



Stories and Plays
for
Children

Sunanda

**STORIES AND PLAYS
FOR
CHILDREN**

By
SUNANDA



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I

THE GARDEN

IT was a small lone plot of land; there were no trees, no grass, no men, no animals. It was all bare like a piece of earth newly created. The blue of the sky and the red brown of the earth were the only colours there. In the middle of this land was a hill of brown wet mud.

Slowly gentle clouds rushed into the blue sky and a cool breeze blew in soothingly. Soon the silver rain poured down over its bareness. It cooled the dry land thoroughly and shed calmness on its silent heart. Suddenly here and there a few heads pushed themselves out of the earth. They seemed to be strangers here for they clasped their hands in surprise and there was a gleam of astonishment in their eyes. They came up and stood on the land. There were signs on them which revealed that they had long been working their way out from within

the earth. A joy of victory shone on their faces. When they felt sure of standing on the earth, in reality and not in a dream, they fell on their knees and prayed gratefully to the Sender of the Grace who had brought them here. Underneath the earth all had been dark. And after many years' endeavour they had now seen the light for the first time.

Opening their eyes after the prayer they saw near the small hill of mud an old man with a long beard and grey hair. He had such welcoming kind eyes that all the men and women went up to him. He smiled compassionately and said, "This piece of land is as new to men as you are to her. I shall give you each a plant which you will tend with care and love in the separate places allotted to each of you." Then he distributed the plants according to the persons and their needs. Some got 'Harmonia', some got 'Helpous', some got 'Cordelia', some got 'Violets' while some got 'Honey suckles'.

Having distributed the plants the old man said that the mud of that hill could be used for their better growth. At once everyone got to work and when they looked up after a while, the old man had gone. No one knew where. They were surprised, but their main attention was now on their plants. They tended them

day and night. They loved them and prayed daily for their better development.

Ardently they watched the growth, the coming of each new leaf and each fresh twig. A wonderful sweet smile broke over their faces on seeing a new bud or flower on the plants. Every morning they saw the sun shining on the dew-decked plants and in the evening they watched it leaving a crimson glow over them. Thus they worked on and on and soon turned the once barren land into a calm, fragrant, colourful garden of joy and beauty.

Now, once, a solitary youth, tired of the noise and hustle and bustle of the world, accidentally happened to come to this land. He was fed up with the cunning intrigues of the men around him. He was disturbed and confused. But as soon as he came here the sweet, pure fragrance welcomed him. Just on the border of the land he saw the fence of silence. As he entered some one from outside tried to pull him back, but he was so eager to go in that he pushed himself in with a strong will. Suddenly the creeper of Protection, growing just inside the gate, sent forth its branches between the youth and the hand pulling him back. The thorns of the creeper protected him and drove away the evil hand. When he walked on he saw the

purple-eyed 'Organisation' growing all around; he saw the gay yellow 'Cheerfulness in Work' dancing with the wind and he too became cheerful; on seeing the white and purple 'Enthusiasm' and bold 'Courage' he straightened himself up and went forward.

At each corner that he turned, pure white delicate 'Openings' revealed to him the new land. As he moved on he felt the serene fragrance of the 'Purity'. In every nook there grew 'Light' leaving no place for darkness. Pink and white 'Harmony' bloomed all over and filled the youth's being.

A land of peace, purity, colour, fragrance and joy it was. The men who were instruments of God in creating this harmonious garden walked here and there in humility and silence. In the heart of the garden the youth saw a throne made of very light pink 'Tender Love'. He approached the throne of Love and found his being's peace, his mind's illumination, his heart's true Beauty. It was his Soul's Abode.



II

A LAUGHING MIRROR

“WHY Jaya! you have again been taking the things that do not belong to you. How many times have I told you not to do a wrong thing? But you never take my words seriously.”

Jaya's head hung down with the weight of shame and her rolling brown eyes seemed to be searching for a place to hide herself. Slowly her lips moved and formed the words, “But I do take them seriously, Mother. I always want to avoid doing wrong but do it; and only when somebody catches me, I realize that I have done wrong. Why don't you catch me when I begin to think of doing such a thing, instead of scolding me when I have already done it?”

“If you really wish to change yourself, always think that God looks at each thing that you do. He is everywhere and sees every action that we do. Think that He is in front of you, behind you, on your right, on your left and all around you. This will stop your hands from doing any wrong.” So advised the mother.

Jaya was not pleased. How to feel that God is all the time looking at you when you cannot see Him? She could not understand how to be a good and faultless girl. Still she wished to be one. The whole day long she thought of the wrong things she had done and became miserable remembering how many times she had been scolded by her parents. In the night she prayed to God:

"O God in the blue Heaven, Helper of all, the little folks or the big, You know I want really and truly to be a good girl. Why don't You send mamma or papa to remind me not to do a wrong thing before I do it? They find out after I have done it. Of what use is that?"

Her prayers ended, she opened her eyes and saw a charming fairy with green glittering eyes and golden ringlets dancing as she nodded and playing hide and seek under her jasmine woven crown. She smiled tenderly. Jaya rubbed her eyes to make sure that it was not a dream. Before long the fairy said, still smiling, "My dove, close your eyes and pray to God again." Jaya obediently closed her eyes.

The fairy then touched Jaya's hands with her wand. Jaya, though praying, felt some weight in her hands. Her tempted curiosity forced her to open her eyes. She saw no fairy

but a small mirror with an ivory frame carved with a design of jasmine flowers. It had as sweet and as pure a feeling about it as those flowers have.

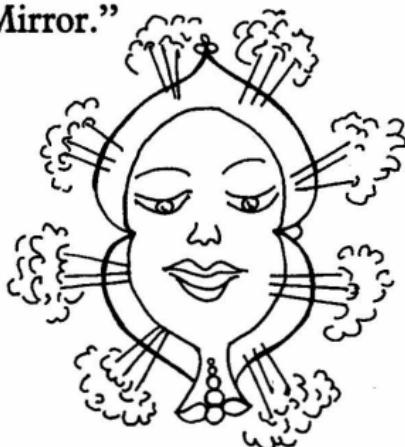
It was a simple mirror but not a trifle. Jaya was wonder-struck. She held the mirror a little high to see her face but to her great surprise she could not see her face in it. She turned it in all directions, but could not understand whether it was a real mirror or not. Still she dared not run to papa for an explanation because this was the fairy-given mirror, papa might laugh at her; so she hid it in her pocket—it was small enough.

Just then she saw her brother going out of the house with his friends. Her sharp brain at once set to work and informed her that there was a chance to creep into her brother's room and see his beautiful picture book. She went. She closed the door, took out the book from the shelf with both hands and began enjoying the colourful pictures. She finished soon going through them. Then she turned a few pages and stopped at a picture of a white cloud which looked like a white rose on a blue background. She peered through the window. No one was looking at her. She could tear out the beautiful picture for her collection, couldn't she? She

held the picture between her two fingers but before she had begun to tear it, the mirror in her pocket burst out into a roar of laughter.

Jaya was afraid. Her fingers left the picture. She took out the mirror and her unbelieving eyes saw her image in it, her abashed face, drooping eyes and pale cheeks. The mirror had a magic power. It laughed to make Jaya understand that if nobody else, at least God saw her mischief. She closed the book, put it back properly on the shelf and left the room.

Henceforth whenever she was on the point of doing some such thing, the mirror laughed and she could see her image in the mirror only at that time. Otherwise the mirror was blank. Many a time and often Jaya wished to throw it away, but this pure, silent reminder never allowed her to do so. The sudden laughter was so disagreeable and reminding that gradually she dared not do any wrong. When mamma once remarked that Jaya had become a wise girl, Jaya just said, "It's the Blessing of the Laughing Mirror."



III

THE ADVENTURE OF DIPU

A POOR boy named Dipu lived in a small hut near a river. Dipu's mother used to tell him all the stories of God's goodness and His help to man. Hearing His praise Dipu began loving God deeply. He wished to go to the village temple to worship Him and to thank Him.

So early one morning he took his bath in the river and went to the temple. A priest stopped him at the gate and turned him out saying, "If you come to the temple to see God's Image, you must bring some offering for Him. You can't see or worship Him empty-handed." Dipu was greatly disappointed but he had to return home.

That day when he sat for food, he found it difficult to touch his bread and waited for his mother to move away from him. No sooner had she done so, than he slipped the little loaf into his shirt pocket. Thus he went without food to secure an offering for his God.

In the evening he went to the temple again but this time with an offering. The priest on

seeing such an offering angrily slapped Dipu and asked him to leave the place instantly, for bringing such a meagre thing for God.

Dipu walked away with a heavy heart. He wanted to worship God but could not do so only because he was not rich enough. As he was thinking what to do, he heard a very faint voice, "Go away to the forest. There God lives freely for everyone, not for the rich alone."

Dipu wanted God so much that he went to the forest, as he could not stay in the village without Him. He walked on with firm and steady steps, sure of the ground he was treading. His eyes were wide open to catch all that was for him to catch. After walking thus a long distance, he suddenly saw on his way a grand cobra with a bright ruby on his hood. Dipu stood still and watched the majestic grandeur in front of him. He wanted to run away but his feet seemed fixed to the ground. Once more he heard the faint voice, "Follow him." The cobra led the way, Dipu followed.

They passed through many twisted paths before they came to an open place surrounded by high green trees. There under a thickly blossomed tree Dipu saw a small temple made entirely of fresh flowers. He was spell-bound by such a beautiful sight, but when he saw the

cobra moving towards the temple, he too followed.

They entered the temple and Dipu saw a smiling image of Shiva. An image to his physical eyes, yet it was as living to his inner being as the grand cobra and himself.

He found his God though he had offered nothing. He sat there feeling so grateful to the cobra and the image that tears of gratitude flowed freely from his eyes. His love for the worship of God had accumulated in his heart since long and here he found the answering love in Shiva's smiling face.

He lived there and became a friend of the cobra and worshipped Shiva with deeper ardour everyday.



IV

SINCERITY

ONE evening there had gathered at a street corner a crowd of young children. They were discussing something very seriously. One child was saying, "It is decided then. Tomorrow at six in the morning we shall set out to search for the old lady's lamb." Another child pointing at a girl who sat away from the rest of them, said, "But what about Uma? We are not going to take her, are we? She is so bad and hates working even when we go for picnics. She is not a real friend."

"Let us give her one more chance. If she does not work sincerely this time, next time we shall leave her out."

"No, we have given her enough chances. And because we are so lenient with her, she is spoilt. She must learn a lesson this time."

Uma shouted angrily, "I don't care a bit for your company. I can as well play alone. Even if you want me, now, I am not going to join you." She walked away proudly and the other children also returned home.

On the second day the children set forth

as decided. Uma played alone in the street. But after a while she was bored and felt lonely. She longed to be with the other children. But they were far away and even if she went, they would not welcome her. So, brooding over what she should do, she went to a nearby lake. She sat there and seeing many lilies and a crowd of sweet swans in the lake, she began to weep. She said to herself, "Even the lilies and swans do not like to be alone but want their companions; then, how can I live without any friends?"

She cried and cried and her tears moistened the ground in front of her. After a while she saw, through her tears, that a plant was slowly coming out of the moistened earth. As the plant grew bigger and many small branches spread out, Uma wept aloud saying, "Even a plant does not look beautiful with only one branch; it looks complete and pretty with many branches; so would I look with my friends if they allowed me to be one of them."

By this time many white flowers had adorned the plant. Hearing her weep so aloud, a gentle spirit spoke from the plant, "Why do you weep?" Uma was surprised but she thought that a good fairy would help her. So she told her the reason of her crying. The spirit asked, "Why did not the children take you?"

Uma replied, "Some of them said that I do not do the work that I should do and idle away unnecessarily. Some said that they could not rely upon me for anything and some said I am dishonest, and they would have nothing to do with me."

The spirit at once understood that Uma was not sincere to her friends and thus she was not liked by others. The spirit said, "Do you like these flowers upon me?"

Uma: "Yes! they are lovely."

Spirit: "Pluck some of them. They will help you to be sincere to your friends. When they return, give one flower to each of them and that will make you give them your word to be sincere."

So saying the spirit vanished. Uma, amazed by all this, plucked some flowers, and returned to her street. Her companions had come back by that time. She gave a flower to each one of them and she said that it was a sincerity flower. Of course no one believed her at first but as the days went by, they found that Uma was really sincere to all of them. Thus many a time they used to say, "Really, Uma you did give us the sincerity flower that day."



V

VASU, THE FLUTE BOY

ONCE there was a little boy called Vasu. He lived in a forest; he ate the fruit from the trees and drank water from the rivers. He was very happy living amidst nature. When the shepherds came to graze their cows and sheep and goats, Vasu used to guard the herds for them. The shepherds were so sure of Vasu's help that they would leave their cows, goats, and sheep in Vasu's care and return to their work.

Now Vasu had a wooden flute with him on which he used to play the whole day long. In the evening he would play the flute to call all the cows. The cows were so accustomed to his music that they would run to him as soon as he would play.

Vasu had learnt many tunes from Nature. He would imitate the cry of different birds at different times of the day. He could play the calls of a great many birds through his flute. He was very fond of water and his ears were very keen to catch the different sounds of rippling water. He used to say, "The rivers and

brooks and torrents sing a lovely chorus and my flute imitates them." He could play such a quivering tune that people used to mistake the tune of his flute for the real sound of a river or brook. Nature was his teacher.

Once in this forest a king came to hunt. It was very hot and the king was thirsty. His men were left far away from him and he was searching for water all alone. Suddenly he heard the sound of murmuring water. He ran in that direction and saw no river but a young boy under a tree playing a rippling tune. White lambs were at his feet. He was our Vasu. The king went up to him and asked for water. Vasu led him to the river which was only a little distance away. After drinking the water, the king thanked Vasu and asked him, "Who taught you to play the flute so beautifully?" Vasu said, "Nobody; I just imitate the songs of the rivers and the birds and the wind."

The king was wonder-struck and asked Vasu to follow him to his palace. Vasu did not want to, but could say nothing against the king's persuasion. He went with him. The king gave him beautiful clothes and asked a learned man to teach him to read and write. Everyday Vasu used to play the tunes on his flute which he had learnt from Nature. The king was very pleased,

but Vasu missed his rivers, brooks, trees and birds. He longed to go back to his forest home. But the king wanted him all the time.

Once there was a big festival at the palace. Many musicians had come to play the best music to please the king. The programme started. Many famous musicians played very moving tunes, because the king had said that no instrumental music could move him. They all tried but the king sat and smiled indifferently all the time. When all the competitors had finished, the king asked Vasu to play something. Vasu played such a pathetic heart-stirring tune that in two minutes tears flowed from everyone's eyes, and the king was sobbing like a child. Something in the boy's flute moved him to his deepest depths. When Vasu finished his tune the king told him to ask for a boon.

Vasu asked the king to take him to the forest the next time he went hunting. The king took him there that very day. Vasu played his flute madly as soon as he reached the forest. The king saw that Vasu had never played like that when he was with him. Vasu was weeping all the time he played. The king asked the reason for this and Vasu said, "I am unhappy because I shall have to leave this place and go with you. This place is my mother and my teacher."

The king replied, "But you have no one to take care of you here."

"Mother Nature gives me everything, and also new tunes everyday." And he played again. The king saw that Vasu loved Nature more than anyone. He felt some unique Presence around the boy. He could not take the boy away from his beloved mother and teacher of music.

The king returned to his palace. Vasu stayed in the forest, happy with the trees and birds and rippling waters. And whenever the king felt an emptiness in his heart he would come there to be filled again with Vasu's music.



VI

THE MUSIC

NATURE clad in her new sari looked extra cheerful and happily anxious as if she was waiting to welcome a long-looked for Guest. Everything was ready, a deep fathomless peace pervaded everywhere. The leaves of the forest trees danced silently in the wind. Even the birds stopped their twittering. They forgot to think about their half-built nests, forgot to get the food for their young ones, and forgot their still unhatched eggs.

A very young child came to this forest. In each step of his there was a new joy. He came to a river bank. He was caught by the silence and peace in which Nature around him was steeped. He too stood there as though waiting for something. Slowly the music started, seeming to arise from the pure river.

In the beginning the music was slow, sweet, gentle as if preparing as it were every particle of Nature for something new. Soon the child saw an arrow studded with silver stars, floating upon the soothingly murmuring river, and making its way towards him. As it approached him,

the child uttered a cry of joy, his eyes fixed upon it. The arrow pointed itself firmly towards him and the child heard a clear melodious voice, "Leaving the past far behind us, let us run towards a luminous future."

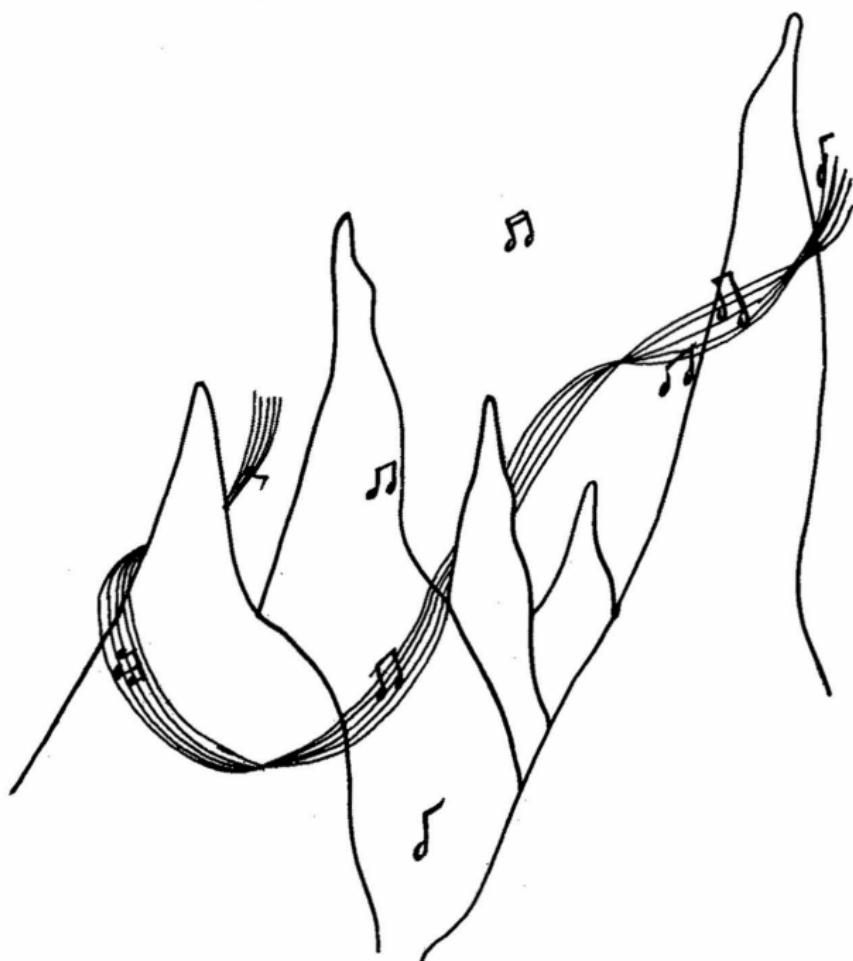
He started taking off his clothes. One by one he laid them by. First the coat, and with it dropped off sorrow; then with the shirt came out weakness limpingly. Anger, greed, desire and ego followed weakness as soon as he took off the rest of his clothes.

No sooner had these left him than he became lax and stretched his arms out for support. And the melodious music took him up and led him on. The arrow moved before him. Slowly it started ascending....

For a time there was a gradual slope. The child felt as if he was wrapped in a mist of tranquillity. Then climbing a sudden steep hill the music carried the child high up. Then again slow movements flowed but always rising up.

Repeating the notes the Music took the child at times round and round like a coiled spring. In slow gentle beats, with step-by-step ascent or sudden rising, the music went always onward. Then it became very faint, climbing softly high, higher as if touching the topmost bounds of the sky, reaching the highest goal.

And the peace that pervaded all around was so intense that the child was afraid to disturb it by his breathing. He was surrounded by such a unique atmosphere that he forgot all about his being—all he felt was that he was soon to be in some supreme place where nothing but ANANDA pervades....



VII

IN SEARCH OF IMAGINATION

FROM a tiny cottage one late evening a small boy came out. Slowly he closed the door behind him and threw a rapid look over his shoulder to make sure that no one had seen him. The atmosphere was shadowy and solemn. Everything was bathed in the tranquillity of the twilight. Even the boy seemed to be taking "silenceward" steps.

This boy, Vijay was very imaginative. He would imagine mountains to be in his room and would climb them with thrill and enthusiasm. In his dry room he would cross torrents holding his clothes up with great care in order not to get them drenched. But unfortunately when he went to school and his master gave him a story to write, Vijay wrote it, but not to his teacher's taste. The teacher therefore remarked, "Vijay, you have no imagination."

Vijay felt deeply hurt by this remark made in the class in which he was generally outstanding. He wondered what this imagination was. He brooded deeply over it and even in his sleep dreamt about it. In his dream he saw a

sweet fairy with a silver wand in her hand and a delightful smile on her bright face. She was dressed in a silver and skyblue robe. Vijay was dazzled at her sight but the fairy came near and said, "Don't worry, my child, I have come to help you." Vijay threw his arms forward to touch her but she stepped back and said, "No, Vijay, don't try to touch me, I am not a real fairy but a fairy of dreams. Tell me what you want and the Fairy Queen will fulfil your wish."

Vijay relaxed his arms and cried out, "O sweet fairy! Can you give me imagination?"

The fairy with a smile said, "Oh! Yes. But not now. Tomorrow come to that 'Rusted Forest' and your wish will be fulfilled." And she vanished into the air.

The next day Vijay got no chance to escape until the evening; when all at home were busy with themselves, he slowly crept out in search of imagination.

As he approached the Rusted Forest, his heart danced with joy and with the idea of his being presented with imagination. As he advanced in the forest he found that, true to its name, the forest was indeed dry and rusty. Still he continued walking hopefully to see the real Fairy Queen. A faint wind moaned through

the dry trees and now Vijay's joy began to melt, because the time and the place, the solemnity and the silence had a depressing effect on him. The mournful cry of a distant bird was the only sound that troubled the dead stillness. Vijay thought that he had been deceived and that he must return home. But as he turned back, he saw to his utter horror that the trees had all closed together behind him when he had walked forward. So he could do nothing but continue his way. He felt his going was something like burning away the bridge between him and home.

Suddenly in this profound silence he heard a noise. As it seemed to come near he glanced enquiringly everywhere and listened. A lulling sound came floating down from the distance. He parted some bushes and peered out in the direction from where it came. With a leaping surprise he saw the fairy of his dream near a tree. Her silver and blue robe seemed as if it clothed all the bareness of the forest. Vijay rushed towards her and caught her hand. She smiled slowly, walked a few steps forward with him and there he saw a big green tree, covered with strings of yellow flowers. Vijay's eyes wide-opened and he asked, "O Sweet fairy, is this a special tree, that among so many others only

this is covered with flowers and leaves?"

"You see, my child, this is the tree of imagination. It can be grown anywhere. Now you want imagination, don't you? Well, climb up and catch those two flower-filled branches; close your eyes and there you will get imagination." So saying she vanished.

Now, as soon as Vijay closed his eyes he felt that the tree had uprooted itself and was flying in the air. He passed over mountains and rivers, forests, fountains and dry deserts. Once he felt himself reaching the moon and sailing in a little boat in the curve of the crescent and he could see even his own figure down there in the river with its reflection. Sitting up there he saw people on the earth by the side of the river admiring him. He saw his disturbed wavy shadow in a brook. He saw a child in front of a basin full of water, trying to catch the boy in the moon.

He felt at one time that he was a divine child cutting off the ten heads of Ravana with his shakti or helping Hiranyakashipu to do away with his ego by becoming Narsinha Bhagwan.

After all these experiences he felt as if the tree was descending. It came to a stop in front of some old castle. He found the front door ajar. He stepped into a still chamber, looked all

around but found no living person. Of many doors he found only one open. He entered by that one and wondered why he had been taken to such a mysterious place. He came to a small room which was full of all kinds of ghastly things. He did not know how to go forward. When he took a step forward his fear would make him take two steps backward. At this moment he heard a voice, "My child, there are greater things to attain than imagination. Yes! imagination makes you happy, widens your thoughts and helps you to write good essays but you cannot forever live in the world of imagination. Cross this room with a manly heart. You will have to overcome more difficulties still to reach a greater goal." He advanced with new vigour and came to another room which was full of reptiles. He was afraid but the words he had just heard were ringing in his ears. So heedless of the creatures in his way, he crossed that room.

Then he came to a big room where the table was set ready. Vijay was very hungry, so he approached the table and began eating. Now among the dishes there were some favourites of Vijay's and some which he just ate without interest. He remembered what he had read in a book that we eat to live and not live to eat. So he didn't touch his favourite dishes first

but started with some bread. As soon as he touched the other things, they disappeared. Vijay understood fully what he had read. He ate ungreedily and continued his journey.

At last he came to a big room. The atmosphere of the room was such that the ego in him melted away and he entered full of humility. The walls were white, the place was filled with deep silence and hidden delight. On the right, he saw a white curtain through which silver and blue light streamed out at random. His head bowed down low, his hands were folded in prayer automatically. The curtain opened and he felt the light penetrating into his body. He humbly raised his head to see his fairy seated on a heart-shaped throne of red lotuses. Light flowed smoothly out of Her. As she smiled light streamed out as it were through Her lips and eyes. Her transparent blue eyes were lovelier than any Vijay had ever imagined. Spontaneously he fell down on his knees and put his head on Her divine feet. She placed Her hand on his head and said, "I hope you are satisfied with your flight into imagination. Now you must have seen that there are greater things to obtain than imagination."

All became dark a moment later and he saw himself walking towards his home. He

longed to see his Fairy-Mother once more but she was nowhere, though she was eternally enthroned in his heart. But before entering his home he decided that the next time he saw Her, he would ask for a trip to the tree of Realization.



VIII

THE SMALL FISH

ONCE there was a fisherman who lived in a cottage near a river with his wife, a daughter and a son. As he was getting old, he started taking his son with him to catch fish and teach him the trade so that he might be able to support his mother when his father died.

Now this boy was very kind-hearted. He could not see a fish being caught. And if he saw a young fish in any fisherman's net, he would plead with him to drop the fish back into the water. Everyone laughed at him and teased him. The boy kept quiet and if ever a young fish was caught in his small net, he would always put it back into the river.

One day the fisherman fell ill and after a week died. Now the boy had to catch enough fish so that he could sell them and get enough money for his mother, sister and himself. His mother who knew how he hated catching small fish, told him, "See, my son, if you don't catch enough fish we shall starve as your father is no more there to help us. So be careful and bring me all that you catch."

The boy went with his net to the river. The first fish he caught was a very beautiful small fish. The boy put it back into the water thinking that he would keep all the other fish. He went on fishing. But at the end of two hours he found only one small fish again in his net. He was surprised and let it go again. By the afternoon he had got nothing. Then he determined to keep any fish that he would catch. Towards the evening he caught two big fish and when he was about to go back the same small fish came again into his net. He liked the fish very much because it was very beautiful. But he felt like leaving it as he had already two big fish for his mother. Just then the fish said, "Don't put me back, take me with you."

The boy was startled. As it was getting dark he went home hurriedly and gave all the fish to his mother. He asked his mother to put the small fish in water and to keep it alive as long as possible. The mother did so because she was pleased with her son.

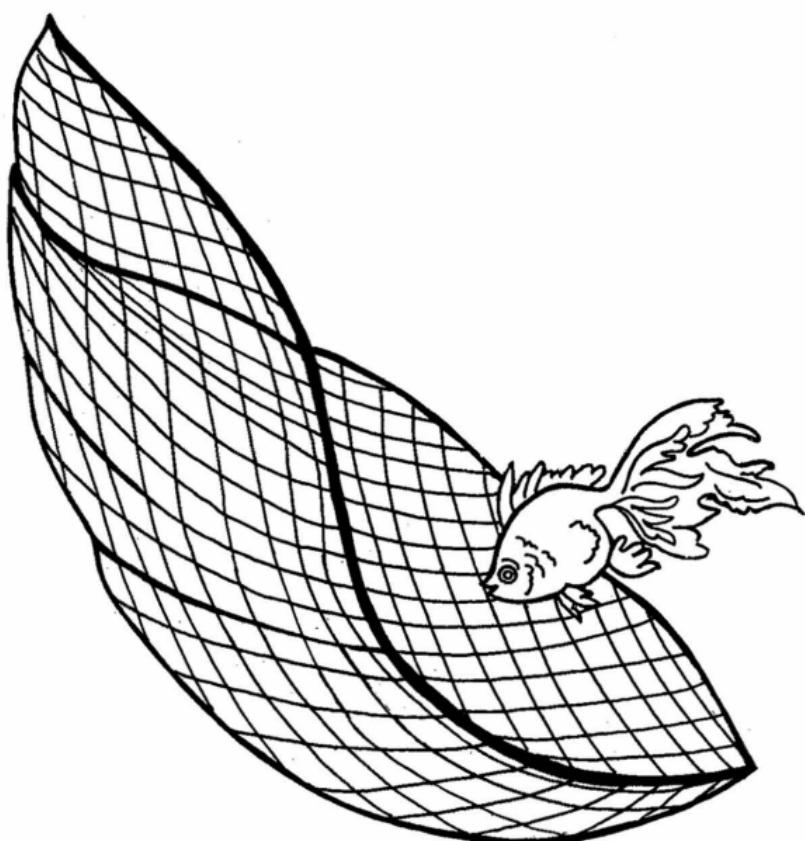
She then went to the market and sold them all to a cook. With the money she bought some necessary things and returned home. The next morning before the boy went out to fish, the cook to whom his mother had sold the fish

came to see them. She had brought with her the small fish in a pail of water. "This is a speaking fish. It has told me the story of my childhood and as a reward it has asked me to give it back to you." So saying, she left the fish with the boy and went away.

They were all amazed and kept the fish in water in a corner. That evening it was sold again. But this time a young housewife took it. Next morning she too came to their door saying "Take back your magic fish. It has sung me the most beautiful song I have ever heard and as a reward, which it deserves it has asked me to give it back to you." The boy was very happy to get the fish back. They all decided not to sell it again as long as they could help it.

But after a few days again the mother was obliged to send her daughter to sell the small fish. A young scholar who was a collector of fish bought it. This time the fisher boy had no hope of getting the fish back because the fish-collector was sure to keep such a beautiful fish.

But the next day the scholar was at his door and while returning the fish he said, "Here is your fish. It revealed to me the secret of a treasure manuscript which I possessed and which no one could read. In return it asked me to return it to you. I was anxious to keep such a



rare fish in my collection but it tried to jump out of the water." Leaving the fish there the scholar went away.

The boy, his mother and his sister now felt quite sure that whatever happened the fish would unfailingly return to them.

IX

RUPAK

THE tinkling of the little bell had just ceased. The young slender woman dressed in a light violet sari bowed down to Krishna's smiling image in front of her and her heart uttered a mute prayer:

"My sweet lord, give me a son and a loving heart to love him always." Thus she, a farmer's wife, prayed day by day. She and her warm-hearted and hardworking husband who was strong, healthy and frank as the village air, lived in a small and neat cottage in the village of Rangpur. The villagers, ignorant of town refinements, shared the sweet waters of a common river. Goodwill and a sense of sacrifice for each other flowed freely in their veins. Hatred, jealousy, the desire for power had not yet touched them.

After many long prayers our young villager's cottage brightened up one morning with a child's cry. A little son had been born to Gopi. As the days passed, the boy's figure and face were moulded into a kind of beauty which caught everyone's attention. The little

boy developed very firm yet refined features. His tender-lidded, deep grey eyes seemed gentle, yet a shade of graveness was already there. He had a high prophetic forehead and a small pointed nose. His full-moon-like cheeks and pink sensitive bud-like lips made his face angelic. The slight gestures of his handsome limbs when he lay awake in the cot, gave the onlooker a feeling of a cluster of white wind-flowers. Everyone who saw him loved him and couldn't help saying that he was the sweetest boy they had ever seen.

Once a friend of Gopi paid a visit to the cottage. The boy was asleep. His bright handsome face was lit with a hidden smile. The friend looked at him and said, "Gopi, you used to pray to God to give you a son like the white clouds. He has really heard your prayers. See how cloudlike and mysterious he looks! How old is he?"

"He will be eighteen months on this new moon," replied Gopi very lovingly.

"But, it is high time you gave him a name."

"Oh yes. All have called him Gop till this day but we must give him a proper name."

The friend got up to go and looking at the child once more said, "Well, lucky girl, give him a name worthy of him."

That night when Gopi talked to her husband about the name of their son, he said, "Yes, tomorrow we may call the priest to find out a good name for him."

Next day in the morning the farmer came to Gopi with bright eyes and a happy face and said, "There is no need to call the priest. Your Krishna has given me a name for our son. In my dream He asked me to call our son Rupak." So the grey-eyed child came to be called Rupak.

As he grew up, new pretty features marked their way on his face like new buds sprouting out after a cheerful shower. His progress in sitting up, standing, crawling and walking was remarkably speedy. When he was pleased or tickled, he threw back his handsome head and showing all his splendid teeth, laughed the most musical laugh in the world. The laugh revealed the heart behind it—a heart innocent and pure. Those who heard or saw him laughing found it difficult to forget it. There were no words but still he seemed to have said so much through that frank laugh. When he started speaking in his vibrating but unusually steady notes, people were awe-stricken; still it was so pleasing and penetrating that they wanted to make him speak all sorts of things. Children,

when they have just learnt a word or phrase love to repeat it to everyone. But our young friend proved to be different. He would not let a word escape his small mouth, a second time if he had already uttered it, despite all the tricks of the ladies and other older children to make him repeat it. Everyone keenly observed the movements of this boy who had something inscrutable in him.

Suddenly a break came in this happy home. The farmer became the victim of a fatal fever and in a week's time he was on his death-bed. Sadness wrapped the little cottage in her arms like a grey ashen sari muffling a pallid white face.

It was evening. The sun had gathered up all his rays preparatory to his retreat and the coming night had not brought the moon; when Rupak entered, there was no light in the cottage. In spite of the darkness he rushed in calling his mother.

"Rupak," a hushed voice came. But before the mother came out he was in the kitchen which was darker than the first room.

"Ma, why isn't there a lamp?" There was no reply.

"Ma, why don't you speak, Ma, you are weeping—why?" Still there was no reply....

"Where is Bapu, Ma? I know if he was here, you would not cry. Tell me where he is and I'll go and tell him that you are weeping."

Now Gopi could no more check her tears. She sobbed and sobbed. She didn't know why but she felt as if she was weeping her sorrow out in front of some elder person or in front of God to lighten her heart. Rupak also didn't question her often as a child would do but with each of his little hands on his mother's cheeks, stood there firm and silent. For a long time neither of them felt the darkness or the need of a lamp. Then Gopi composed herself and lighted the oil lamp. She brought some food for Rupak who refused to eat alone. Tears forced their way out of Gopi's red eyes but Rupak had his ever sweet ways. He took some food in his hand, climbed into Gopi's lap and started putting it in her mouth. Though Gopi had a mind to turn her face away, unknowingly her lips parted and she started eating the food offered by those tiny but pressing hands. After their food Gopi told Rupak, "My dear, your bapu will never come back to see my tears. He has gone away far, far, very far....God has taken him."

"But Ma! if God has taken him, he cannot be so far, as God is always around us. Can't

we talk to God and send Bapu a message? Can't we ask Him, Ma?"

"Rupak, God is seated eternally in us in a small room. We have to call Him from there. But the room is so deep, that we have to call strongly. There are many doors and corridors before the final threshold. And our voices are so feeble and faint and insignificant that they reach there only if we go on calling Him with all our love and faith. You have to go on calling."

"But how long are we to call Him to make Him hear?"

"Oh! over and over again. You know how many leaves fall from the trees in autumn? Well, if you gather all the leaves one by one and make a long garland of them calling Him with each leaf that you pick up, He may hear you."

"Ma, that is easy, I love to go to play in the fields though you don't like me to do so; but tell me Ma, how long should the garland be?"

"Long enough to reach that grey heaven where your father is."

The talk ended there.

The next morning a small figure was seen in the next field, now bending down to pick up a leaf, now standing up to weave the leaf into a garland, then walking forward. The sun had

painted his white cheeks crimson and lit up his golden hair. As he walked on he called God.

Rupak was making a garland of leaves as his mother had said. He had taken all his mother's words literally and had set forth to call God. He called Him ardently as he took each step with some indescribable resolution.

Soon a farmer was attracted by the voice of the boy and came to see who it was calling God in the fields. He saw Rupak. He stopped him and asked why he was there. Rupak weaving a leaf into the garland said, "I am making a garland of leaves to call God. He will come to me when it is long enough."

The farmer laughed rudely and taunted him: "If you make a garland of sweet flowers perhaps He may be pleased. But how do you expect Him to come to you when you call Him with a garland of dead leaves, not even of green ones?"

Rupak quietly going on with his work replied, "The garland is not for Him."

The farmer called him crazy and went away. The boy walked on inattentive to that meaningless laughter. When he had thus called for three hours he turned back to see the length of his garland. Then he looked up at the sky and muttered, "It is long enough." He wove

some more leaves. Now he was at the end of one big field. No one else was around him. He was alone amid big trees and long grass hiding him from human eyes. Then suddenly he stopped. He looked up and said, "God, come now, I feel my garland is long enough. Come, God."

He saw a white cloud. His eyes wide open, and keen, penetrating that mysterious cloud, looked like two candles burning up through the darkness. The deep vibrating notes of his voice flowed again very yearningly: "Hasn't my feeble voice reached You, God?"

As he was thus standing a gentle murmuring wind surrounded him. He felt as if it came from a far-off mountain of jasmines. Suddenly he heard a rustle of leaves behind him. An irresistible feeling forced him to look back. He saw his God walking slowly towards him, holding the end of the leaf-garland in one hand.

Rupak looked at Him with a steady gaze, then suddenly ran towards Him and was down on his knees; his hands clasped the radiant feet. His face was turned upward, the grey eyes fixed on the light of that strange smile. Rupak had no words but his aspiring eyes seemed to be asking, "Has my voice reached You, Lord?" Even to these unuttered words came the reply, "My child, your mother will weep no more

with you by her side." These were the sweetest words ever spoken to Rupak. The words had some hidden power in them. Rupak's frail figure trembled a little. His God lifted him up from the ground and looked into his eyes. A ray of tender Light passed from His eyes into Rupak's which gleamed with unearthly radiance.

Then with the young one's hand in His He walked back till the end of the field. Rupak, of course, forgot everything else around him. At the end of the field God said, "Go home, my child." Rupak looked up but was not willing to go just then. His little lips trembled and he said, "I know You will take my message to Bapu but..." The rest was not spoken but understood. God said, "Call and I shall come." Rupak was satisfied. His eyes no more had that wanting look. He smiled a wise smile and said, "Yes, I'll go home but You wait here until I turn that corner so that I can see You everytime I look back."

God obeyed his young lover.

Gopi was anxiously waiting at her door. Her Rupak had been out for a longer time than usual. Just then Rupak came running, his face all flushed and illumined. Gopi's arms were open, and in a moment Rupak had jumped into them.

"Ma, Ma, I saw God today. I have sent the message to father...."

"But...Rupak! what are you talking about? How can you say such a thing?"

"But Ma, I saw Him. He was smiling, He talked to me, He caught my hand and He said He would come again when I called and I know He will."

Gopi saw something so real and strange in her son's eyes that she could not deny anything that he had said. "Rupak, listen, for my sake, please don't tell anybody what you have seen. You can call God, speak to Him, but don't tell anyone else."

Rupak became thoughtful suddenly. Why could not he speak about God who was in every part of his being, who was so sweet, so grand, so wonderful? But soon he nodded, as if he had made up his mind.

Henceforth he had something more strange in him. His developed forehead was marked with the stamp of new wisdom. His bright eyes had an additional ray of unknown sweetness. As he moved in the streets and fields the poor workmen came to know him and on seeing him loved him. Almost everywhere there was talk about this sweetest boy of the village.

Once he saw a very young kitten near a

tree. It was trembling and seemed obviously lost. A crowd of young curious children had gathered around. One of the elders passed by throwing a glance at the poor lost one. Suddenly rain came and everyone ran away; only Rupak waited with the kitten in his hand. He refused to go until the mother cat came and took her kitten.

Another day in the village there was a great shouting and hurry-scurry; children were hustled and jostled by their mothers back into their home, brave men hurled stones in the air at something. Rupak was standing at the door of his house with Gopi and saw all this. A dog was running at a dashing speed and about twenty men with sticks and stones in their hands were trying to beat the dog. In spite of Gopi's pleading, Rupak went out. Other women seeing him from their windows cried to him to go back but Rupak went forward with determined steps. When he was near the crowd, the older people shouted at him and asked him to run away immediately because the dog had gone mad, but when they saw the smile on his face they stood still. Rupak then went towards the running dog and stood in his way. The dog came closer and seeing Rupak was about to change his direction when Rupak touched him with his fingers.

The people were all dumb-founded. They knew that the mad dog would at any moment leap upon little Rupak and bite him but they could do nothing. Rupak had already caught the gasping dog by his neck. Immediately the dog, mad till then, became absolutely quiet. The mysterious force that had made him dash about so blindly seemed to have disappeared. Rupak patted the dog which looked at him with deep grateful eyes. The dog slowly but heavily walked away, out of the street, out of the village, out into the forest. Leaving the astonished crowd in the street Rupak returned home where Gopi was waiting for him.

Thus our Rupak, though strange to people's eyes, became their beloved. He was a mere child, yet he exercised a queer influence upon everyone in the village. Sad people became happy in his presence. He was the friend of the children and the pet of the elders.

Once to this happy village came a wealthy man with his wife, his son and a daughter. They took the big house near the temple, for the man was to officiate as high priest there. The villagers were surprised at this yet they could not but be silent before the authorities. Soon the son of the priest who was eight years old became friendly with the other children

of the village. But he was proud. He considered himself much above the others and when they played he always wanted to become the captain. Formerly Rupak had said that everyone would become captain in turn. So the other children were unhappy to see the new proud boy becoming their captain everyday. Still they dared not say anything for fear of the priest. But all waited to put down the pride of Kumar at the Dashahara festival when they usually had their sports competition. They knew that many of them were sure to defeat him in some of the games.

The long awaited day arrived at last and every villager came to witness the sports. Kumar had come with high airs and sneered at everyone. The priest proudly looked only at his son. Soon the games and the races started. Many boys besides Rupak showed greater ability than Kumar. Kumar lost five games and was greatly upset. He saw that his pride could not win him the games. Even the priest became uneasy, but the villagers' eyes rested lovingly on Rupak who played all the games with grace.

The sixth game was going on. Other players were very enthusiastic about winning the game. But Kumar was slow and seemed gloomy. When he realised that he was sure to lose the

game his pride vanished; he sobbed pitifully. The spectators jeered, the priest was about to run to the field but Rupak turned his eyes towards them and everyone became still. No one mocked, no one laughed. Then he walked to Kumar, put his hand on his shoulder and said in a low voice, "Kumar, take courage, don't lose heart. Pray to God and He will help you win the game." Kumar's tears dried up, his sobbing heart became calm. He had never felt such peace and comfort as the hand softly touching his shoulder gave him at that moment. He looked at Rupak. Rupak smiled the friendliest smile and Kumar was again in the game, this time much gentler and more loving than before. He seemed to have grown up after those few moments spent intimately with Rupak. Kumar played in a friendly spirit all the rest of the games and he won three. Rupak's work was enthusiastically appreciated.

Somehow the priest's face seemed clouded with some unhappy feeling. Even when he distributed the prizes he did not smile. He tried to look into Rupak's eyes when Rupak approached him for his cups. His sullen eyes met a pair of gleaming frank eyes and he at once turned his head away. People marked

that Rupak was not in his good books. With the close friendship of Kumar and Rupak the function ended.

From that day Kumar was closely attached to Rupak and despite his father's unwillingness he very often took Rupak to his house. They had become such fast friends that Kumar would insist on eating out of the same plate with Rupak. The priest in the beginning found this horrible, because Rupak was a mere villager and Kumar the son of a priest. Rupak hearing this argument would simply smile. Very often these two friends were seen sitting in the temple. Most often they found Rupak speaking and Kumar listening quietly. Of course no one knew what these friends' secret talks were; but now and then people had heard Rupak telling Kumar to pray to God.

One day towards the evening the big doors of the temple were closed. Inside the temple it was all dark except for the oil lamp in front of the image in the innermost chamber. Slowly the small door on the left opened and out came the priest. His eyes looked searchingly everywhere and not seeing a soul around seemed to be satisfied. He went into the deep chamber where the lamp burnt. He went very near the huge statue of God installed there and took

out a hammer and a chisel from his pocket. He had just put his chisel on the statue's ruby eye and raised the hammer in his hand when someone touched his elbow with both hands. He turned back. His face grew ghastly with fear. His eyes turned red as soon as he saw a young figure in front of him.

The setting sun hastily sank into the far horizon earlier than ever; a villager returning home chanced to discover wandering near the temple, a young blind boy. The villager stopped almost dead when he recognized Rupak. When his mind recovered from the shock and realized what it meant he wept bitterly like a young child and caught Rupak in his hand. Rupak's beautiful grey eyes so dear to all who saw them had been pierced cruelly, the red blood which had trickled down from the wound had dried up on his smooth white cheeks. The villager was so overcome by emotion that he only said, "Rupak..."

"Take me home to my mother," said the blind boy in a deep melodious voice. The voice was calm and profound, not shaky, not perturbed, not angry, not agonized. The villager was stunned. Rupak said again, "Come."

The villager led him home. On the way

many other villagers saw him and mourned the mischance and loudly cursed the doer of such a devilish act. They reached home. Gopi was waiting as usual at the door for Rupak. But that day no running Rupak rushed into her open arms. Instead of the strength-giving, lovely eyes she saw the cruel hollows. Everyone around wept, some silently, some openly. Some looked at Rupak who saw no one, some looked at sorrow-stricken Gopi. But Rupak was calm. At last an old man asked him, "Rupak who is this wicked person who has taken those wonderful eyes which used to see for all of us?"

"Yes, who is it? Who is this devil to hurt our lamb thus?" many voices were heard. But Rupak was silent. Slowly he called, "Ma". Gopi put her trembling hand on his head. Rupak sat in her lap and remained quiet as if in deep meditation. No one could comfort Gopi, because each one felt the need of comfort.... With heavy hearts they left the blind son and the sad mother.

The next day the news travelled all over the village. Everyone came to see Rupak but Kumar, his close friend, was not allowed to come. Most of the villagers thought the priest was responsible for the calamity. But no one dared say a word. When the priest heard that

Rupak had spoken nothing about the person who had committed the crime, he was sick and uneasy, his head seemed to turn at such a speed that he felt as though it would burst into pieces. Kumar did not eat or play because he was forbidden to go to Rupak. He remained sad, lifeless and morbid all the while. The priest found the circumstances unbearable and he left the village within five days.

Now Rupak on this side told his mother that he wished to go to the fields to see his God, and that Gopi should take him there. Gopi refused in the beginning but when Rupak said he would go alone if she did not accompany him, she agreed to lead him there. They walked through the fields, and the passers-by saw what a sweet smile adorned the blind face. When they had crossed about five fields, Rupak stopped and asked Gopi to return home. She wept and said that she would never leave him in the fields and asked who would bring him back. She feared that her dear boy would never come back to her. But Rupak gave her his assurance: "God will bring me back to you. Pray to Him."

Gopi felt such a deep and abiding certainty in those words that she turned and took her steps homeward. No sooner had Rupak walked

a few paces than he felt a Hand leading him. He said, "See, my Lord, I am blind. What now?" The Hand pressed caressingly his cheeks. Rupak said, "Lord, I cannot see your face."

"See within, my child. Canst thou not see me there?"

Rupak after a little while said, "Oh, yes, I can. Shall I come with you today?"

"No my child, not yet."

"But without sight..."

"It is good thus. Ask and thou shalt have guidance. Call and I shall come. Now this dog I give to thee. He will lead thee where thou must go."

Rupak felt once more the affectionate Hand move softly all over his body. Soon he felt some one catching his clothes and pulling him. It was the dog. Rupak murmured, "Give me strength, O Lord, to do your work," and followed the dog. The pair walked on. Rupak's steps fell steady and sure. The dog's steps were full of alert keenness for service. There was now a new deep mark over Rupak's forehead. Though the once bright eyes were lightless the face now had a quiet splendour and it looked just as if many stars had been collected under a thin light pink cloth.

Eventually they came upon a small hut. It

was far away from Rupak's village; there were no other huts around. A clean narrow grass path led them to the small, simple, white door which stood closed. The dog stopped in front of it and so did Rupak not knowing where he was. Then he heard a voice, "Knock and it shall be opened." Rupak knocked gently. The door opened and a slender girl of about twenty years stood on the threshold. She was dressed all in white and looked almost an aerial spirit. Her large solemn eyes lit up for a second on seeing Rupak at the door but became extremely soft the next moment. Her curved lips trembled uneasily, the whole of her face seemed to have received a faint shock, but immediately she composed herself and said, "At last you have come. I have been waiting for you, Rupak." Rupak felt that this voice, though new to the physical ears, was pleasingly familiar. She took him inside the hut which consisted of only two small but very clean rooms. The dog followed. When she had made Rupak sit, she took the dog by her side and patted him. Then she told Rupak who sat there in peace feeling absolutely at home in this new hut, "Rupak, come every morning to this hut with the dog, and we shall together do what has been asked of us. This dog is a gift from God. Let us call him Ratna because he is a jewel".

Rupak listened to the ringing notes of that strange new voice and agreed to do as the girl asked. He inquired then, "What is your name? How shall I call you? Shall I call you Kiran?"

"Yes, that is good."

Towards the afternoon Kiran said, "Rupak, it is time to go to your mother. But remember for the good of the work, it is best not to let anyone know about me. Don't mention me anywhere, not even to your mother and come here tomorrow at about nine."

Rupak simply said in his childlike wise way, "Yes, I'll come." And led by Ratna he slowly walked away. Kiran stood at the door of the white hut and looked at the pair. Her work had begun, she felt.

Rupak and Ratna went home to Gopi who, as usual, was waiting anxiously. She was almost mad with joy to see the joyful beaming face of her child. Rupak told Gopi that God had given Ratna to him and that he would lead him wherever and whenever it was necessary. Gopi prayed gratefully to her Krishna for having taken care of her child. She took loving care of Ratna.

That evening Ratna took Rupak out into the village for a walk. Every eye looked sympathetically at them. The joy from Rupak's face

radiated to all hearts. A few persons came near him to put their kind hands upon his head or shoulders; but most of them watched this elegant boy from a distance.

Suddenly Rupak said in an eager voice, "Ratna, someone's weeping on the right. Take me there, Ratna." The people around were stupefied at the sharpness of Rupak's ears, because though they were all there, it was only after he had mentioned it that they heard the sobs.

Ratna led Rupak in the direction from where the sobs came. Soon they came to an old hut with broken doors and half fallen front walls. Ratna took Rupak right inside the hut where a woman sat weeping near a small boy who lay unconscious on the floor. The woman was trying to cover the child with her torn sari which was not sufficient even for herself. Rupak went down on his knees and touched the woman's arm with his smooth fingers. The woman looked at him with a startle in her eyes. Rupak said, "Don't cry." The woman was shocked to hear these simple words. "Don't cry! when my child is dying? What are you saying? Soon he will die, see how cold he is and yet no one to help me."

"Did you ask for help?"

"Of course I did. The doctor refuses to come, because I have no money to give him. The employer refuses to lend money without work. No one will help, I know."

"Ask God and He will surely help. Pray for help. He is all kindness. Come let us pray together. You and I and Ratna all of us will pray."

By this time some other people had gathered around. They laughed at Rupak's remark. One kind person, however, said, "Don't you worry Rupak, I have sent for the doctor. He will be here shortly." The woman looked thankfully at the speaker for a moment. But she felt a strong urge to gaze upon Rupak's mysteriously impressive face. He was serene and silent. Some of the people noticed a slight smile over his face when the kind man spoke of the doctor. And those who could not help looking at him all the time marked also a deep compassionate expression coming over his brows.

The doctor arrived with all his pomp and personality demanding immediate attention. People made way for him. Some even asked Rupak to move away but the woman pressed him to stay near her. The doctor examined the child, shook his head in a professional way and said, "No hope," and stood up to go away without concern. The woman immediately took the

child from the floor and putting him in Rupak's lap said, "Pray for me Rupak, pray and save my child." Some of the people around walked away, some waited to see the fun, some lingered to see Rupak and a few others out of sympathy for the woman. Rupak started praying. The growing light over his face compelled everybody to look at him. The woman and some of the other people closed their eyes and prayed for the Help.

They found it very easy to pray, and felt a kind of joy while praying which they had never felt before. They were all lost in prayer when they heard the child cry. The woman turned to Rupak and saw her child who had remained unconscious for two days, in Rupak's lap with eyes wide open. The others also saw that the sick child had not a trace of sickness over him now. He called, "Ma, ma."

"Oh Rupak, you have saved my child," spoke out the mother.

Rupak said, "Not I but God has saved. Remember if no one else, He is there always to help. Don't forget to ask His Help." Then he turned to Ratna and said, "Come Ratna we'll go."

The crowd that was present was amazed. Some said, "A miracle, the boy has some power." Some said, "He is becoming dangerous. He seems

to be knowing magic. Otherwise when the doctor said 'no hope' how can the child live?"

"Yes, better be careful," muttered some.

"Oh don't be an ass. Didn't you see that he simply prayed to God? And didn't you mark how ardently he did it? How the spirit of Him whom he was calling seemed present in him? You should learn a lesson that Prayers can do what nobody among us can," said a strong voice.

"Yes, it is God's help that has saved my child. I'll pray that I never never forget to thank the Lord for His Help. That wise Rupak has opened the doors of eternal help to me", murmured the mother with a grateful heart.

This incident made Rupak more popular in the village. He became the talk of all once again. Some praised him for being so good, while others thought he had a magic power and that he was dangerous.

As days passed, Rupak was seen very often in the village streets with Ratna. They would walk on without any fixed idea and wherever a person was unhappy, Rupak would ask him to pray for the Help. Some laughed at him whereas some really tried to pray. These people soon realised that the unsophisticated words of Rupak asking the Help did work miracles. He was so kind to everyone that even an unbeliever

would be disarmed by his tenderness. His presence used to trouble many malignant hearts, who caught themselves gazing unconsciously at his beautiful face for a long time.

Rupak went regularly every morning to Kiran. No one knew where he went—not even Gopi. But she did not question because she was sure of the Hand that guided her son. Kiran taught many handicrafts to Rupak. And with amazing swiftness Rupak learnt to make beautiful baskets, paper-flowers, vases, toys and carved model temples. They were unique in their designs because he saw them with his inner eyes and moulded his objects on them. Every morning Kiran and Rupak sat side by side and prayed as they worked. They looked a perfect pair, beautiful and angelic.

When Rupak would start home, Kiran gave him all the things that he had completed. Rupak handed them to Gopi who sold them among the villagers; or she would go and sell them in the nearby town. The objects were bought with great eagerness because they had a unique beauty and feeling in them. And thus Gopi got enough money to look after her son and his guard.

Every evening Rupak would go for a stroll in the village. Whenever he talked to anyone he

always talked of prayers. He said, "Prayers are the greatest Help. Have faith in our Creator and He will certainly help." Many believed him because they actually experienced how, when no money, no friend, and no other means had helped them out of a dangerous plight, it was only a whole-hearted prayer that had completely rescued them. Such persons followed Rupak closely whenever he was seen in the village and wanted him to talk to them often. There were some who still thought that a magic which Rupak had mastered and not the prayers helped people; but Rupak, though sad for their disbelief, was untouched by their malicious remarks. Such persons were, however, few and most of the villagers started relying more and more on Divine Help.

One day when Rupak went to Kiran, he was a few minutes earlier than his usual time. As he reached the hut, he heard some divine music. He went in slowly and found Kiran playing a Veena; her fingers moved slowly up and down on the strings and there issued forth a soft and most peaceful melody. As soon as she saw Rupak she jumped up and said, "Why, Rupak, you are early!"

Rupak's thrilled voice said, "Play on, Kiran, don't stop." The words forced Kiran to play on. She played. He stood and listened. After a few

seconds he said, "I feel something in my throat, something strange". Kiran ran to him and putting her hand on his throat said in a persuasive voice, "Let that something come out". She made him sit near her and touched the strings of her Veena once more. Soon from a quiet depth some music flowed. Rupak was singing some pure notes in his clear capturing voice. She played and he sang on. Ratna sat and filled his ears and heart.

That day when it was time for Rupak to return, Kiran looked with compassionate eyes at the wisely serene face of Rupak and said "Rupak, sing the Lord's prayers and message to the people. You are the blessed one".

Rupak went home with renewed wisdom. He had grown. He was no more a boy. That day when he went home, Gopi saw a new brightness on his face and a dancing joy in Ratna's steps. In the evening Rupak stayed at home and started singing. Gopi rushed to him almost madly on hearing his deep melodious voice. Some of the neighbours were also drawn to Gopi's cottage by the magnetic music. They came and stood still at the sight of the blind youth singing hymns to the Lord. No one could go very near him because he seemed to be rapt in such a remote air. But they were thrilled by the music, the voice caught them,

the words forced their attention and the depth and the powerful sweetness enriched their being.

All of them seemed praying in that wonderful atmosphere. Many couldn't help doing so. Everyone respected Rupak now.

From now onwards whenever he went out in the village, a crowd of people followed him and constantly asked him to sing. They never got tired of his ever fresh voice, because though he sang without accompaniment, a heavenly organ seemed to be accompanying his voice and his songs were the renderings of the feelings of so many mute hearts. He seemed to be giving words and music to the secret thoughts and feelings of the people. He filled up many empty souls with his heavenly music. They realised at last that Prayers can do everything for them, that the Lord in heaven hears each call that is made to Him for Help. They learnt to be dependent only on God. The entire village was one because practically all of them looked up to one Lord for Help, refuge and peace. They were no more servants to tyranny and slaves to money, power, flickering beauty and mundane joys. They sought support in the ever-ready arms of God. They also realised that Rupak was sent to them to teach them this lesson in the tenderest way.

But there were some who were curious. They wanted to know where Rupak went each morning. Rupak at once became serious on hearing this question. This was the first time people saw such a shade of sorrow over his face. Those who loved him dearly asked the curious people to keep quiet. Even Rupak said in a solemn voice, "It is best for you not to know that." This aroused the stirring inquisitiveness of the ignorant all the more. They insisted upon knowing. Rupak remained unmoved.

When he went to Kiran, Rupak told her about this. She also became sad for a moment but soon she said, "Let us pray and ask His guidance." They sat in the white hut. Their eyes turned inward. Soon their faces were radiant as if a powerful lamp had been lit within. They looked like two statues illumined by the descent of Light into them. Both of them simultaneously bowed down and heard, "All will be well. The time has come." They were satisfied and were no more sad. Rupak returned home with Ratna.

As the days passed the curiosity of the few increased on seeing Rupak so quiet. They said, "We know that you go on the right side of the river everyday. If you don't take us there, we'll follow the way and see ourselves what is there.

You seem to be having a dark secret there,—some black spots behind your white being."

The people who loved Rupak shrieked with pain at these ungrateful words. They tried their utmost to stop the mad men but Rupak was still and quiet. He repeatedly said only one thing, "You will be wise not to go."

One evening when Rupak returned home, Gopi told him, "Rupak, my son, sing me a long song that I may sleep and feel myself in my Krishna's lap. Rupak found her tone strangely shaky but he was happy to see her so undisturbed. He knew that the time had come for her to go. He sang a long hymn in the softest and most personal voice. Before he had finished the hymn Gopi had passed away. Her body lay there smiling with satisfaction. Rupak's quiet attitude puzzled the neighbours who found Gopi dead. But Rupak had read the veiled future in advance. He just said, "I am free now." No one understood his meaning, yet none dared ask him because of his solemnity. They prepared Gopi's body for the cremation and quietly carried it out of the house.

The very next day the anxious people headed towards the river—towards the white hut. Rupak and Ratna followed the mad few with a huge crowd who shouted at the mad

ones. But Rupak and Ratna walked silently. When they reached the gate and saw the pure white hut, they stopped for a moment and looked at Rupak. He was quiet. For a few seconds everyone was caught in the inscrutable silence. And then all rushed towards the hut.

Rupak and Ratna stood still at the gate. The mob neared the hut, the door was ajar; they pushed it slightly because they were stunned by some powerful feeling. They found the hut lit by an unseen light. No one was inside. It was empty to their physical eyes but not to their souls. The curiosity dropped from them like an unbuttoned cloak. When they realized the purity of the hut, they turned back to look at Rupak. But...neither Rupak nor Ratna were to be seen. Terrified, the people tried to run to call him, but they were magnetized by the power of the purity there. They automatically fell on their knees and prayed to the Lord, asking His pardon and thanking Him for the great Help sent to them.

Rupak had gone, but not his love. He had made himself so familiar to each place and object in the village, so one with them, that the villagers felt his presence among them constantly. And the hut became for them a living symbol of Divine Light and Presence.

X

EXPLORATION

EXPLORATION!—the sight and sound of the word itself gives one the feeling of unknown heights, strange depths and hidden treasures. ‘Ex’ lifts you out of your little self, ‘plo’ makes you think of digging deep and ‘ration’ gives you the idea of a storehouse in land and water.

It was evening. A quiet, dusky light paved my way through the forest’s dimness. Now and then where the trees allowed more light, I caught a glimpse of some beautiful flowery bushes and of pitch black but shining stones. In the absolute darkness, when the faint light that I followed was shut out, I saw sparkling stars on the ground, which the returning intermittent light soon revealed to be the eyes of some reptiles. At last I crossed the forest and the deep valley that followed. I knew not where I was being led by the dim light. By and by I came to a brook. Near the brook was a man, healthy in body, pale of face. His eyes were closed but his immobile expression showed that he was in a tense inner search. I waited, not

knowing why. The light which had seemed only my light till then surrounded both the man and me.

He opened his eyes. I inquired why he sat thus, lazing away his time. He said, "I am exploring and excavating." I refused to believe it. If at all anyone seemed to have tried to explore, it was I who had done it. I had gone through that strange forest and crossed the valley, while he sat there doing nothing. He smiled the compassionate smile of a sage, but there was a thread of pain on his eyebrows.

He said, "I know you don't believe me but if you follow me, you shall know what I mean." I didn't refuse, I know not why.

He got up, took my hand and we walked along the murmuring brook. As we walked, he informed me that he had travelled all over the world and was taking me to show me the treasure he had gathered.

Soon we were in front of a cave. Here he stopped and asked me to be extremely assiduous and follow only the dim blue light. I promised immediately and we entered the cave. I saw a long passage in front of me. There was that familiar blue light at the further end of the passage. The man walked on, I followed. There were other sub-passages on our right and on

our left. But I was not to pay attention to them. I had to follow the dim light. Some of these passages wafted out magnetic fragrances, some the savoury smell of food, some sent forth even flashes of light and some tinkling music, but I fixed my eyes on the dim light as did the man in front of me. At last we came to a rounded-off end. There again the dim light was no more the guiding light, but it enwrapped both of us.

The man sat on a carved white stone seat, took me by his side, and then spoke, "These are the things I brought from far-off lands. When I went to Australia, I visited the centre of the continent where rarely a man goes. There in the rocky dull soil, I found a line of bushes. It amazed me and my searching mind thought, 'There must be something new here.' I went closer and saw real green shrubs. When I uprooted some bushes and dug the ground, to my great surprise I found a running stream. When people came to know of this, they excavated more and found out a long river. They praised me and put an inscribed marble plate to show that I had explored that part.

"When I went to China, there was hardly anything that I could explore but there were innumerable new things that I had never known. Once in a solitary park I saw a blind young girl

sitting in a corner. As she heard my footsteps she stretched her hands forward and showed me this Joss made of Jade. I asked if she wanted to sell it. She did. I bought it and also found out that it was the work of that sweet solemn looking blind girl herself. This fleecy cotton landscape you see in the glass box is from Uganda. You are surprised to find such a white relic from the darkest continent on the earth, aren't you? Yes! it was an unforgettable sight. A crowd of negroes working on a cotton farm made this landscape of mountains, the Sahara desert with tiny diamonds strewn here and there depicting mines, and the river Nile. In South America I explored the parts which had hidden the old native civilisation. In North America a valley and a river are called by my name because I saw them first according to the Americans. And these kinkhabs, the richly embroidered garments in gold and silver, these ivory idols, these stone temples I found in cities of India." He was quiet. I stood still looking at his treasure which did not seem a treasure to him any more. He rose, took my hand and walked out of the cave. The dim light pointed our way.

When we came to the murmuring brook, the man softly spoke in reverie: "In a deep forest

of India, I found an old sage. His face was bright and clear, his eyes were magnetic. He pointed out a vast unexplored region which is within me. He told me how many idols, sweet rivers, grace-pouring fountains and untouched treasures are within. He also hinted that there was a brilliant diamond in the very depth of ourselves. I tried to go a step inward and saw the vast unexplored land. With the same assiduity that I explored barren Australia, dark Africa and unknown America, I wish to explore the unknown Land.”



XI

THE SECRET OF BUDS

ONCE Uncle gave Gita and Radha each a plant as a present. They decided to look after their plants separately. So Radha took her plant to one corner of the garden while Gita kept hers in another one. They watered their plants daily and watched carefully how much the plants grew.

After a few days both the plants got some tiny buds. Now Gita and Radha watched the size of the buds with great enthusiasm. But before long Gita said to Radha, "I feel like looking inside this bud. They say that it will open by itself, but I feel, I can easily do it with my own fingers."

"Yes, it seems that the buds do have a great secret and I wonder what these buds could be doing inside themselves for such a long time; but I shall wait and let them open themselves."

"I am not going to try my patience for such a thing, when I know I can easily open it," replied Gita, tossing her head up.

She opened the little pink bud with her nails, the thin delicate petals broke off slowly

and all that Gita saw was a yellow centre. She said, "There was nothing in it."



Radha was sorry to see the broken bud. She waited patiently and went on watering her plant regularly. After six more days when Gita and Radha both went to see the plant, they saw a beautiful pink rose. The half opened rose seemed to have told them half the secret of life. The plant looked as if it was suddenly decorated with a fairy's gift.

Gita felt very sorry that she had spoilt her bud. With tears in her eyes, she said to Radha, "Oh, how beautiful are the secrets of God! Your patience worked out joy for you and a lesson for me."

XII

THE FLOWERS AND THE STONES (A FABLE)

ONCE the flowers in the garden talked among themselves and the question came up, "Why should we always decorate the garden with our lovely colours and fragrance, while the stones sit idly and enjoy us?" Then came a proposal: "Let us pray to Mother Nature and ask Her to make the stones work a little."

They prayed with their fragrant aspiration and Mother Nature accepted their proposal.

The next day all the stones started working. They came falling down on the garden. Some wanted to sit in the beds of blossoms to decorate the flowers; but the flowers got hurt, and they came down weeping on the ground. The sharp stones cut them from their stems. Then there arose a touching prayer, "Mother Nature, we don't want stones to work, please let us do the work of decoration ourselves. We are happier to work than to have the service of others."



XIII
IN SEARCH OF RICHES
ONE ACT PLAY

Characters

UMAA little girl
RUPA AND VINUher friends
MOTHER
FATHER
PUSHPAbrother to Uma
MITAsister to Uma
CHILDREN in the garden (about six)
A FAIRY
(Fourteen characters in all)
Time: less than twenty minutes.

First Scene

(*The stage represents the sitting room in Uma's house; the three children, Uma, Rupa and Vinu come walking towards the front of the stage. The three children are returning from a lecture they have just attended.*)

RUPA: I don't like speeches. How bored are we, sitting and sitting!

VINU: But you are supposed to listen, Rupa. If you were asked tomorrow in the class to write an account of today's speech—what then?

UMA: But do you go to lectures only for that? Apart from listening in order to remember certain things for the class, don't you gather anything out of the lectures of big persons for yourself?

VINU: What else can we gather for ourselves from a lecture, little philosopher?

RUPA: If it were a play you would be amused or if it were a party or a dance then it would have been different but what can you ever find in a lecture?

UMA: Oh! I always find something, one little point in every speech—these people always have things to say, which help us to be better, if we keep them in mind—I don't do all the things that they ask us to do. But today's lecture was not clear to me. The speaker did not ask us to be faithful, truthful, obedient or honest....

VINU: Yes—but he spoke only on riches.

UMA: Oh yes!...Vinu you are right. He often mentioned the word 'riches'. But I don't know exactly what it means.

VINU & RUPA: (*together*) Nor do I.

UMA: (*almost to herself*) If we knew the meaning of that word, today's lecture would be clear. I will go and look in the dictionary.

VINU: Now you have become serious again, Uma, as you usually are—come let us be off.

RUPA: Yes it's time for tea, after that cold lecture.

(*They go away.*)

Second Scene

(A living room—chairs and a small table—a bookshelf full of books, placed somewhere in evidence. Father and Brother of Uma are sitting reading books.)

Uma enters

FATHER: There you are, my little one, how was the lecture?

UMA: The speaker seemed to have said some good things, but it was too difficult to understand. Papa what does 'Riches' mean?

FATHER: (*taking out a handful of coins from his pocket*) These are riches, my wise kid.

UMA: No—But... this is money. Tell me what are riches.

FATHER: (*taking out some bank notes*) Look, these are also riches.

UMA: (*Shrugging her shoulders*) These are not the riches that our lecturer spoke of. These are the notes that we buy things with, from the shops. And he didn't say a word about buying.... (*Her mother enters while Uma is speaking*)

MOTHER: My dear, you are talking of riches, well, listen, sweetness in behaviour, a

kind heart and a helping nature, all these are true riches.

(Uma does not seem satisfied.—She goes towards her brother who is all this time engrossed in a book.)

UMA: Pushpa, can you tell me if in any of your good books, you have come across the meaning of riches?

PUSHPA: Uma! I don't know about others but look at this shelf of mine (*pointing at the bookshelf*)—these are my riches.

(Uma is puzzled and is about to speak, but just then her sister comes on the stage well dressed and decked with jewels.)

MITA: What is this talk about riches? Uma see these are riches. (*showing her jewels.*)

UMA: These are your jewels, your ornaments not riches. Riches should be something that fills you up. It must be having a feeling about it like a Fairy's smile or the smell of many a gentle jasmine.

FATHER: Does none of these jewels or coins or notes fill you up?

MOTHER: Now, let us stop this argument. It's time for tea. Come, Uma, think of other sweet things like birds and flowers and fairies.

Third Scene

(A garden with flowers of various kinds growing all round. Children are playing and tending the plants. No one speaks, but still an atmosphere of joy and sweetness—a background music.

Uma enters timidly. She is very sad but is wonder-struck by the smiling children all free and joyous. Some children come forward.)

FIRST CHILD : Oh! Look! Look!

SECOND CHILD : A new girl!

UMA: What are you all doing here in this beautiful garden? You all look so happy and cheerful, like the children in fairy tales.

THIRD CHILD: We have nothing to worry about when we are under the Fairy's care.

UMA: Whose care did you say?

THIRD CHILD: Fairy's....We have all we want here—all, all!

FOURTH CHILD: We can do all we want as long as we do lovely, good things.

UMA: But how do you do them? Who teaches you?

FIFTH CHILD: (*With a half finished garland*) When you want to do a thing for the Fairy, no one need teach you. You know it yourself, because she helps you somehow.

UMA: Doesn't any elder person stop your work and play?

THIRD CHILD: Oh! but that is the fun. No one except the Fairy can stop us doing anything.

UMA: Is this the land of Utopia in reality or perhaps James Hilton's Shangrila on earth? How long have you all been here?

CHILDREN ONE AFTER ANOTHER: Three years, Four years, Two years, I came last Christmas.

UMA: (*surprised she asks the youngest of them*) When did you come?

FIRST CHILD: When did I come? I am always here!

UMA: Always here! You were born here?

FOURTH CHILD: No. But he came when he was too young and remembers nothing about the place he came from.

UMA: You never feel like going back to your homes?

CHILDREN: No, never; we have everything here.

A LITTLE CHILD: And the Fairy?

THIRD CHILD: Yes! Whom you only see in dreams or in picture books; She is truly with us. But tell us why have you come here?

UMA: (*sadly*) Oh! I had been asking every-

one to tell me properly. I was looking for the meaning of real riches.

FOURTH CHILD: Riches! Someone go and get some flowers of riches.

(*A child goes.*)

UMA: Flowers of riches? (*Just then a child with riches-flowers enters.*)

UMA: Really these are the most beautiful and yet fascinating flowers I have ever seen! Are they called riches?

A VOICE: (*from behind*) Yes! These are riches grown in Mother Earth's garden. But you know, we have a similar garden within ourselves. Try to grow one of these riches flowers there.

(*All the while there is perfect silence.*)

SECOND CHILD: It is time for prayer; let us gather our flowers. I will take Honesty today.

FIRST CHILD: I shall take Imagination.

FOURTH CHILD: I shall take Tender Love.

FIFTH CHILD: I shall take Cheerfulness in Work.

THIRD CHILD: I shall take Divine Presence and Opening.

SIXTH CHILD: I shall take Silence.

UMA: (*surprised*) Where will you get these things from?

THIRD CHILD: From different flowers? Oh! you don't know this. We talk to the Fairy, when she comes for prayer, through flowers. These flowers talk to the Fairy Queen of our wants; then She gives us the things somehow.

UMA: But how?

ALL: We don't know how.

SECOND CHILD: What will you take to the Fairy Queen?

UMA: Can I stay for prayers? Will the Fairy allow me?

ALL: Of course, She is so sweet and tender that She has a place for everyone.

UMA: Is there a flower called Divine's Help?

ALL: Oh! yes. How can we live without that? Here it is.

(*They give her some.*)

TWO CHILDREN: There she is coming.

(*Fairy enters, smiles at everyone, walks to the front majestically; each child comes forward and places his or her flowers in front of a place somewhat like a little temple.*)

(*Then they stand all round her but at a distance. She looks straight in front all the time.*)

FAIRY: (*slowly*) Let us pray.

(Everyone including the Fairy kneels down with folded hands. They pray.)

O Thou of whom I am the instrument,
O Secret Spirit and Nature housed in me,
Let all my mortal being now be blent
In Thy still glory of divinity.
I have given my mind to be dug Thy channel
mind,
I have offered up my will to be Thy will:
Let nothing of myself be left behind
In our union mystic and unutterable.
My heart shall throb with the world-beats of
Thy love;
My body become Thy engine for earth-use;
In my nerves and veins Thy rapture's streams
shall move;
My thoughts shall be hounds of Light for Thy
power to loose.
Keep only my soul to adore eternally
And meet Thee in each form and soul of Thee.



XIV

THE LIGHT

Boys

RAVI
GOPAL
THE NEW BOY

Girls

DAKSHA
MENA
REKHA

First Scene

(*Two children talking gravely together on the dimly lit stage*)

RAVI: Oh! the darkness is approaching.
Soon there will be darkness all around.

DAKSHA: How uneasy it feels to be all in
the dark! The place around us seems all empty.
And we have been in the darkness for so long.

RAVI: Yes, we can't see anything and we
have no light to lessen the darkness.

DAKSHA: What shall we do?...For the
last few days, day by day, I have been hearing
a voice telling me that there is a region where
night never comes. All is a garden of joy and
Light.

RAVI: But how are we ever to go there?
We don't even know the place and the elders...

(*A girl comes running in. She falls but gets up quickly and speaks.*)

MENA: O Ravi, Daksha, come I'll tell you
something. Last night when I had gone to
bed, an old man came to our house. I was in
my bed but I could hear him speak, you know.
Well! He was talking about the land of Light.

He said, "If we go along the river and on and on, we would see that land." Of course my mummy didn't believe him, but I feel strongly that he was telling the truth. He also said what a beautiful place that land is. I am so happy I overheard this.

RAVI: Yes, Mena, but how can you believe him? See actually the darkness is all around us. You are not really in that land that you can be so happy.

DAKSHA: I wonder if we shall ever see the kingdom of which the old man spoke, where as you say, the bright light is.

MENA: That is just what I am saying. I feel certain that there is such a happy land somewhere and we must try to go there. We will follow the road that runs along the river.

RAVI: Yes let us try. It is better to move somewhere instead of waiting in this uneasy darkness.

DAKSHA: Yes let us go and tell our mothers at home not to wait for us and let us start soon.

(CURTAIN)

Second Scene

(*Three Children walking on the stage*)

RAVI: You know, Mena, my mother refused to let me come. She said God has taken away the light from us and He Himself will return it only when He wants to.

DAKSHA: But didn't you tell her, that the light is there already and that we have to go to the light?

RAVI: Oh but they don't believe that there is light anywhere. They think there is only darkness.

MENA: Well we know that there is, and we are also shown the way to reach it.

RAVI: Yes, that is why I left my mother weeping and came with you.

(*After a time*)

DAKSHA: Yet see the darkness grows thicker and thicker. Now we can't see anything at all. How shall we go on?

RAVI: Let us hold hands firmly to prevent anyone of us from falling; and we shall manage to go on.

DAKSHA: But it is so dark!

MENA: See, see behind those trees. Can you see something?

RAVI: O yes there is something there which helps us to see the trees which we could not see until now.

DAKSHA: Oh! it is a light. Let us go there.

(*They go behind the trees.*)

MEENA: Here is a small boy with a light in his hand. Come out of the trees friend.

(*He comes out.*)

GOPAL: Who are you all?

MENA: We are going to the happy land, to the land of light.

GOPAL: Oh! are you really? I am also searching the road leading to the land of light.

DAKSHA: But you have a light with you already.

GOPAL: This is the gift that an old man gave me last night. He said this would help me to find the road. But you seem to be already on the road.

RAVI: Still your gift will help us to see further. We won't fall so often now. If you are going to the same place can't we all go together and use your gift?

GOPAL: Of course, we can.

(They all hold hands and walk.)

MENA: Tell us little boy who are you?

GOPAL: I stay in a village beyond the river. My name is Gopal. There was no light and I could not read or play or do anything because of the darkness. Then yesterday this kind old man, who had a beautiful silver beard and deep eyes came to our village and said that there actually is a place where darkness has no power to annoy us. When I asked him how to go there, he gave me this lamp and said that it would help me.

MENA: Oh! had he a long white cloak over him and shining but thin cheeks?

GOPAL: Yes, but how do you know him?

MENA: Then he is the same person who came to my mummy. There also he talked of the same thing.

GOPAL: How strange!

(In silence they walk for a few seconds and then from the opposite direction a girl and a boy come towards them.)

GOPAL: Oh, see see... they look like us, dont' they?

MENA: Yes, they seem to have lost something.

(By this time they come closer to the other children.)

MENA: Have you lost something? Can we help you to look for it?

REKHA: (*the new girl*) Both of us are lost in this darkness. We are searching for the land of light.

MENA, DAKSHA, GOPAL and RAVI: Oh! we are also on our way to that beautiful land.

THE NEW Boy: Oh! do you know if there is a place like that? Is there a place that can be called our own home?

MENA: Why do you ask that? What do you mean by 'our home'?

THE NEW Boy: I was born in a very rich house. My father had many horses and elephants and I loved to go on long rides. But wherever I went some voice told me over and over again, "This is not your home. Go and search for your real home." I felt irritated to hear this because I couldn't understand how my father's home was not my home. But as time passed the voice spoke on and on the same thing. I found I would not have rest until I had found my own home. And I have left my father's house to search for my home. On the way I met Rekha to whom the bright land is also

calling. I felt my home must be that calling land.

RAVI: That means we are all going to the the same land.

DAKSHA: Yes then why don't you come with us? We are to follow the way that this bright gift of Gopal shows.

REKHA: Oh! yes it will be easy to go with the help of such a bright gift. We seem to be going on the wrong way. Now that we have met you we shall surely join you.

(They walk on for some time.)

RAVI: I feel some beautiful air around me. How it caresses my tired limbs.

GOPAL: I smell a fine fragrance. It draws strongly. It is wonderful.

DAKSHA: I find myself being carried along. I walk on without effort. I feel myself in a fairy land.

REKHA: I hear the same music which I used to hear when I was at home. Oh! the same music which with its sweet joy pulled me out of that dull place. Oh! I know we are nearing the land. Let us follow the music that is leading us.

THE NEW BOY: I don't feel anything but

just very very happy...but see....Where is Gopal's Gift?

ALL: (*now seeing the lamp in his hand not alight*). Oh!

MENA: See the real Light, see the beckoning light. See our home and our own sweet sweet land of Light.

(*On the east corner is seen some faint light. The light brightens slowly and at the same time joy comes over the children's faces. They stand still, overawed with clasped hands. From somewhere a deep voice comes*).

“LIGHT, ENDLESS LIGHT! DARKNESS HAS ROOM NO MORE”.

CURTAIN



