was weeping for her father-in-law, and the sight of Gobind Lâl increased her sobs. Gobind Lâl also was weeping bitterly.

The danger of any great quarrel was averted by the general confusion. The two felt this; they both resolved that this was not the time for discussion of their personal trouble. Let Krishna Kanta's funeral rites be first reverently accomplished, and later they could refer to the other questions. Gobind Lâl said, "Bhramar, there are matters I must speak of with you; words it will make my heart burst to utter. I am distressed with a grief greater than that for the loss of my father; but I cannot speak of it now. After the funeral ceremonies I will speak to you. While these are going on we cannot introduce that topic."

Bhramar, checking her tears with great difficulty, and remembering the gods known from childhood—Kâli, Durgâ, Sivâ, Hari—said, "I also have something to say. When you have leisure, ask me about it."

Nothing further was said. The days passed on as usual—as usual to outward appearance only. Nor man, nor maid,

servant, not the *grihini*, nor the neighbours, relations, or members of the family, not one of them knew that a cloud had arisen in the sky, that a worm had entered the flower, that an insect had attacked that charming image of love. Yet it was so. Things were no more as they had been. Their smiles were not the same. Bhramar, Gobind Lâl—did they no longer smile? They smiled, but not as of yore. The smile that had beamed forth spontaneously at the meeting of the eyes no longer came; no more that smile, half laughter, half love; the smile that spoke at once of overflowing joy and of unsatisfied desire appeared no more. Those loving looks were gone, the look which had made Bhramar think, "How beautiful he is!" and Gobind Lâl, "How many charms she has!"—that look had fled. The longing looks with which she gazed on the love-lit eyes of Gobind Lâl, so intently fixed on hers, which set Bhramar thinking, "I shall never in this life reach the further shore of this ocean of love." That look—in dwelling on which Gobind Lâl forgot all the world beside—that look was gone. No more those loving forms of address, in-

flexions of the one-loved name, "Bhramara," "Bhomara," "Bhorna," "Bhumri," "Bhumi," "Bhuma," "Bhou, Bhou," those ever-changing epithets, full of love, of colour, of joy, were used no more. That Kâlo, "Kâla," "Kâlachand," "Kelesona," "Kâlomanik," "Kâlindi," Kâliye"—no more of these caressing names; that playful, mischievous calling was no longer heard, that teasing speech had ceased. The very mode of their speech was changed. Formerly, there was no lack of matter for talk, now it had to be hunted for. That talk which was half words, half meeting of eyes and lips, had ceased. No more that talk with words half uttered, half left unsaid, but readily understood, that needed no response, save only simplest sounds. Formerly, when Gobind Lâl and Bhramar were together, it required much calling to induce Gobind Lâl to respond, while Bhramar did not respond at all. Now, they had not to be called, but one or other would get up with the remark, "How hot it is!" or, "Who is that calling?" and would depart. A cloud had come over the full moon, an eclipse had obscured the autumnal moon.

Who had mixed dross with the refined ..

gold? Who had broken the chords of the divine instrument?

Now all was darkness in those hearts once lit up by the joyous rays of the noonday sun. Gobind Lâl sought to lighten this darkness by thinking of Rohini; Bhramar, to relieve this gloomiest gloom, cherished the idea of death. Refuge of the homeless, Path of the pathless, Home of love to the loveless art Thou, O Death! Comforter of the heart, Destroyer of sorrow, Preventer of misfortune, Cheerer of the destitute, art Thou, O Death! Hope of the despairing, Love of the loveless, Thou art; take, then, Bhramar to Thyself, O Death!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AFTER this the ceremonies of Krishna Kanta Râi's *srâddha* ¹ were performed on a magnificent scale. His enemies said, "Oh, yes! it was a grand affair indeed, but only some five, seven, or perhaps ten thousand rupees were spent upon it." His friends averred that the cost amounted to quite a hundred thousand rupees. Krishna Kanta's heirs mentioned privately to friends that the cost had been about fifty thousand rupees. We have seen the accounts. The total expense: 32,356 rupees, 5 annas, and 12½ gandas (20 gandas make 1 anna).

Be that as it may, for some days there was great uproar. Hara Lâl, as eldest son, came to perform the *srâddha*. For days nothing could be heard in the village but the buzzing of flies, the jingling of brass dishes and

¹ See in Appendix, Note 7.

cooking-pots, the tumult of beggars and the disputes of the logicians. There was the arrival of loads of sweetmeats of various kinds, the arrival of beggars, arrival of Brahmans with a single tuft of hair, and others wearing a *nâmâbali* (see Glossary), arrival of relations, relations' connections, relations of every degree. The children began to play at ball with the sugar-balls, the women, seeing that cocoanut-oil had become dear, smeared their hair with the ghee used for frying cakes; the opium-smoking shops were closed, for all the opium-smokers had gone to the feast of fruit and sweetmeats. The liquor (drinking) shops were closed, for all the frequenters of those shops had assumed the Brahminical tuft of hair, and bought *nâmâbalis*, and had gone to the *srâddha* to receive the customary presents. Rice became dear, for not only was a great deal used in cooking, but flour also was so much in request that the demand for it could not be made good by the admixture of ground rice.¹ So much ghee was needed

¹ In this and following sentences the author is humorously exposing the frauds of shopkeepers in selling ground rice as flour, in mixing castor oil with

that sick men could no longer obtain castor oil. If any one went to buy skimmed milk, the milk-sellers said that the little they had remaining had, by the blessing of the Brahmans, been turned into curds.

In some fashion the tumult of the *srâddha* was silenced, and the torment of reading the last will began. Hara Lâl, on reading it, perceived that it had been signed by many witnesses, and that there was no chance of upsetting it, so after the *srâddha* he returned to his home. After the reading, Gobind Lâl came to Bhramar and asked, "Have you heard what was in the will?"

"What is it?"

"A half-share to you."

"It is not mine, but yours."

"You and I are now apart. It is not mine, but yours."

"Even so, it is yours."

"I will not enjoy your property."

Bhramar had a strong desire to weep, but from pride repressed her tears and said, "What will you do then?"

ghee, and in selling skimmed milk as curds, when the demand for these articles exceeded the supply, as on the present occasion.

"I will find some way by which I may earn a few coppers to keep me going."

"In what way?"

"I will go from place to place seeking work."

"My property is not the uncle's property, but my father-in-law's. You are his heir, not I. The uncle had no power to will that property. The will is not valid. At the time of the *srâddha* my father went by invitation and explained this. The property is yours, not mine."

Gobind. "My uncle knew what he was about. The property is yours, not mine. From the moment that he passed away leaving it to you, it became yours, not mine."

Bhramar. "If there is any doubt about the matter, I will, if you like, make it over to you in writing."

Gobind. "Do you think I can endure to live on a gift from you?"

Bhramar. "What harm is there in that? Am I not your devoted slave?"

Gobind. "That sort of speech is not suitable nowadays, Bhramar."

Bhramar. "What have I done? Except you I know no one in this wide world. I

was married at eight years old, and I am now in my seventeenth year. In these nine years I have known nothing but you. I am your cherished one, your doll to play with; what is my fault?"

Gobind. "Reflect and see."

Bhramar. "I went home at the wrong time; I have been remiss; I have committed a hundred thousand faults. Forgive me all. I know nothing; I know no one but you. I did it in an angry moment."

Gobind Lâl did not speak. Before him was his wife—that girl of seventeen, with disordered hair, in floods of tears, helpless, miserable, stunned, on the floor at his feet; but he spoke not; he was thinking.

"This one so dark, Rohini so beautiful; this one has virtues, the other beauty. Hitherto I have worshipped virtue, now I will serve beauty. I will spend as I choose this worthless, hopeless, motiveless life of mine; then, when I please, I will destroy this earthly frame."

Bhramar lay, clasping his feet, weeping—"Forgive! forgive—I am but a girl."

He, the infinite, all-pervading dispenser of joys and sorrows, the friend of the distressed,

must surely have heard this petition ; but Gobind Lâl would not ; he stood silent ; he was thinking of Rohini—that lovely, fickle Rohini—whose beauty shone, dazzling and ever brilliant, like that of Venus the morning star.

Getting no reply, Bhramar asked, "What do you say?"

Gobind Lâl answered, "I will forsake you."

Bhramar released his feet, arose, and went out. Stumbling at the threshold, she fell senseless on the floor.

CHAPTER XXIX.

“WHAT fault have I committed that I should be abandoned?”

These words Bhramar had been unable to utter to Gobind Lâl; but now, moment by moment, she asked herself, “What is my fault?”

Gobind Lâl also asked himself what was Bhramar's fault. He was in a manner convinced that she had committed a very heinous offence, but what it was, even after so much thought, he could not see. It arose in his mind that Bhramar's want of faith in him, and her writing that very hard letter at once, without inquiry into the truth or falsity of the report, constituted her offence. “That she for whom I do so much, that she should so easily distrust me—this is her fault.” I have formerly spoken of the two spirits, Kumati and Sumati. I will now relate how

these two conversed, sitting side by side in the heart of Gobind Lâl.

Kumati said, "This was Bhramar's first fault, this unbelief."

Sumati answered, "Why not distrust the unworthy? You were enjoying Rohini's society. Is it so great a fault in Bhramar that she should have suspected it?"

Kumati. "Suppose that I have now become untrustworthy—still, when Bhramar distrusted me, I was innocent."

Sumati. "A day or two sooner or later matters little. I have become guilty. Is it so heavy a fault to distrust a person who is capable of this guilt?"

Kumati. "The fact that Bhramar considered me guilty made me become so. If you call an honest man a thief he becomes one."

Sumati. "Is that the fault of the person who called him a thief? The one that steals, is he not to blame?"

Kumati. "I can't argue with you! Then see how Bhramar affronted me! As soon as she heard I was coming home she went off to her father's house."

Sumati. "What woman is there that would

not be angry if her husband became attached to another?"

Kumati. "She was wrong to believe it—that was her fault."

Sumati. "Have you questioned her about that?"

Kumati. "No."

Sumati. "You are angry without examination, yet you make all this to-do because Bhramar, who is but a girl, became angry without questioning you. This is not the real matter. Shall I tell you the real cause of your anger?"

Kumati. "What do you say it is?"

Sumati. "The true cause is Rohini. You have set your heart upon Rohini, and no longer love the dark Bhomrâ."

Kumati. "Then how is it I loved Bhomrâ so long?"

Sumati. "Because you had not come across Rohini. A thing does not come about in a day. Everything has its time. Because you are parched with the sun to-day, shall it not be cloudy to-morrow? Nor is that all; there is something else."

Kumati. "What else?"

Sumati. "Krishna Kanta's will. The

old man knew that in leaving the property to Bhramar it remained yours. He also knew that in the course of a month Bhramar would make it over to you in writing. But, seeing that you are at present pursuing evil paths, to purify your character he left you bound to Bhramar. You, not comprehending all that, are angry with Bhramar."

Kumati. "That is true. Do you think I am going to live on a monthly allowance from my wife?"

Sumati. "It is your property. Why don't you take the deed of gift from Bhramar?"

Kumati. "Shall I live in dependence on my wife?"

Sumati. "Good gracious! what a lion of a fellow! Then go to law with your wife and get a decree; 'tis your ancestral property."

Kumati. "Go to law with my wife!"

Sumati. "Then what will you do? Go to destruction?"

Kumati. "That is what I am striving to do."

Sumati. "Rohini—will she go with you?"

Then Kumati and Sumati began a terrible wrangle.

CHAPTER XXX.

IT is my belief that if Gobind Lâl's mother had been a good *grihini* this black cloud might have been dispersed by a breath. She knew there was internal division between her son and his wife. Women readily comprehend these things. If at this time she had striven, by good counsel, affectionate persuasion, and other womanly devices, to remedy the evil, I think she might have succeeded. But Gobind Lâl's mother was not a thoroughly good house-mistress. She had, moreover, conceived a sort of hatred towards her daughter-in-law since she had become inheritor of the property. She had not that love for her daughter-in-law which should make her desire Bhramar's welfare. She could not endure the thought that whilst her son lived his wife should possess the property. She never once conceived that, knowing Bhramar and Gobind Lâl's property

indivisible, and seeing Gobind Lal's tendency to go astray, Krishna Kanta, to correct this tendency, had given the succession to Bhramar. Nor did she once conceive it likely that in his dying state Krishna Kanta's intellect had become obscured, and that he had made this unsuitable arrangement under a delusion. She dwelt only on the fact that in her daughter-in-law's household she was now only entitled to food and raiment, and would have to live henceforth as one known by the neighbours to be dependent on her daughter-in-law. Therefore she decided it would be well for her to leave the family. A widow, and somewhat self-centred, she had, from the time of her husband's death, desired to go on pilgrimage to Benares, but from love for her son had hitherto refrained. But now again that desire had become strong. She said to Gobind Lal, "One after another the elders of the house are gone, and my time is approaching. Do a son's office. Send me now to Benares." Gobind Lal forthwith consented to this proposal. He replied, "Very good; I will go and take you there myself."

As ill-fate would have it, Bhramar had

lately gone, at her own request, to pay a visit to her father. Therefore it was without Bhramar's knowledge that Gobind Lâl prepared for the Benares journey.

He had a little property of his own; this he secretly disposed of, and so got together a little money. He sold also whatever he had of his own in the way of gold and diamond jewellery and other valuable things. In this way he managed to collect about a lakh of rupees, on which he determined to live in the future. Then, having fixed the day for setting forth with his mother for Benares, he sent for Bhramar, who, hearing of the intended pilgrimage, hastened back. She threw herself at her mother-in-law's feet very humbly, and with tears entreated, saying, "Mother, I am but a girl; do not leave me alone. What do I know of household management? Mother, the family is a sea; do not leave me to float alone in this sea." The mother-in-law said, "You have your elder sister-in-law; she will look after you as I have done, and you are now become *grihini*."

Bhramar could not understand; she could only weep; she saw great trouble before her.

Her mother-in-law was leaving her, her husband was going with his mother, and she felt that he would not return. Claspings Gobind Lâl's feet, she besought him, "Tell me, before you go, after how many days you will return?"

Gobind Lâl replied, "I can't tell when. I have no great desire to come back."

Bhramar unclasped his feet, and, rising, stood thinking. "What need I fear? I can take poison."

At length the day chosen as auspicious for beginning the journey came round. A short distance had to be travelled by palanquin, and the journey continued by train. All was ready. Bearers began to carry heavy chests, trunks, boxes, bags, and bundles. The servants in pure, freshly washed garments, and with hair neatly arranged, were standing in front of the gateway chewing spices. They were to be of the travelling party. The *darbâns*, tightening the fastenings of their chintz coats and grasping their cudgels, were talking to the bearers. The village women were bending forward to look in. Gobind Lâl's mother, bowing reverently to the family deity and addressing suitable words of fare-

well to the assembled villagers, went forth weeping to her palanquin; the villagers also wept. The lady got in, and the palanquin was borne forward.

Meantime Gobind Lâl, after saying good-bye to the rest, went to the bedroom to take leave of Bhramar, who was weeping bitterly. Finding her thus overwhelmed, he could not say what he had come to say, but only—

“Bhramar, I am going with my mother.”

Wiping her eyes, the young wife said, “Mother will dwell there, but you will return?”

As she spoke Bhramar's tears dried up. The steadiness and gravity of her voice, the firmness of her lips, somewhat amazed Gobind Lâl, and he found himself unable to answer her. At her husband's continued silence Bhramar went on, “See, it is you who taught me that truth should be my sole religion, my only joy. Tell me now truly—me, your cherished one; deceive me not—when will you return?”

“Then hear the truth. I have no desire to return.”

“But why do you not wish it? Will you not say before you go?”

“Because if I remain here I shall live as your dependent.”

“But what harm is there in that? I am your dependent.”

“My dependent, Bhramar, should have stationed herself at the window looking out for my return from travel, she should not then have gone to stay at her father’s house.”

“But how often have I not sought pardon for that? Cannot this one offence be forgiven?”

“Nowadays there will be a hundred such offences. You are now possessor of the property.”

“Not so. This time that I went home, see what I arranged by my father’s assistance;” and Bhramar showed a paper, bidding her husband read it.

Taking it in his hand, Gobind Lâl found it to be a deed of gift on duly stamped paper, by which Bhramar had given her whole possessions to her husband. It had been duly registered. After reading it Gobind Lâl said—

“You have acted becomingly in drawing up this, but what relationship is there be-

tween us two? If I give you ornaments you wear them; if you give me the property I shall enjoy it; that is no relationship." And, taking the costly deed, Gobind Lâl tore it in pieces.

"In giving it to me my father said it would be useless to tear it up. A copy of it has been kept in the Government office."

"Let it stay there. I am going."

"When will you return?"

"I will not come back."

"Why? I am your wife, your pupil, the one you have protected, cherished, your dependent, one who begs a word from you. Why will you not come?"

"I don't wish to come."

"Have you no sense of duty?"

"I think I have not even that."

With much effort Bhramar restrained her tears, at her command they returned to their source. With clasped hands and in firm tones she said—

"Then go, if you have the heart to do so, and return not. Forsake me, if you will, for no fault of mine, but remember there is a God above. Remember that one day you

will weep for me. Remember that one day ^{V.9r} you will search this wide earth for a genuine, heartfelt love. The gods are witness if I am true—if with heart, soul, and body my devotion abides at your feet—then we shall meet again. In that hope I will live. Now go. If you wish to say so, say that you will come no more. But I say to you that you will come back; again you will call upon Bhramar, again you will weep for me. If these words are not fulfilled, then know that the gods are false, that religion is false, that Bhramar is faithless. Now go, it does not trouble me. You are mine, not Rohini's."

Thus saying, Bhramar bowed reverently at her husband's feet, and, with a stately walk, entered a side room and closed the door.

CHAPTER XXXI.

BEFORE the date of the commencement of this tale Bhramar had had a son born to her who died within a few days of its birth. To-day, going into that other room and closing the door, Bhramar sat down and wept for that infant of seven days. Throwing herself on the floor, rolling in the dust, with heaving breast, she wept for her son. "Where art thou, my darling? If thou wert still living he could not abandon me! He [*i.e.*, Gobind Lâl] has ceased to love me, but who could have ceased to love thee? Hadst thou lived he must have stayed with me. I am ugly, ill-formed, but who could have called thee ugly? Who is more beautiful than thou? Show thyself for once, little one. Canst thou not, in this time of trouble, let me see thee even once? After death can you appear no more?"

Then Bhramar, with clasped hands, up-

turned face, and quivering lips, asked of the gods, "Let some one tell me what is my fault, that in this, my seventeenth year only, I am fallen into this strange condition. My son is dead, my husband has forsaken me, and at this age I long for nothing save my husband's love, I wish for nothing else in this world, and have not learned to wish for anything else, why at this youthful age am I rendered hopeless of it?"

Bhramar came to the conclusion that the gods were very cruel. When the gods are cruel what can man do? Nothing but weep, and that was all that Bhramar could do.

Meanwhile Gobind Lâl, having taken leave of Bhramar, went very slowly to the outer rooms. I will speak the truth, he came out drying his tears. At this moment he recognised the girl's simple love, so sincere and impulsive, the stream of which leaped day and night; that priceless love, the possession of which had made him so happy. He reflected that what he was now giving up he would never get again on earth. Then he thought, "I can't undo what I have done. I must go. I have begun this jour-

ney, I must go on with it. I don't think I shall return. Whatever happens, the thing is done. I must go."

At that moment if Gobind Lâl had taken two steps back, had pushed open Bhramar's door and said, "Bhramar, I will come again," then all would have been well. Many times Gobind Lâl wished to do this, but, though wishing, he did not do it, he was ashamed to do it. He asked himself, "What is the hurry? When I am inclined I will return." He felt guilty towards Bhramar, and had not the courage to go back and see her. He could not bring himself to any resolution, so he went his way on the path he had entered. Forcibly driving away thought, he went outside, mounted his saddled steed, and whipped it up. As he proceeded on his way Rohini's many beauties sprang up in his heart.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

NEWS came to the house in Haridrâ village that Gobind Lâl, his mother, and the rest, had arrived at Benares safely and in good health. No letter came to Bhramar, and she, from pride, never wrote to Gobind Lâl. The letters came to the men of business.

A month passed, two months passed, and letters continued to come. At length news arrived that Gobind Lâl had left Benares for home.

Hearing this, Bhramar comprehended that Gobind Lâl had given this out to deceive his mother, but had gone elsewhere. She had no hope of his coming home.

At this time Bhramar made constant secret inquiry for news of Rohini. She heard of her as being engaged in cooking, sewing, eating, bathing, fetching water, but nothing

else for some time. At length one day news came that Rohini was ill, that she lay in her room with shaven head, unable to go out, and that Brahmânanda was cooking for himself.

Then it was said that Rohini was somewhat better, but the cause of her illness was not removed; that she had sharp internal pains which could not be cured; that she was going to the holy shrine at Târakeswar¹ to be cured by self-torture. Then news came that she had gone to Târakeswar, gone alone, for who was there to go with her?

Thus three or four months passed, Gobind Lâl did not return; five, six months, yet he came not. Bhramar wept ceaselessly. She thought incessantly, "Where is he? How is he? If I knew only this I could live. Why do I not hear even this?"

At length Bhramar spoke to her husband's sister, and got a letter written to his mother saying, "As his mother you certainly must have news of your son." The mother wrote that she had news of Gobind Lâl. He had been journeying to Allâhabâd, Mathurâ,

¹ See Appendix, Note 8.

Jâipur, and other places, and was now dwelling at Delhi. He would soon be going elsewhere, as he made no stay at any place.

Meanwhile Rohini did not return. Bhramar thought, "God knows where Rohini is gone. I, a sinful creature, will not utter my suspicions." Bhramar could endure no more; weeping incessantly, she gave notice to her sister-in-law, and then went by palanquin to her father's house. Finding it even more difficult at this place to obtain news of her husband, she returned to Haridrâ, and again wrote to her mother-in-law. This time the mother wrote, "Gobind Lâl no longer sends news. I do not know where he is now; I hear nothing." So passed the first year. At its close Bhramar was lying on a sick bed. The *Aparâjitâ*¹ flower had withered.

¹ *Aparâjitâ* is the name of a lovely creeping plant with delicate, feathery leaves, and a bright crimson flower (*Clitoria ternatea*).

CHAPTER II.

HEARING that his daughter was laid up, Bhramar's father came to see her. We have given no particular account of this gentleman, but will now supply it. Mâdhabi Nâth Sarkâr was forty-one, a man of fine presence. As to his character there was much difference of opinion. Many praised him highly, many said there never was so evil a man. That he was clever all admitted, and those who praised also feared him.

Mâdhabi Nâth was deeply shocked and grieved at his daughter's condition. He recalled that dark, glowing beauty, every part of whose frame was perfect in graceful symmetry. Now he saw her face withered, her body emaciated, her neck so thin that even the bones were to be seen, her lotus eyes sunk in their sockets. Bhramar also at sight of her father was greatly overcome.

When both had recovered a little she said, "Father, I think my days are ending. Help me to perform some holy deeds. Though yet a child my days have come to an end, so why should I delay any longer? I have much money. I will devote it to religious purposes. Who will carry them out? Father, do you undertake to do so."

Mâdhabi Nâth made no reply. He could no longer bear this pain, and leaving her, he sat long in the outer apartment, weeping bitterly. Nor did he only weep, the sharp pain in Mâdhabi Nâth's heart changed to deep anger. The thought arose, "Is there no one in this world who can inflict upon the destroyer of my daughter the outrage he has committed upon her?" Thus brooding, the distress in his heart changed into burning anger, his eyes red and swollen, he vowed to himself "Upon him who has destroyed my Bhramar I will bring the same destruction." Becoming calmer, he returned to the inner room, went to his daughter and said, "I have been thinking of your wish to devote your money to religion. Your health is bad. If you enter upon a religious course, much fasting will be involved, and you can-

not now bear fasting. When you are a little better——”

“Will this body ever be better?”

“Of course it will. Things are not so bad as all that. I know how it is—you don't take any medicine here. How can it be otherwise? there is neither father-in-law nor mother-in-law to look after you and see you put under proper medical treatment. You must come home with me and I will have you properly looked after. I'll stay here a couple of days and then take you to Râjgrâm.”

Bhramar's paternal home was at Râjgrâm. Taking leave of his daughter, Mâdhabi Nâth went to her men of business. He asked the *Dewân* if any letters came from the Babu. The *Dewân* answered “No.”

Mâdhabi. “Where is he now?”

Dewân. “None of us can give you any news of him. He does not send any.”

Mâdhabi. “From whence can I obtain news?”

Dewân. “If we knew that we should have inquired about him. I sent a man to the Babu's mother's (Mâ Thâkurâni) at Benares to ask for news of him, but none had come there. No one knows where the Babu is living.”

CHAPTER III.

AT sight of his daughter's sad condition Mâdhabi Nâth had firmly resolved to avenge it. Gobind Lâl and Rohini were at the root of it. Therefore the first thing was to find these people, otherwise their sin could not be punished. Bhramar also would die.

They had completely hidden themselves; every thread by which they could be traced had been cut, the traces of their footsteps effaced. But Mâdhabi Nâth said "If I fail to find them, then no longer need I boast of my manhood."

With this firmly fixed design Mâdhabi Nâth set out alone from the Râi's mansion. There was a post office at Haridrâ. Mâdhabi Nâth, stick in hand, with a slightly swinging gait, chewing spices, walked leisurely into the post-office with the air of a pleasant gentleman of peaceful disposition.

The Deputy Postmaster, a gentleman

receiving a salary of fifteen rupees a month, ruled over this post-office, a dark, thatched house. On a dilapidated mango-wood table lay letters, a letter-file, some sealing wax, a potful of gum, a pair of scales, the post-office seal, *et cetera*. Amid all these things the postmaster, or post *bâbu*, was gravely displaying his importance to the *peon*. The Deputy Postmaster received Rs. 15 a month, the *peon* only Rs. 7. So the *peon* considered that there was not more difference between himself and the *bâbu* than there is between seven annas and fifteen annas. But the *bâbu* thought, "I am Deputy Postmaster; he is a mere *piyâda*. I am his lord and master, between him and me there is the distance of the sky from the earth. To display this difference the postmaster constantly scolded the poor man, to which the *piyâda* also gave seven annas' worth of sauce in reply. The *bâbu* was just now weighing the letters and bestowing on the *peon* eighty annas' worth of abuse, when the peaceful, smiling face of Mâdhabi Nâth Bâbu appeared before them. At sight of a gentleman the postmaster ceased awhile his squabbling with the *piyâda*, and gazed at him with some degree of curi-

osity. He had some impression that he ought to be civil to a gentleman (he was *sitting* at this time), but in what way to show this civility he had never been taught, consequently he failed to show any. Mâdhabi Nâth saw he had to do with a boor. Smiling, he said, "Are you a Brahman?"

The postmaster said "Yes, and thou?—you, what are you, sir?"

Repressing a smile, Mâdhabi Nâth bent his head, touching his brow with clasped hands, said, "A morning salutation."

The postmaster said, "Be pleased to sit."

This threw Mâdhabi Nâth into a difficulty. He was bid to sit, but where was he to sit? The *bâbu* himself occupied an old three-legged chair, and other seat there was none. Then the postmaster's seven-anna Hari Dâs *peon* took a heap of torn books from a broken stool and offered it to the strange gentleman for a seat. Seating himself, Mâdhabi Nâth glanced at the *peon*. "Oh, how are you?" he inquired. "Have I not seen you somewhere?"

Peon. "Yes, sir, I deliver the letters."

Mâdhabi. "Ah! it was thus I came to

know you. If you would be so good as to prepare a *hukâ* for me."

Mâdhabi Nâth was from another village and had never seen Hari Dâs Boiragi *piyâda*, and Boirâgi Bâbâji had never seen him. Bâbâji thought, "He looks the sort of gentleman who would give me a small present if I asked him." And with this idea Hari Dâs ran off joyfully to get a *hukâ*. Mâdhabi Nâth was not a smoker at all, and it was only to get rid of Hari Dâs that he ordered the tobacco.

As soon as the *piyâda* had gone, Mâdhabi Nâth said to the postmaster *bâbu*, "I am come to make some inquiries from you, sir."

The postmaster smiled inwardly. He was of Bengal. If he was stupid in other matters, he at least was as sharp as a needle at understanding his own interests. He said, "What would you know, sir?"

"Are you acquainted with Brahmânanda?"

"A little, not well."

Mâdhabi Nâth perceived that the Avatâr was inclined to maintain his dignity, so he said, "Do any letters come to your office addressed to Brahmânanda Ghosh?"

Postmaster. "Have you no acquaintance with Brahmânanda Ghosh?"

Mâdhabi. "Never mind whether I have or not. I came to ask from you some information about him."

Then the postmaster, remembering his high office and his designation as deputy, became extremely grave and said somewhat roughly, "We are forbidden to give information at the post-office," and proceeded silently with the weighing of the letters.

Mâdhabi Nâth smiled inwardly, but aloud he said, "I know well you never do give it, so I came provided. I shall give you something before I go. Now give me correct answers to the questions I am going to put to you."

The postmaster, with a cheerful face, repeated his former question, "What would you know?"

"This whether letters to the address of Brahmânanda Ghosh do not come here?"

"They do come."

"At what intervals?"

"I have not yet been paid for my first answer. Pay for that first, then ask a fresh question."

Mâdhabi Nâth's intention had been to give the postmaster something before he left. But the *bâbu's* manner put his back up; he said: "My good sir, I see you are not of this part of the country. Do you know who I am?"

Shaking his head, the postmaster replied, "No, but what does it signify who you are? Do you think we give post-office information to any sort of person? Who are you at all?"

"I am named Mâdhabi Nâth Sarkâr. I dwell at Râjgrâm. Do you happen to remember how many *lâthiyâls* I employ?"

The post *bâbu* was frightened. He had heard of Mâdhabi Bâbu's name, and of how he lorded it over all with a strong hand. The post *bâbu* remained silent.

Mâdhabi Nâth resumed: "Mind you give me truthful answers to whatever I ask you. Don't try to deceive me, for if you do, I will give you nothing, not a copper. But if you either refuse to speak, or speak falsely, I will burn your house and plunder the post-office, and I will produce evidence in the Courts to prove that you did it yourself to get hold of the Government money. Now will you speak?"

Shaking and trembling, the post *bābu* said, "Why does your honour get angry? I did not know who you were. Thinking it was some common person, I spoke in that manner. As your honour has been pleased to come here, I shall tell you whatever you may ask of me."

"At what intervals do letters come for Brahmānanda?"

"About every month. There is no certainty about it."

"Are the letters registered?"

"Yes, most of them are."

"In what post-office are they registered?"

"I don't remember."

"Don't you keep a receipt book for registered letters coming to your office?"

The postmaster hunted about and produced a receipt. He read it and said "Prasādpur."

"In what district is Prasādpur? Look at your list."

Still trembling, the postmaster examined the printed list and answered "Jessore."

"Look and see from what other places registered letters have come to his address. Examine all the receipts."

The post *bâbu* found that all the letters lately received had come from Prasâdpur. Mâdhabi Nâth placed a ten-rupee note in the postmaster's trembling hand and took leave of him. Hari Dâs had not yet arrived with the *hukâ*. Mâdhabi Nâth left a rupee for Hari Dâs with the *bâbu*. It is needless to say that the post *bâbu* kept it for himself.

CHAPTER IV.

MĀDHABI NĀTH returned triumphant: He heard the whole story of Gobind LĀl and Rohini's fall from one and another, and came to the firm conclusion that the two were dwelling together secretly. He also fully acquainted himself with Brahmānanda's condition, and learned that, save Rohini, he had no one belonging to him; so when he heard at the post-office that to Brahmānanda's address a registered letter came month by month, he understood that either Rohini or Gobind LĀl sent to Brahmānanda a monthly allowance. The letters came from Prasādpur, therefore the two must be dwelling there or at some place near, but to make assurance doubly sure, immediately upon his return to his daughter's house, he sent a messenger to the police-station with a letter to the sub-inspector, asking that a constable might be

sent, as it was possible he might be able to get some stolen property recovered.

The sub-inspector knew Mâdhabi Nâth very well and feared him, so he at once, on receipt of the letter, sent the constable Nidrâ Singh. Mâdhabi Nâth, putting two rupees into the constable's hand, said—

“Don't talk any Hindi gibberish, just do what I tell you. Go under that tree and remain in hiding, but stand in such a way that you can be seen from here. That is all you have to do.”

Nidrâ Singh, consenting, retired.

Mâdhabi Nâth then sent for Brahmânanda, who, obeying the summons, came and took a seat near. There was no one else present.

After an exchange of polite inquiries, Mâdhabi Nâth said—

“You were very intimate with my deceased relatives by marriage. There is no one to represent them. Even my son-in-law is abroad. If you fall into any trouble or misfortune you must look to us for help. That is why I sent for you.”

Brahmânanda's face shrank. He said, “What trouble, Mahâshoi?”

Mâdhabi Nâth said gravely, "You are in some trouble, surely?"

"What trouble, sir?"

"In a mass of trouble. How did the police come to know that you have a stolen note in your possession?"

Brahmânanda fell from the sky.

"What do you say? A stolen note in my possession?"

"Oh, not with your knowledge. Some one has paid you a stolen note, and you in ignorance have kept it."

"How can that be, sir? Who would pay a note to me?"

Mâdhabi Nâth lowered his voice. "I know all about it. The police also know. In fact I learned the whole matter from the police. The stolen note came from Prasâd-pur. See! there is a policeman standing down there for you. I paid him something to wait a little."

Mâdhabi Nâth then pointed out the figure of the bearded, bâton-bearing constable, walking beneath the trees like a dark cloud.

Brahmânanda began to tremble. Claspings Mâdhabi Nâth's feet and weeping, he cried, "Save me, I beg of you."

“Fear not! Just tell me the number of the note you last got from Prasâdpur. The police have left the number of the note with me. If your note does not bear that number you have nothing to fear. How long will it take to compare numbers? Fetch the letter you received last from Prasâdpur, and let me see the number of the note.”

How could Brahmânanda go? He feared the policeman beneath the tree. Mâdhabi Nâth said—

“There is no fear, I will send some one with you.”

And at his bidding a *darwan* accompanied Brahmânanda, who then fetched Rohini's letter, in which Mâdhabi Nâth found all the information he sought. The letter read, he returned it, saying—

“The note sent you does not bear the number of the stolen one. There is nothing to fear. You can go home and I will dismiss the constable.”

Brahmânanda's dead body recovered life. Drawing a long breath, he fled from the spot.

Mâdhabi Nâth took his daughter home to be nursed. He placed a suitable physician

in charge, and himself went to Calcutta. Bhramar raised many objections, but her father did not heed them. He consoled her with the promise of a speedy return and departed. At Calcutta lived Nishâkar Dâs, an intimate friend of Mâdhabi Nâth, some eight or ten years younger than he. Nishâkar had no profession, he lived on his ancestral property, and gave himself to the study of music and song. As an idler he was constantly travelling about, but Mâdhabi Nâth found him at home. After other speech, the visitor asked—

“Are you inclined for a journey?”

“Whither?”

“To Jessore.”

“Why there?”

“I want to buy an indigo factory.”

“Come along, then.”

So, making the needful preparations, the two friends, in the course of a day or two, set out for Jessore. From thence they would go to Prasâdpur.

CHAPTER V.

SEE how slowly the slender-streamed Chitrâ floweth onward, its banks adorned with a forest of fig, *kâdamba*, mango, date, and other trees, from which comes the song of the cuckoo, the *dayal* and *pâpiyâ*. There is no village near. About two miles away stands a small bazar named Prasâdpur. Here, at some former time, some indigo factor, seeing the loneliness of the place and thinking it one where deeds of violence might be done with impunity, had built a factory. Now the factor and his wealth had gone to destruction, and all his underlings were enjoying the fruits of their works, according to their deserts, in another world. A native of Bengal had bought the beautiful deserted dwelling standing in spacious grounds, and had furnished it handsomely. Flowers, statues, seats, mirrors, pictures adorned the house. We enter the fine hall

on the upper story. In this room were some fine pictures, but also some offensive ones, indescribable. On one of the softly stuffed, handsome seats sat a bearded Mussulman, tuning a guitar, and sitting near him a young woman beating a drum, the gold bracelets on her arms keeping time therewith, and in two large mirrors hanging on the side wall the two people reflected were also performing these operations. In a side room a young man sat reading a novel, and through the open doorway watched the young woman's proceedings. As he screwed the pegs of the guitar the bearded one fingered its strings, and when, in his opinion, the strings and the drum were in tune with each other, from amidst the darkness of that beard some snow-white teeth appeared as he began to sing in a deep-toned voice. The teeth took part in many contortions of the visage, which, with the accompanying motions of the bee-black beard, made an amusing spectacle. The young woman, urged by these contortions, began to sing, mingling her sweet voice with the other's full, deep tones, the slender and the strong voices uniting like the blending of gold and silver threads.

And here we would gladly let fall the curtain; the impure, the unseemly we will not depict. We will relate only what is unavoidable, briefly indicating the charms of this place amid the groves of *asokâ*, *bâkul*, hill jasmine and *jhânti* trees, the humming of bees, the voice of the cuckoo, the cackling of the geese as they floated on the waves of the little stream; the wonderful glory of the sunbeams streaming into the house through panes of tinted glass, the beauty of the well-arranged bunches of flowers in gold and crystal vases, the brightly polished furniture that beautified the house, and the pure strains of the singers. For all these surrounding influences, combining with the sweetness of the restless glances of the young woman he was so intently watching, had filled the young man's heart with animation.

The young man was Gobind Lâl, the young woman Rohini. Gobind Lâl had purchased the house and here they had taken up their abode.

Suddenly Rohini's *tabla* sounded out of tune, a string of the guitar snapped, the teacher's voice faltered, the song ceased, the

novel fell from the hand of Gobind Lâl. For at that moment in the doorway a strange young man appeared. We know him. It was Nishâkar Dâs.

CHAPTER VI.

THE upper story of this mansion had been assigned to Rohini. She lived in semi-seclusion. The servants dwelt in the lower rooms. In that solitary spot scarcely any one came to visit Gobind Lâl, so outer reception rooms were not required. If at times a shopkeeper or any other person came, word was sent to the *bâbu* upstairs, who would come down and see him below. For this purpose a room on the ground floor had been set apart.

Nishâkar Dâs had appeared at the house door downstairs and had asked, "Who lives here?"

Gobind Lâl had two servants, one named Sonâ, the other Rupo. At the sound of a masculine voice, both men came to the door, and were surprised to see Nishâkar, whom they at once perceived to be a respectable man. He had taken care to go somewhat

grandly got up. Such a person had never stepped within that door-frame, and the servants looked at each other much impressed.

Sonâ inquired, "Whom are you seeking, sir?"

"You. Inform your master that a gentleman wishes to see him."

"What name shall I say?"

"There is no need of a name; simply say a gentleman."

Now the servants knew their master was not in the habit of receiving gentlemen, and they did not care to announce the visitor. Sonâ hesitated; Rupo said, "You have come in vain, sir, my master does not see any one."

"Well, then, stay here; I will go up unannounced."

The men were in a fix, and said—

"Not so, Mahâshoi, we shall lose our places."

Nishâkar displayed a rupee, saying, "Whoever shall announce me will get that."

Sonâ meditated; Rupo, pouncing like a kite, took the rupee from Nishâkar, and sped

up the stair to carry his message. The house was surrounded by a lovely garden.

Nishâkar said to Sonâ, "I will walk in this garden; do not oppose me, and when the summons comes, call me in from here," and thereupon gave him also a rupee.

When Rupo approached his master, Gobind Lâl was so occupied that the servant had no opportunity to speak of the visitor. Meanwhile Nishâkar, wandering in the garden, cast his eyes upwards and saw a lovely woman standing at the venetians looking at him. Rohini, seeing Nishâkar, was thinking, "Who can this be? I don't think he belongs to this neighbourhood. Judging from his dress he must be some grandee. What a fine man he is! handsomer than Gobind Lâl?—no, not that, Gobind Lâl's complexion is so clear; but this one has a fine mouth and fine eyes, specially the eyes. Oh, my, what eyes! Where can he have come from? He cannot be from Haridrâ village, for I know every one there. Could I not get a couple of words with him? What harm would it be? I would never be unfaithful to Gobind Lâl." While Rohini was thus thinking, Nishâkar

glanced upwards and their eyes met. Whether these eyes held converse together I don't know, or if I know, I don't care to say; but I have heard that eyes do talk together.

At this moment Rupo obtained the attention of his master, and informed him of the visitor. The *bâbu* asked where the gentleman had come from.

"I do not know."

"Why did you not ask before you came to tell me?"

Rupo saw that he was making himself appear a simpleton, and, his intelligence coming to his aid, said, "I did ask, but the gentleman said he would tell you himself."

"Then tell him I shall not see him."

Meanwhile, Nishâker began to fear from the delay that Gobind Lâl had refused him a meeting. "Why," he thought, "should I be civil to an evildoer? Why should I not go up myself?" So, without waiting for the servant's return, Nishâkar re-entered the house. He found neither Sonâ nor Rupo in the lower rooms, so, unhindered, he proceeded up the stairs to the place where were Gobind Lâl, Rohini, and Dânesht Khân,

the singer. Rupo, noticing him, pointed out that this was the gentleman who desired an interview. Gobind Lâl was enraged; but he perceived the visitor was a gentleman, and asked, "Who are you, sir?"

"My name is Râs Bihâri Dé."

"Where do you live?"

"Barâhanagar."

Nishâkar pompously took a seat. He understood that Gobind Lâl would not invite him to be seated.

"Whom do you seek?" asked Gobind Lâl.

"Yourself."

"If you had waited a little instead of forcing yourself into my house, you would have heard from the servants that I have no leisure to see you."

"But I see you have plenty of leisure. I am not a man to be cowed by threats. If I were I should not have come to see you. Since I have come it is best to settle the matter by listening to a few words from me."

"I have no desire to listen to you, but if a few words will end the matter, pray speak them and depart."

"I will tell you in a couple of words.

Your wife, Bhramar Dâsi, wishes to lease out the property."

The singer, Dânesh Khân, was putting a fresh string to his guitar. As he did this with one hand, he held up a finger of the other hand, saying, "One word is spoken."

Nishâkar continued, "I wish to take a lease of that property." Dânesh, counting, counting on his fingers, said, "Two words are spoken."

Nish. "For that purpose I went to your house at Haridrâ."

Dânesh. "You have had your two words, this makes three."

Nish. "O Tutor, are you counting your pigs?"

With angry eyes the teacher said to Gobind Lâl, "Dismiss this rude man, Bâbu Sâhib."

But the Bâbu Sâhib, otherwise occupied, did not speak.

Nishâkar resumed. "Your wife has consented to take me as a tenant, but awaits your assent. She had not your address, and also did not wish to write, so the task of discovering your wish fell upon me. After

much search I have traced you and am come to obtain your assent."

Gobind Lâl did not answer. His thoughts were elsewhere. After many days he had news of Bhramar, his own Bhramar. Nearly two years had passed.

Nishâkar understood something of what was in Gobind's mind. He repeated, "If you are willing, just give me a line to say that you have no objection and I will go."

Gobind Lâl still did not reply, and Nishâkar saw he must speak yet again; so once more he explained the matter from beginning to end. Gobind Lâl, forcing himself to attend, heard what was said. The reader knows that Nishâkar's tale was a false one, but Gobind Lâl did not suspect it. Throwing off his former harsh manner he said, "There is no need for my permission. The property is my wife's, not mine. I think you know that. She can deal with the property as she pleases. It is not for me to order or prohibit. Neither will I write anything. Now I think you might let me be."

Nishâkar had now no choice but to go. When he was gone Gobind Lâl bid the

tutor sing something. Dânesh Khân tuned the guitar and asked, "What shall I sing?"

Gobind Lâl replying "What you will," took up the *tabla*. He had formerly known something of music and was now become a proficient. But to-day, somehow, he and Dânesh Khân were not in accord, the measures got adrift. Dânesh Khân, annoyed, threw aside the guitar and stopped singing, saying, "I am tired to-day." Then Gobind Lâl took a *sitâr* and strove to play it, but forgot all the airs. Abandoning the *sitâr* he tried to read his novel, but could not take in the meaning of what he read. He threw down the novel and went into the sleeping-rooms. He did not see Rohini, but the man Sonâ was in attendance. From the doorway Gobind Lâl said to Sonâ, "I am going to sleep, let no one disturb me till I get up." He then closed the door of the bedroom, but though he had closed the door, Gobind Lâl did not sleep. He sat on the bed, covered his face with his hands and wept. I know not why he wept, whether for Bhramar or for himself, I cannot say. I think for both.

Except weeping, I see not what remedy

Gobind Lâl had. He might weep for Bhramar, but he could not return to her. He could not again show his face in Haridrâ. The path to that village was beset with thorns. He could only weep.

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN Nishâkar had taken his seat in the large hall, Rohini had to go into a side room. She could not now see but she could hear. She listened to the conversation that ensued. Moreover, she moved the door curtain a little aside and looked at Nishâkar. He also observed that a large and beautiful eye was peeping at him from the curtain. Rohini heard that Nishâkar, or rather Râs Bihâri, had come from Haridrâ. The servant Rupo, like Rohini, stood listening to all that was said. As soon as Nishâkar had gone away, Rohini, showing her face from one side of the curtain, beckoned to Rupo, who approached. She said in his ear—

“Will you do what I tell you? It must be kept secret from the *bâbu*. If the *bâbu* knows nothing of it I will give you five rupees.”

Rupo thought “I know not whose face I

saw when I rose this morning.¹ Every one I see to-day gives me something. It is well for a poor man to get a few coppers." Aloud he said, "I can do anything you wish. What are your commands?"

"Go down with this *bâbu*. He has come from my father's country. I never get any news from there, how much I have wept about it! When a person comes from one's own country one wants to question him about one's folks. The *bâbu*, in anger, has dismissed him. Do you follow and ask him to be seated, but in such a place that if the *bâbu* goes down he won't see him. Don't let any one see you, I will go to him in private. If he does not wish to sit, persuade him a little."

Rupo, scenting a present, darted off with the words, "At your bidding."

With what design Nishâkar had come to deceive Gobind Lâl I cannot say, but his conduct on coming downstairs would have led any intelligent person to distrust him.

¹ A common saying amongst Bengalis. The sight of an auspicious or inauspicious face the first thing in the morning is supposed to influence the events of the day for good or evil.

He was examining the shutters and fastenings of the entrance door when Rupo *Khân-sâmâ* came up to him and said, "Do you wish to smoke, sir?"

Nish. "As the master does not offer it, how can I take it from the servants?"

Rupo. "No, I suppose not, but I should like a word with you in secret; please come to a place where we may be in privacy." Thus saying, Rupo led the way to his own private room, and Nishâkar followed without making any objection. Offering a seat, Rupo gave to Nishâkar Rohini's message.

Nishâkar had stretched forth his hand and reached the moon in the sky. He had found a means to accomplish his design very easily. He said, "Your master has driven me out; how can I remain hidden in his house?"

"He will know nothing of it, I assure you, sir; he never comes into this room."

"Well, suppose he doesn't; still, when your mistress comes down he may wonder where she has gone. If he does, and follows her, and by some chance finds your mistress with me, then what position shall I be in? eh?"

Rupo remained silent. Nishâkar resumed,

“He would lock me up in his house, murder me, and bury me in this garden before I could say anything. Even you yourself would give me a blow or two. So I can't consent to this. Make your mistress understand that I can't do it. Also say that her uncle charged me with important messages for her. That I was anxious to deliver them to her, but that your master has driven me out. I could not tell her what I had in charge, and so I am off.”

Rupo saw the five rûpees slipping from his hand. He said, “Well, though you can't stay here, could you not wait at a distance for her?”

“I did think of that. As I came I observed a *ghât* at the bank of the stream near your dwelling. Near it I saw two *bakul* trees. Do you know the spot?”

“I know it.”

“I will go there and wait. It is now evening. When night falls if I sit there I shall not be noticed. If your mistress can come thither she will hear all the news. If I see anything go wrong I shall be able to save my life by flight. To be locked up in

this house and killed like a dog would not suit me at all."

So Rupo had to go to Rohini and repeat to her Nishâkar's words. What now were Rohini's emotions I am quite unable to tell. If I cannot understand my own mind how can I possibly say, "Thus and thus thought Rohini?" That she loved Brahmânanda so fondly that to obtain news of him she lost all power of discrimination, I am unable to say. I think there was something more in it. There had been a little exchange of glances, some divining of one another's thoughts. Rohini had observed that Nishâkar was a handsome man with fine eyes. That in manliness Nishâkar was a prince among men. Rohini was firmly resolved never to be unfaithful to Gobind Lâl, but then unfaithfulness was one thing, this quite another, I fancy this sinful woman thought.

If a huntsman should see a deer carelessly straying, would he not certainly shoot an arrow at it? What woman seeing a vulnerable man would not strive to make a conquest? The tiger slays the ox, but he does not consume the whole carcase. A woman defeats a man only that she may

flourish the standard of victory. Many go fishing for love of the art; they don't eat the fish, but give them away. Many shoot birds for the sake of the sport and throw them away. The hunter hunts for sport, not to eat. I know not what fun there is in that. Rohini continued thinking, "Since this large-eyed deer has strayed into this Prasâdpur forest, why should I not pierce him with an arrow and let him depart?"

I know not what else arose in this wicked woman's heart, but Rohini agreed that in the evening, when she could make an opportunity, she would go alone to the *ghât* on the river Chitrâ and hear news of her uncle from Nishâkar.

Rupo brought this message to Nishâkar, who received it with much contentment of mind, rising slowly from his seat.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN Rupo had gone away, Nishâkar, calling Sonâ to him, said, "How long have you been in your master's service?"

"Since he first came here I have been with him."

"Oh, not very long, then. What is your pay?"

"Three rupees a month, with board and clothing."

"How can a *Khânsâmâ* of your ability keep himself on so small a wage?"

Sona *Khânsâmâ* was quite melted by this speech. He said, "What can I do? There is no other service to be had in this place."

"You need not be anxious about getting service. In my part of the country you would be snapped up. You would easily get five, seven, or even ten rupees a month."

"If you would favour me by taking me with you."

"How can I take you? Would you leave the service of such a master?"

"The master is not bad, but the mistress is an evil woman."

"Of that I have proof in hand. Is it agreed that you go with me?"

"Why, of course I agree."

"Well, before going you must do your master a good turn, but it must be done very cautiously. Can you do it?"

"If it is a good thing; why not?"

"It is good for your master; very bad for your mistress."

"Then tell me at once. I need not delay. I consent gladly."

"Your mistress has sent me word to wait at the Chitrâ *ghât*, and that at night she will meet me secretly. Do you understand? I too have consented to this. My object is to open your master's eyes. Can you go very cautiously, let your master know this, and then join me?"

"I'll go at once. It will be a good thing if that wretch of a woman dies."

"Not now. I am going now to sit down

at the *ghât*. You must be on the watch. When you see your mistress go in that direction, inform your master at once. After that come and join me."

Promising obedience, Sonâ took dust from his new master's feet. Nishâkar, with easy gait and stately walk, went and seated himself on the flight of steps which adorn the bank of the river Chitrâ. The waters of the Chitrâ flowed silently by the light of the stars in the darkness. All around jackal and dog made their voices heard in many strains. Somewhere in the distance, a fisherman, seated on his boat, chanted loudly the praises of Krishnâ. Other than these no sound was to be heard in the solitary place. Nishâkar listened to the song and gazed at the bright light which came from the window of a room in the upper story of Gobind Lâl's house. In thought he said, "How malignant I am! To destroy a woman, to what tricks have I descended! Yet what malevolence is there in that? It is right to defeat the wicked. Since I have agreed with my friend to do this work, to save the life of his daughter, I am bound to do it. But I don't like it. Rohini is a sinner, I will give

her the punishment of sin. I will check the tide of sin. Why is this disagreeable to me? I can't say; but I think if I had walked in straight paths I should not have felt as I do. It is because I have followed crooked paths that I shrink. And then, who am I that I should punish sin or reward righteousness? He who will punish sin or reward righteousness in me is also Rohini's judge. I cannot tell, but perhaps He has appointed me to do this work. How do I know?"

"O Krishna! thou who ever livest in my heart,
I can do nought save what thou biddest me."^{*}

As he thus mused, the night deepened. He saw Rohini approach with noiseless step and take her stand near him. To make certain, Nishâkar asked, "Who is that?"

Rohini also, for the same reason, asked the same question.

"I am Râs Bihâri."

"And I am Rohini."

"Why are you come so late?"

"I had to watch my opportunity. How could I tell but some one might see me from

^{*} The author quotes from the Bhagavad gîta, a Sanscrit philosophical poem.

somewhere. Are you much annoyed about it?"

"Annoyed or not, I began to fear you had forgotten."

"If I were a forgetful person, I had not been in my present condition. Because of one I could not forget I came to this place. And now I am come, not being able to forget you."

As she spoke, some one, coming from behind, seized Rohini by the throat. Startled, she exclaimed, "Who is that?"

A grave voice replied, "Your death!"

Rohini recognised Gobind Lâl. Feeling danger at hand, darkness all around, Rohini in a frightened, trembling voice said, "Let go! let go! I am not come with evil intent. Ask the *bâbu* who is here what I have come for." And Rohini pointed to the spot where Nishâkar had been seated, and she saw that no one was there! At sight of Gobind Lâl, Nishâkar had instantly vanished. In amazement, Rohini exclaimed, "Hallo! I declare! there is no one there!"

Gobind Lâl replied, "There is no one here. Come home with me."

In great dejection, Rohini slowly accompanied Gobind Lâl to the house.

CHAPTER IX.

ENTERING the house, Gobind Lâl told the servants not to let any one go upstairs. The music-teacher had gone to his dwelling. Gobind Lâl took Rohini into the private sleeping chamber and closed the door. Rohini stood trembling before Gobind Lâl like a reed shaking in the current of a stream. Gobind Lâl in a gentle tone said, "Rohini!"

"What is it?"

"What are you to me?"

"Nothing. So long as you retain me at your feet, I am your servant. Otherwise, nothing at all."

"I have placed you at my head, not at my feet. Princely wealth, wealth greater than princely, an unstained character, an unbroken faith, all these I have abandoned for you. What are you, Rohini, that for your sake I should have given up all this

and become an exile? What are you, Rohini, that for your sake I have deserted Bhramar, who is unequalled in the world, a comfort to my thoughts, a never-failing source of joy, nectar in sorrow?"

With these words, no longer able to restrain the tide of sorrow and passion, Gobind Lâl spurned Rohini away with his foot. Rohini sat down; she said not a word, but fell a-crying. Gobind Lâl did not see that she was weeping, he said, "Stand up, Rohini."

Rohini stood up.

"You once went to destroy yourself. Have you the courage again to die?"

Rohini now desired to die. In agonised tones she said, "How can I not wish to die? My destiny is fulfilled."

"Then stand still; don't move."

Rohini remained standing. Gobind Lâl opened the pistol-case and took out a pistol. It was loaded—it was always kept loaded. Holding the pistol in front of Rohini, Gobind Lâl said, "Well, are you ready to die?"

Rohini meditated. The day that she had gone so easily, so calmly to drown herself in the Bâruni waters, Rohini had forgotten.

That trouble was gone and her courage with it. She thought, "Why should I die? If I do not, he may cast me off if he likes to do so. Well, let him. I can never forget him; but is that a reason why I should die? That I shall think of him, that in poverty I shall remember him, shall recall these delights in Prasâdpur, that is in itself a joy, in itself a hope. Why should I die?" So she said, "I will not die. Do not kill me. If you will not keep me, give me leave to depart."

"I give you leave." And raising the pistol, Gobind Lâl aimed it at Rohini's brow.

"Don't kill me! Don't fire! I am young, and happiness is new to me. I will never come near you, never cross your path. I am going at once. Do not kill me!"

The click of the pistol was heard, then a loud sound, and all became dark. Rohini fell, lifeless, to the ground. Gobind Lâl, flinging down the pistol, fled from the house.

At the sound of the pistol, Rupo and the other servants came to see what had happened. They found the dead body of Rohini cast on the floor like a lotus snapped by the fingers of a boy. And Gobind Lâl nowhere to be seen.

CHAPTER X.

THE SECOND YEAR.

THAT night the *chokidâr* gave notice at the police-station that a murder had been committed at the Prasâdpur factory. It happened that the police-station was about twelve miles distant from that spot. The *dârogâ* arrived about nine o'clock on the next day and began his investigation. He noted down the facts of the case as prescribed by law, examined the dead body, and sent in a report. Then, placing Rohini's body on a bullock cart, he sent it in charge of a *chokidâr* to be examined by the doctor. He then bathed and ate his dinner. Now at his ease he set about searching for the guilty person. Where was he? Gobind Lâl had not re-entered the house since he fled from it on slaying Rohini. Who could say how far he had gone in the night and the day that had

passed? No one had seen him. No one knew in which direction he had fled. No one knew even his name. Gobind Lâl had never revealed his name and condition in Prasâdpur. He had given out his name as Chuni Lâl Datt. Even the servants knew not from what part of the country he had come.

The *dârogâ* spent some days in going about, getting hold of one man after another, and taking down their depositions. He could not find out whither Gobind Lâl had gone, so at length he sent in a final report of the case, saying the accused had absconded.

Then a very clever detective officer named Pichel Khân was sent from Jessore. There is no need to relate in detail Pichel Khân's method of investigation. In his search through the house he found letters from which he was able to determine Gobind Lâl's true name and address. Needless to say that he took the trouble to go in disguise to Haridrâ village. But Gobind Lâl had not been there, so Pichel Khân returned without finding him.

In the meantime Nishâkar Dâs, on leaving the unfortunate Rohini to herself in that

grim, fatal night, returned to his dwelling in Prasâdpur bazar. Mâdhabi Nâth was awaiting him there. Mâdhabi Nâth's person being well known to Gobind Lâl, he could not approach him. Nishâkar now told Mâdhabi Nâth all he had done. "That has not been well managed," was Mâdhabi Nâth's comment. "It will surely result in murder." To learn what consequences did ensue, the two men remained in the bazar, carefully disguised, and observing great caution. In the early morning they learned that Chuni Lâl Datt, having slain his wife, had fled. They were greatly alarmed and distressed. Their fear was for Gobind Lâl, but at length they saw that the *dârogâ* could do nothing, as he had no clue to Gobind Lâl's whereabouts. Thus, somewhat reassured, they returned to their homes greatly depressed in mind.

CHAPTER XI.

THIRD YEAR.

BHRAMAR did not die. Why, I cannot say. It is one of the greatest evils in this world that no one dies at the right time. All die out of season. That, I think, was the reason Bhramar did not die. However, she had recovered in some measure from her illness. Bhramar was again in her father's house. The news brought home by Mâdhabî Nâth was communicated in great secrecy by his wife to the eldest daughter, who passed it on, confidentially, to Bhramar. Now the eldest sister, Jâmini, said—

“Why does he not come and dwell in the house of Haridrâ? If he did, I fancy there would be no danger.”

“How would there be no danger?” asked Bhramar.

Jâmini. “He lived at Prasâdpur under a

borrowed name. No one knew him to be Gobind Lâl Bâbu."

Bhramar, "Did you not hear that the police had been seeking him in Haridrâ village? So how can it be that they don't know?"

Jâmini. "Suppose they do know! If he were to come here and settle down in possession of his property, he would have some cash in hand. Father says the police are open to bribes."

Bhramar (weeping). "Who will give him this counsel? Where can I find him to give him that advice? Father did once find him. I wonder if he could do so again?"

Jâmini. "The police are great searchers. If with their daily searching they cannot find him, how should father do so? But I think Gobind Lâl Bâbu will himself come and settle down at Haridrâ. Just after that event at Prasâdpur, had he shown himself in Haridrâ, people would have identified him as the Prasâdpur Bâbu. On that account, I think, he has kept away. But now it may be expected that he will come."

Bhramar. "I have no hope of it."

Jâmini. "And if he comes?"

Bhramar. "If it be for his welfare to come here, I will pray to the gods with all my heart that he should do so; if it be better for him not to come, I will pray earnestly that he shall never again be seen in Haridrâ. May the gods enable him to live in security."

Jâmini. "I think, sister, that you ought to live there. Who knows but some day, being short of money, he may appear there? Suppose he does not trust the Åmlâ, and won't see them? Then if he doesn't see you he may go back again."

Bhramar. "And I so ill!—now worse, now better. I may die at any time. Under whose care should I stay there?"

Jâmini. "If you like, one of us will stay there with you; in any case you ought to live on the spot."

Bhramar (after some thought). "Well, I will go. Tell mother to send me to-morrow. None of you need come now. But in the day of my trouble mind you come."

"What trouble, Bhramar?"

"If he should come."

"How can that be a trouble, Bhramar?"

If your lost jewel returns home, what greater joy than that?"

"Joy, sister! What joy can there ever be for me?"

Bhramar said no more. Jâmini understood nothing of her feeling, knew nothing of her inward grief. Bhramar had a dim vision of what must follow in the future. Jâmini had no such vision; she never thought of Gobind Lâl as a murderer, but Bhramar could not forget it.

CHAPTER XII.

FIFTH YEAR.

BHRAMAR went back to her father-in-law's house, and lived in continual expectation of her husband's return. But he came not. Days, months passed; the husband came not, nor any news of him. Thus the third year passed. Gobind Lâl came not. The fourth year also passed; still no Gobind Lâl appeared. Meanwhile Bhramar's disease gained upon her—asthmatic cough, increasing emaciation. Death in the foreground, it seemed as if she would not see her husband again in this world.

The fifth year opened. In this fifth year there was great confusion. News came to Haridrâ that Gobind Lâl was caught, that he had been living at Brindâban disguised as a Boirâgi, and that there the police had

arrested him and taken him on to Jessore, where he was to be tried.

Bhramar heard this news from rumour only. This was the origin of the rumour. Gobind Lâl had written a letter to Bhramar's *Dewân*, saying, "I am on the way to gaol. If you think it suitable to spend some portion of my father's property in saving me, now is the time. I am not worthy of it; I do not wish to live; but I do beg that I may be saved from the gallows. Do not let it be known that I have written a letter."

The *Dewân* did not proclaim that he had received a letter; he sent the news as a report to the women's apartments.

On hearing it Bhramar sent for her father, who came immediately. Bhramar took out and gave him bank notes and securities for 50,000 rupees, and, with tears in her eyes, said, "Father, do all that can be done; let me not be driven to commit suicide."

Mâdhavi Nâth, weeping bitterly, said, "My child, rest quite assured; I shall go to Jessore this very day. Be not anxious. There is no proof that Gobind Lâl committed a murder. I engage to bring back 48,000

rupees out of this sum of money, and my son-in-law to his own country."

Then Mâdhabi Nâth went to Jessore. He heard that the evidence was terribly strong. Inspector Pichel Khân had investigated the case and sent up the witnesses. He found no trace of Rupo, Sonâ, or any other eye-witnesses to whom the facts were known. Sonâ was with Nishâkar, and no one knew to what part of the country Rupo had gone. Finding the evidence so weak, Pichel Khân had, by bribes, prepared three witnesses who had deposed before the magistrate that they had with their own eyes seen Gobind Lâl, alias Chuni Lâl, fire a pistol and kill Rohini, and that they had gone there to listen to the singing. The magistrate was an Englishman, and had been always praised by the Government for his good administration. He, relying on this evidence, committed Gobind Lâl for trial at the sessions. When Mâdhabi Nâth reached Jessore Gobind Lâl was wasting away in gaol. Mâdhabi Nâth was greatly depressed on hearing the whole state of the case. He took the names and addresses of the witnesses, went to their homes, and said to them, "What you said

to the magistrate is done with. You must speak very differently before the judge. You must say, 'We know nothing.' Here, each of you, take 500 rupees in cash. If the defendant is set free, I will give you each another 500 rupees."

The witnesses said, "Why, in that case we shall be punished for committing perjury."

"Fear not. I shall spend money to get witnesses to prove that Pichel Khân forced you, by blows, to give false evidence before the magistrate."

The witnesses and their ancestors for fourteen generations had never seen so large a sum as 1,000 rupees all at once. They immediately agreed.

The day of trial before the session came round. Gobind Lâl stood in the dock. The oath was administered to the first witness. The Government *Vakil* asked him, "Do you know this Gobind Lâl, *alias* Chuni Lâl?"

"No, I think not."

"Have you never seen him?"

"No."

"Do you know Rohini?"

"Which Rohini?"

"The one who used to be in the *Koti* at Prasâdpur."

"I, and my father before me, have never been to the Prasâdpur *Koti*."

"How did Rohini die?"

"I hear she committed suicide."

"Do you know anything of the murder?"

"Nothing at all."

The *Vakil* then read over to the witness the deposition he had made before the magistrate, and then asked, "Come, now, did you not say all that to the Magistrate Sâhib?"

"Yes, I said it."

"But if you know nothing, why did you say it?"

"Because of the beating. Pichel Khân covered my whole body with blows." Here the witness wept. Some days previously, in a quarrel with his own brother about some land he had sustained some blows. The marks remained. These the witness, with unblushing face, displayed to the judge, as the marks of Pichel Khân's beating.

Much perplexed, the *Vakil* called the other witness. The second witness spoke to the same effect. Before coming he had

painted marks on his back with the juice of the *rangan* tree. One can do everything for a thousand rupees, and these he showed to the judge.

The third witness gave evidence to the same effect. The judge discharged the defendant, the evidence being insufficient, and, being much dissatisfied with Pichel Khân's doings, directed the magistrate to inquire into them.

Gobind Lâl was amazed to find the witnesses so favourable to him at the trial, but when he saw Mâdhabi Nâth among the crowd he understood the whole. Though discharged he had to return to the gaol, as he could not be released till the gaoler had received a written order to that effect. When he arrived at the gaol Mâdhabi Nâth went to him and whispered in his ear, "When you leave the gaol come and see me, I lodge in such a place."

But Gobind Lâl did not go to Mâdhabi Nâth. Where he did go no one knew. Mâdhabi Nâth sought him for four or five days, but found no trace of him, so he was obliged to return alone to Haridrâ

CHAPTER XIII.

SIXTH YEAR.

MÂDHABI NÂTH informed Bhramar of her husband's discharge from gaol, and of his disappearance, leaving no clue by which to trace him. When her father left her Bhramar wept bitterly, though why I cannot say.

Meanwhile Gobind Lâl, on his release, went to Prasâdpur. He saw that the house had been stripped, and that no one was there. He heard that some five or six men had plundered the house of all that was in it, and what they had not carried off had been sold as unclaimed property. Only the house remained, and even that had been stripped of the door and window frames. Living for a day or two in the bazar, Gobind Lâl sold the remaining brick and woodwork for a trifling sum, and with this money went to Calcutta.

In secret and in very ordinary fashion Gobind Lâl passed his days there. In a year's time the little money he had brought from Prasâdpur was exhausted; he had nothing left wherewith to support life. So, after six years, the thought arose in his mind to write to Bhramar.

He gathered together pen, ink, and paper, and sat down to write. I will admit that in doing so he wept. He thought, "How can I tell if Bhramar is yet alive? To whom shall I write? Well, I can but try; at any rate my letter will come back to me, and from that I shall know Bhramar is no more."

It took him long to decide what to say. Finally he thought, "What great harm can there be if I write in the ordinary way to one whom I have abandoned for ever, through no fault of hers?" So he wrote—

"BHRAMAR,—After six years this vile one writes you a letter. If you feel so disposed read it, if not, tear it up unread. I think you must have heard all that my fate has brought upon me. If I say it is the fruit of my acts, you may recall to mind that I am only saying

what you predicted of me, for I am, to-day, about to beg something of you.

"I am now destitute. I have spent the last three years in beggary. I went to a place of pilgrimage, and there lived on alms. Here I get none, and am dying for want of food.

"I had one refuge, my mother at Benares. But my mother is dead. I suppose you know that. So now I have no refuge, no food.

"So I thought I must once more show this guilty face in Haridrâ, or I cannot obtain food. What feeling of shame is left to one who deserted you without a cause, who lived with another woman, and even slew her? How can one who has nothing to eat feel shame? I may show my guilty face, but you are the owner of the property, the house is yours. I have acted hostilely against you, is it likely that you will take me in? Impelled by hunger I have applied to you for help, will you grant it?"

The letter written, Gobind Lâl hesitated long, but at last posted it. In due time it reached Bhramar, who immediately recog-

nised the handwriting. Her whole frame trembling as she opened the letter, she took it to her room and closed the door. Then, sitting alone, and staunching the fast-flowing tears, Bhramar read her letter. Again, once, twice, a hundred times she read it. That day Bhramar did not again open her door. When they called her to meals she said she had fever and could not eat. Bhramar had constant fever, so she was believed.

When, after a sleepless night, Bhramar left her bed the next day, she really had fever. But her heart was firm, decided. She had previously resolved what answer to write. A thousand times had she thought of such a contingency. It now required no thought, she had arranged the very phrases she would use.

She did not write "Your Servant,"¹ but as a husband is in all conditions to be revered, she wrote, "I send thousands of salutations, and beg to state as follows."

¹ This is the usual form of self-appellation, implying respectful deference to one's superiors. A son in writing to his mother would make use of the same phrase.

Then followed, "I have received your letter. The property is yours. If even it were mine, I gave it to you. You may remember the deed of gift you destroyed before you left. But a copy of it is in the Registry Office. The gift was accomplished, it remains valid.

"Therefore you can without impediment return to Haridrâ and take possession of your property. The house is yours. Moreover, in these five years I have saved much money. That also is yours. Come and receive it. Out of this money I beg a small portion. I have taken 8,000 rupees from it. With three thousand I will build myself a house on the banks of the Ganges, the remaining five thousand will support me. Having made and settled all arrangements for your coming, I shall go to my father's house and shall live there until my own is ready. It does not seem likely that you and I will meet again in this life. I am satisfied that it should be so, and I do not doubt that you also are pleased. I await your second letter."

In due time this missive reached Gobind Lâl. What a terrible letter! no atom of

tenderness in it. Gobind Lâl, in writing, had recalled the fact that six years had passed, but in Bhramar's letter not a word of the kind. Could it be the same Bhramar?

Gobind Lâl replied, "I will not go to Haridrâ. Send me a monthly alms to sustain life here."

Bhramar wrote, "I will send you 500 rupees monthly. I could send more, but I think it might be wasted. I beg also another thing. It would be better if you were to come here yourself and enjoy the yearly savings from the revenue. Do not forsake your home on my account. My days are nearly ended."

Gobind Lâl remained in Calcutta. Both felt it was best.

CHAPTER XIV.

SEVENTH YEAR.

TRULY the end of Bhramar's life approached. For many days her mortal illness had been kept in check by treatment, but now it no longer yielded to remedies. She was wasting away day by day.

In the month Agrahâyan Bhramar took to her bed, and never again left it. Mâdhabi Nâth came and stayed with her, vainly trying remedies. Jâmini came to the Haridrâ house to give the last cares to her sister.

The disease would not yield to remedies. Thus the month of Pous passed. In Mâgh Bhramar gave up taking physic. She said to Jâmini, "You need not give me any more physic, sister. With next month's full moon I shall die. See, sister, that on that night you do not leave me. If you see that I am likely to outlive the night of the full moon

don't forget to ensure my death by an inward pinch ; be sure you let me die that night."

Jâmini wept, but Bhramar would take no more physic. As she did not she had no relief from her disease, but she became daily more cheerful. After so long Bhramar had begun to be pleasant again. It was her first smile after six years. Like the brightening of a lamp before it expires. As the days went by, the nearer death approached, the more calm, cheerful, and smiling was Bhramar. At length the terrible last day arrived. Bhramar saw from the restlessness of the family, and from Jâmini's tears, that it had come. The pain she suffered told the same tale. She said to Jâmini, "This is my last day." Receiving no reply, she went on, "Sister, on this, my last day, I have a request to make, be sure you carry it out." Jâmini kept weeping in silence. Bhramar repeated, "I have one request, do not weep to-day. Wait till I am gone, weep then, I shall not return to forbid you ; but to-day I wish to say to you, unhindered, before I die the few words that I can speak."

Jâmini dried her eyes and sat near, but

could not speak for the sobs that checked her utterance.

“Another request is that except you no one shall come here just now. In time I will see every one, but let no one come now. I shall not have another chance of speaking to you.”

How much longer could Jâmini restrain her tears? Gradually the night came. Bhramar asked, “Is it a moonlight night, sister?”

Jâmini, opening the venetians, replied, “Divinely bright. The full moon has arisen in all its glory.”

“Then open all the shutters. Let me die gazing at the moonlight. Are there any flowers blooming in the garden below the window?”

Standing at that window in the dawn Bhramar and Gobind Lâl had talked together. She had not been at that window now for seven years. She had not opened it all this time. Jâmini opened it with difficulty, and said, “There is no flower garden here, only weeds and one or two dying shrubs. No flowers or leaves.”

“There was a garden there seven years

ago. It has gone to ruin. I have not seen it all these years."

Bhramar remained long silent, then she said, "Let flowers be brought for me, sister, from wherever you can get them. Don't you see this is my *phulsajjâ*?"¹

At Jâmini's bidding the servants brought heaps of flowers. Bhramar said, "Scatter them over my bed. To-day is my *phulsajjâ*."

Jâmini obeyed. Then tears streamed from Bhramar's eyes, and her sister asked her why she wept.

"Sister," she replied, "One great sorrow remains. On the day that he left me, and started for Benares, that day I entreated the gods, with tears, to grant me one more meeting with him. I was bold enough to say, 'If I am faithful, I shall meet him again.' But I have not seen him. Oh, if I could but have seen him on this my last day! In one day, sister, I should have forgotten seven years of suffering."

"Will you see him?"

"Of whom do you speak?" asked Bhramar, startled.

"Of Gobind Lâl," said Jâmini calmly.

¹ See Appendix, Note 9.

"He is here. Father sent him news of your illness, and he has come to see you once again. He arrived to-day, but in your state I feared to tell you. He also has not the courage to come in."

Bhramar, weeping, said, "Oh, sister, let me see him but once, only once more in this life. Let me see him once again."

Jâmini went out. Presently, with noiseless footsteps, Gobind Lâl, after seven years, entered his own sleeping chamber.

The two wept, but neither spoke. Bhramar signed to her husband to sit on the bed. Gobind Lâl, weeping bitterly, obeyed. Bhramar bid him come closer to her. He did so. Then Bhramar stretched forth her hand and touching his feet, took thence a grain of dust¹ and placed it on her head saying, "Pardon all my faults and bless me, that I may be happy in another life."

Gobind Lâl could not speak, but he took Bhramar's hand in his. So they remained long, hand-in-hand. Bhramar silently passed away.

¹ A common Eastern practice, expressing loyalty, devotion or obedience.

CHAPTER XV.

BHRAMAR was gone. Her funeral rites were performed in the usual manner. At the close Gobind Lâl sat in the house. Since his return he had not said a word to any one.

Again a night passed. The sun rose on the day after Bhramar's death the same as on other days. The leaves of the trees glistened in the shadow. The tiny ripples in the dark blue waters of the tank sparkled in the sun. The dark clouds in the sky became white; it was as though Bhramar had not died. Gobind Lâl went out.

Gobind Lâl had loved two women, Bhramar and Rohini. Rohini had died. Bhramar was dead. He had been attracted by Rohini's beauty, he could not quench youth's unsatisfied thirst for beauty; so, leaving Bhramar, he had taken to Rohini; but no sooner had he done so than he fully recog-

nised that she was Rohini, not Bhramar; that thirst for beauty is not love; that enjoyment is not happiness; that the deadly poison, produced at the churning of the ocean by means of the serpent Vāsuki, followed after the creation of the nectar that was borne in the cup of Dhanvantari. So, in like manner, he perceived that poison had resulted by the churning of the ocean of his heart, which could not be got rid of; that he must of necessity drink it. So he drank it up, even as the blue-throated god Sivâ had swallowed the poison of yore; and as with Sivâ, so with Gobind Lâl: the poison had lodged in his throat, it could not be digested, it could not be rejected.¹

But then that formerly known relish, that pure nectar of Bhramar's love, mingled with heavenly fragrance, that heart-nourisher, that remedy for all ills by day and by night, awoke in his memory. When at Prasâdpur Gobind Lâl was floating in the stream of Rohini's song, Bhramar reigned in full possession of his heart; Bhramar within, Rohini without. Then Bhramar was unattainable and he could not give up Rohini—yet Bhra-

¹ See Appendix, Note 10.

mar reigned within, Rohini remained without. Thus it came about that Rohini so quickly died. If this is not obvious to every reader, then in vain have I written this story.

If then, making suitable provision for Rohini, Gobind Lâl had come humbly to the loving Bhramar, had said, "Forgive me, give me again a place in your heart"; if he had said, "There are no merits in me to induce you to forgive me, but you are so full of grace, out of your own grace pardon me," I think Bhramar would have pardoned him. Because woman is full of forgiveness, of compassion, of love; woman is the crowning excellence of God's creation, the shadow of the gods. Man the god's creation only. Woman is light, man is shadow. Could the light do without the shadow? (*i.e.*, could a woman ever forget her love for man?)

Gobind Lâl could not do that. There was something of pride, man is full of pride, something of shame, the punishment of the evil-doer is shame, something of fear; sin cannot easily face virtue. So there had been no way of return to Bhramar. Gobind Lâl could advance no further.

After that, Gobind Lál became a murderer. His hope died out. Darkness could not approach light.

Then again, that unquenchable, burning thirst to see Bhramar tormented Gobind Lál year by year, month by month, daily, hourly, at every moment. Who had ever possessed such a treasure? or who had ever lost such an one? Both Bhramar and Gobind Lál had suffered, but Bhramar was happy compared with Gobind Lál. His suffering was beyond man's power of endurance. Bhramar had a helper in death. Gobind Lál had not even that help.

Again night passed, again earth smiled in the sun's light. Gobind Lál came out of the house. He had slain Rohini with his own hands; he had in effect caused Bhramar's death also with his own hands. With these thoughts in his mind he came out.

I know not how Gobind Lál had spent that night. It must have been a terrible night to him. On opening the door he encountered Mádhabi Náth, who stood gazing into his face—a face which bore the shadow of a disease beyond human remedy.

Mâdhabi Nâth said nothing to him. Mâdhabi Nâth had mentally vowed he would never again in this life speak to Gobind Lâl. So he went away without a word.

Gobind Lâl on leaving the house went into the garden below Bhramar's window. Jâmini had spoken truly: it was no longer a flower garden. It had become a jungle of grass and weeds. One or two hardy, half-dead plants were to be seen amid the jungle, but they bore no flowers. Gobind Lâl walked long amid this wilderness. It became late, the sun's rays were extremely powerful, and at length, wearied with his long walk, he went away.

Thence, without holding speech with any, not looking at any one, Gobind Lâl went to the edge of the Baruni tank. It was half-past ten. The deep, dark blue waters of the tank sparkled in the burning rays of the sun. Numbers of men and women were bathing on the *ghât*. The children were swimming about, tossing the dark water round about in crystals. Gobind Lâl did not wish to join that crowd, so he left the *ghât* and went to that part of the bank where the flower garden lay. First he noticed

that the railing was broken, the handsome iron gate had been changed into a bamboo hedge. Bhramar had carefully preserved all Gobind Lâl's property, but of this flower garden near the Barunî tank she had taken no care. Jâminî had spoken of it on one occasion and Bhramar had replied: "I am on the way to Death's dwelling, let that pleasure garden of mine also go to destruction. Sister, can I bequeath to any one that which formed my heaven on this earth?"

Gobind Lâl saw there was no gate, the railing had fallen. Passing into the garden, he found no flowering shrubs, only thatching grass. Wild arums and other weeds with cassia-trees filled the place. The creeper-covered bowers were all fallen, the statues lay on the ground broken in pieces, overrun with creepers, some still standing but mutilated. The roof of the summer house was gone, the venetians and sashes broken and carried away; all the marble stripped from the building and removed. In that garden flowers bloomed no more, nor fruit ripened. Even the pleasant air seemed to have ceased to blow.

Gobind Lâl sat at the foot of a broken statue. The mid-day came, he still sits there. The intense heat burns his head, but he feels it not, his life is going. Since night he had thought only of Bhramar, of Rohini, first one, then the other, continuously. Now Bhramar, now Rohini seemed to rise before his eyes; the world seemed filled with these two figures. Sitting in that garden each shrub took the form of Bhramar; Rohini sat in the shade of every tree. Now Bhramar seemed to be standing there, and again she was gone; now Rohini came, and she too vanished. Every sound seemed to be the voice of one or the other. The voices of the people on the *ghât* seemed now that of Bhramar, now of Rohini; now the two in conversation. The rustling of dry leaves seemed the sound of Bhramar's approach; the moving of insects in the wood, that of the flight of Rohini. The swaying of a bough in the wind seemed the expiring sigh of Bhramar; the call of the *dayal* the song of Rohini. The world was filled with Bhramar, with Rohini.

Twelve o'clock, half-past one, Gobind Lâl

still there, at the foot of the broken statue, still in that world of Bhramar, of Rohini. Three, half-past four, Gobind Lâl has not bathed, has eaten no food, is still in that Bhramar-Rohini-filled pit of fire (the fire of remorse). Evening comes, but Gobind Lâl does not rise, he is senseless. His household, not seeing him all day, thought he had gone to Calcutta, so they made no search. Evening had fallen, the garden had become dark, stars glittered in the sky, the earth was silent, Gobind Lâl still there.

Suddenly in that dark, hushed solitude a great change came over Gobind Lâl's maddened heart. He clearly heard Rohini's voice as though she were calling out—

“IN THIS PLACE!”

Gobind Lâl no longer remembered that Rohini was dead. He asked, “What—in this place?”

And it seemed as if Rohini answered—

“AT SUCH AN HOUR!”

Mechanically he repeated, “In this place, and at this time—what, Rohini?”

Under the influence of his mental malady, he heard Rohini say: “IN THIS PLACE, AT SUCH AN HOUR, IN THIS WATER, I PLUNGED.”

Gobind Lâl, hearing this voice in imagination, asked, "Shall I plunge into it?" Again, in fancy, he heard the answer—

"Yes, come; Bhramar, sitting in heaven, sends to say that her merit has power to redeem us. Perform penance thus. Die."

Gobind Lâl closed his eyes. Exhausted in body and trembling all over he fell, benumbed, on the stone landing steps of the *ghât*. In his dazed condition he seemed to see Rohini suddenly dissolve into the darkness. Then, gradually filling the whole atmosphere with brilliance, the bright figure of Bhramar arose before him, and said: "Why should you die? do not die. You have lost me. Need you die for that? There is one dearer to you than I. Live and you will obtain her."

Gobind Lâl lay there in that senseless condition all night. At dawn, searching for him, his people carried him into the house, Seeing his state, even Mâdhavi Nâth pitied him. All strove to restore him. In two or three months he recovered his natural health. They hoped he would

now dwell at home, but he did not. One night, without telling any one, he went away, and no one got news of him any more.

SEQUEL.

GOBIND LÂL's possessions fell to his sister's son, Sachi Kânta, who was now of full age.

Sachi Kânta came daily to walk in that ruined garden, formerly Gobind Lâl's pleasure garden, now a dense jungle. He had heard the whole of that sorrowful story. Day by day he sat there thinking it over, and after a time he began to restore the garden. He had a handsome iron railing again prepared, and a splendid flight of steps built of black marble descending to the water. He made flower beds, and planted therein rows of beautiful shrubs, yet among them none bearing coloured flowers. The *bakul* and jasmine of indigenous, and the cypress and willow of foreign trees were included. He erected a temple in place of the summer-house, but had no gods or goddesses placed in it.

A costly statue of Bhramar in gold was placed in the midst of the temple, and at the foot of the statue this inscription was engraved—

“To her who shall equal Bhramar in joy and in grief,
In faults and in virtues,
I will give this golden statue.”

Twelve years after the death of Bhramar a *Sannyâsi* came to the door of this temple. Sachi Kânta was there. The *Sannyâsi* asked, “May I see what is in this temple?”

Sachi Kânta, opening the door, displayed the golden figure. The *Sannyâsi* said, “This Bhramar was mine. I am Gobind Lâl Râi.”

Overwhelmed with amazement, Sachi Kânta was, at first, unable to speak. Recovering a little he bent before the ascetic, taking dust from his feet, and then sought to take him into the house. But Gobind Lâl did not consent; he said, “This day completes my twelfth year of secret wandering life. Completing it I have come hither to give you my blessing. This now done I shall return.”

With clasped hands Sachi Kânta said, "The property is yours, I entreat you to stay and enjoy it."

"A gift of more value than all possessions, beyond the reach of *Kuvera* himself, is mine. I have obtained that which is sweeter, more holy than even Bhramar. I have found peace. Wealth is nothing to me. Do you remain in possession."

Sachi Kânta asked humbly, "Is peace to be found in asceticism?"

"Not always. Only for the sake of dwelling in secrecy have I adopted this disguise. Only by placing one's thoughts at the feet of the Divine Being can one obtain peace. He alone is now my wealth. He is my Bhramar, and more than Bhramar."

With these words Gobind Lâl went his way, and was never again seen in Haridrâ village.

APPENDIX.



NOTE I.

Fractional quantities are frequently expressed in India by the fractional parts of a rupee, which consists of 16 annas. Thus, an 8-anna estate is half the estate; 3 annas is $\frac{3}{16}$, and so on. Similarly, a farmer may say he expects to get only a 12-anna crop—that is, a quarter less than a full crop. If he has paid his rent in full, he will call it a 16-anna rent; if he only cultivates a fourth of his land, it is a 4-anna cultivation.

NOTE II.

To stretch out the hand to seize the moon is a common proverbial saying, denoting the vain attempt to do an impossibility, or to hope for something unattainable or hard to get.

NOTE III.

The hardships imposed on Hindu widows are most deplorable, and can be but faintly realised out of India. Intense misery and loneliness, domestic drudgery and reproach, and a total renunciation of all earthly enjoyments, and of the simplest luxuries in food and clothing, are all summed up in the word widowhood.

NOTE IV.

Draupadī, in Hindu mythology, was the wife of the five Pândava princes, the description of whose contests with their cousins, the Kauravas, is given in the Mahâ-bhârata. She is there said to be specially noted for her skill in cooking.

NOTE V.

The names here quoted are those of some of the leading warriors on each side in the war between the Kauravas and Pândavas, which forms the subject of the Mahâbhârata.

NOTE VI.

This refers to a practice occasionally resorted to by women of Bengal, who, when about to commit suicide by drowning, attach a *Kalsi*, or earthen water-jug, by a rope to their necks, that it may, when full of water, act as a weight to prevent the body from rising to the surface.

NOTE VII.

The *Srâddha*, or funeral ceremony performed on the death of a Brahman, is generally a most costly undertaking. Large sums are spent on gifts to priests and Brahmans, who flock thither from miles around. Besides this, a general feast of milk, rice, *ghee*, sweetmeats, &c., is provided, not only for all the relatives of the deceased, but for the poor and for beggars of every description. The respect shown to a departed relative is often measured by the sum spent on his *srâddha*.

NOTE VIII.

Tarakeswar is a village in the district of Hugli, not far from Calcutta, which contains a shrine of great sanctity, to which sick people and pilgrims flock in great numbers for recovery from disease, or the performance of vows to the god Siva. A great religious festival is held here in the month of April, at which severe penances and most cruel self-inflicted tortures are practised. The well-known barbarous *Charak-puja*, or swinging festival, used to be held at this fair, until put a stop to by the British Government in 1863.

NOTE IX.

Phulsajja is the name given to a prevails amongst Hindus of adorning the bridal bed with flowers.

NOTE X.

This mythological allusion will best be explained by quoting from Dowson's "Hindu Mythology," under the heading *Avatara*, p. 36 :

"Vishnu appeared in the form of a tortoise in the Satya Yug, or first age, to recover some things of value which had been lost in the Deluge. In the form of a tortoise he placed himself at the bottom of the sea of milk, and made his back the base or pivot of the mountain Mandara. The gods and demons twisted the great serpent Vāsuki round the mountain, and, dividing into two parties, each took an end of the snake as a rope, and thus churned the sea until they recovered the desired objects. These were (1) Amrita, the water of life; (2) Dhanwantari, the physician of the gods, and bearer of the cup of Amrita; . . . and (14) Visha, poison."

It would appear from this that all the objects were obtained, but finally a deadly poison was produced. This threatened to destroy the universe; whereupon the god Siva swallowed it up to avert that calamity, but the poison remained lodged in his throat, causing it to become of a dark-blue colour. Hence it is that Siva has received the epithet of the "blue-throated god."

GLOSSARY OF INDIAN TERMS.



- Amin.* A native land surveyor and assessor of rents.
- Amla.* The native officials of a court, or office.
- Asoka.* The *Jonesia asoka*; a tree bearing beautiful flowers, held sacred to the god Siva. It is considered especially meritorious to bathe in a stream with asoka blossoms floating on the water.
- Avatâr.* The incarnation of a deity on earth.
- Bâblâ.* The *Acacia Arabica*, of hard wood and thorny used in making agricultural implements.
- Bairâgi.* A religious mendicant.
- Champak.* The *Michelia champaca*; a tree bearing large brilliant yellow flowers, very strongly fragrant. It is personified as one of the five flowery darts of Kama, the god of love.
- Châtak.* The *Cuculus melanoleucus*; a small bird which, according to a popular legend, exists entirely on rain-drops.
- Chokidâr.* A village watchman.
- Dârogâ.* A manager or overseer of any public department or office.
- Darwân.* A gate or door-keeper.

- Dayal.* The Indian robin.
- Dikpâl.* In Hindu mythology, the guardian of one of the eight points of the universe.
- Diwân.* Manager of a zemindar's estate.
- Durgâ.* A form of the goddess Pârvati, consort of Siva, represented as terrible in form, and irascible in temper.
- Gânja.* The leaves and flower-head of the hemp plant, used for smoking as a narcotic.
- Ghât.* A bathing place on the bank of a river, or tank.
- Ghee.* Clarified butter; used for cooking purposes; also for an offering to the gods, and in the preparation of sweetmeats.
- Gomashtâ.* An agent, steward, or factor.
- Gri hastha.* A Brahman who performs the duties of the head of a family.
- Grihini.* The mistress of a Hindu household.
- Guru.* A Brahman who gives religious instruction, a schoolmaster.
- Hari.* A name or incarnation of Krishna—a name of invocation.
- Huka.* The Indian tobacco pipe.
- Indra.* The god of the firmament.
- Kabiraj.* A native physician.
- Kachari.* A court whether of a judicial officer or of a zemindar.
- Kalsi.* A water-jar, either of earthenware or brass, usually carried by women on the hip, and sometimes also on the head, causing that erect and graceful carriage characteristic of Hindu women.
- Kârkun.* A clerk, a vernacular copyist.
- Karta.* The head of a Hindu family.

- Khânsamâ.* The house steward or butler.
- Khayer.* The resinous gum of the *Mimosa Catechu*.
- Kokil.* The Indian cuckoo. Its notes are associated with all the joys and sorrows of a Bengali villager.
- Kothi.* A factory, warehouse, or large brick building.
- Kuber, or Kuvera.* The god of riches—the Hindu Plutus.
- Lakh.* One hundred thousand.
- Lâthiyâl.* A man armed with a lâthi or stick, employed by zemindars, planters, and others to enforce their orders.
- Mahâdeva.* A name of the god Siva, usually represented as riding on a bull.
- Mahâshay.* A gentleman; a form of respectful address.
- Muharrir.* A writer; a clerk who writes English.
- Naib.* A deputy or assistant.
- Naik.* An overseer.
- Nâmâbali.* A garment worn by Brahmans, bearing the names of Hindu deities.
- Pâpiyâ.* A bird of the cuckoo species, with shrill crescendo notes.
- Pandit.* One learned in the Sanscrit language and literature, or in Hindu law.
- Peon, or, Piyâda.* An office servant or messenger.
- Pirân.* A long coat usually worn by educated natives.
- Rangan.* The *Ixora bandhuca*, an ornamental flowering shrub, used for dyeing.
- Rattika.* A creeping shrub, the pods containing beautiful scarlet seeds, with a black spot, which are strung together for necklaces.
- Râyat, or, Ryot.* A peasant or cultivator.
- Sannyâsi.* A Brahman who has renounced all worldly ties—an ascetic.

Sári. The cloth worn by Hindu women, wrapped round the body, the loose end thrown over the head.

Shástra. The sacred books of the Hindus.

Sitár. The Indian guitar.

Tahsildár. A rent collector.

Thákur. An idol or deity, used as an honorific mode of address.

Tulsi. A plant held sacred to Vishnu, found in every temple, shrine, or holy spot. Every devout Hindu also has a plant growing in the courtyard, to which he daily offers worship. The plant has also valuable medicinal properties.

Vakil. A native pleader or attorney.

Zemindár. A landowner who pays revenue direct to the Government.