



The Telephone Call...

by Satyajit Ray

Translated by Adeeb Z. Mahmud

Crring... crring... crring... Biresh Niogy looked at the telephone on his bedside table and then at the table clock standing beside the phone. The clock's digital display showed 11:52 pm. He was more surprised than annoyed. He did not usually get phone calls at this time of the night. He was just about to close his book and turn off the light. The phone went on ringing. Reluctantly, Mr Biresh picked up the receiver.

'Hallo.'

'Six two one three one one?'

'Yes.'

'Is Mr Biresh there? Mr. Biresh Chandra Niogy?'

'Speaking.'

'Oh, good evening.'

'Good evening.'

'I'm terribly sorry to call you at this hour.'

'That's all right. Who...'

'I need to talk to you about something.'

'Who is this?'

'My name is Ganapoti Shom.'

Mr. Khan felt the urge to slam down the receiver.

'I'm afraid it won't be possible for me to talk right now. I was just going to bed.'

'Besides, I don't think I know anyone by that name.'

'But I know you. I know a lot about you. You are a doctor.'

'You have been living in this

house for three months. Your previous house was damaged in a fire. Your wife passed away eleven years ago. You are fifty five years old. You have a son who is an engineer and is currently living in Bhopal. Am I not right?'

Mr. Biresh was literally bewildered. 'How did you know all this?'

'Consider it as a special power of mine. Now are you willing to listen to me?'

'How long is it going to take? It shouldn't take too much time.'

'Okay then, go ahead.'

'Seven years ago from now, I was a lawyer. You lived at Central Road at that time, didn't you?'

'That's right.'

'Your son's name is Arup.'

'Yes.'

Maharajah of Candipur State in India. He had once saved the Rajah's life from a deadly disease and the Rajah had rewarded him with the ring. Am I right?'

'Correct.'

'Your son took this ring from your safe and gave it to my son.'

'Astonishing. We never did really figure out what had happened to it. The police didn't have a clue either.'

'How could they? Your son seemed so innocent, how could you ever suspect him?'

'Of course.'

'But after seeing the ring, my son liked it so much that he did not want to lose it. He kept it to himself. In the end, I came to know about the situation and repaid his loans.'

headmaster's hand!

The next day, I bought things for everyone, a small bag for my mother, a set of pens for my father, a paint box and some stickers for my sister and three rubbers for myself.

No one could ever guess how happy I was. I thank Allah for letting me win the prize.

Teacher: I've had to punish you every day this week, Gloria. What have you got to say?

Gloria: I'm glad it's Friday!

Parachutist: What happens if my parachute doesn't open?

Instructor: We'll take it back to the store and they'll give us another one to replace it.

I didn't give up hope, though I didn't get my prize at least not until a month passed!

After a month had passed I received a cheque of a hundred and fifty rupees from the headmaster. At that exact second I felt so happy and excited I didn't even mind the arm ache I got by shaking the

ring?'

'Yes, but he wants to return it to you. He does not need it any longer. He wants to give it back to its proper owner and free himself from the guilt.'

'Maybe. I didn't always keep track of my son's friends.'

'Sripathi was my youngest son. He was a very good boy — a brilliant student. Your son, Arup, was his closest friend. But unfortunately, my son began to associate with some unsocial boys. He began to take up bad habits. Arup still felt for his friend and tried his best to bring Sripathi back to the right path again; but all his efforts failed. Did you know all this?'

'I've seen this friend of Arup's. But I didn't know he had fallen into bad company.'

'Let me tell you about an accident now. My son began gambling. He lost thousands in gambling until he was up to his neck in debt. Then he went to Arup for help. He threatened to commit suicide if Arup did not help him. Do you know how Arup helped him?'

'Now I understand.'

'What?'

'There was a ring in the safe at our house. It belonged to my grandfather. It was a diamond ring.'

'Yes. Your grandfather was the house-doctor of the

house for three months. Your previous house was damaged in a fire. Your wife passed away eleven years ago. You are fifty five years old. You have a son who is an engineer and is currently living in Bhopal. Am I not right?'

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Talk About Lonely Islands

by Mir Saaduddin Ahmed

easy and listen to me. I figured that she had stepped on the roof of an underground cave. It might have been a 12-feet fall. I asked her, 'Can you stand up or move?'

Her answer was, 'My ankle hurt!'

Either she had broken it or sprained it. In either cases, however, precautions had to be taken.

I told her, 'Wait down there and don't cry. I'll be right back.'

As fast as I could, I ran off to the tent. There I collected some ropes and bandages.

Back at the hole I threw down the ropes. I said, 'Sareeka, can you tie the ropes to yourself? I'll try to haul you out.'

She answered in the affirmative.

I said, 'Be ready at the count of three.' On three I heaved and after a lot of sweat, I pulled her out. On being out, she was quite happy. As a matter of fact, she hadn't broken her ankle, she would have been jumping up and down. I then took the bandage and remembered the number of times I had seen my father bandage up his patients. With skill, her ankle was firm and secure.

Now the problem was how to get her back to the tent. She definitely could not walk, and I was certainly not going to carry her, so I did what most of the kids do in tropical countries. I got a branch of a coconut tree and placed her on it. Holding the other end, I pulled. It made quite a good caddy.

Back at the camp, I found the boat hadn't come. It was late. What a stroke of luck. So, I helped Sareeka pack up. She was smiling now and looked kind of sweet. We struck up a conversation and talked until we saw the boat coming.

A lady from the office had come along too. As soon as the boat docked, the lady came up to me and started apologising. 'I'm sorry sir that we were so late, and sir, I can explain about your companion.' The poor lady was absolutely rattled.

I took pity on her and said, 'OK lady, I won't sue you and your company.'

As we got on board, I looked at Sareeka, who was going back to, and all I could say, with a smile, to her was, 'Talk about lonely islands!'



However, when I reached the campsite I found that her things were just the same as I had left them. Surely she would have returned to fix up her things. I searched around but there was no sign of her.

Well, you see, Sareeka started, my tent collapsed and I was wondering if I could get some help.

'I got her hint. In no way am I going to help you!' I yelled. Half an hour later I was busy fixing up her tent.

Completing the task I returned to my campsite, and to my surprise I found her sleeping in my tent. I forced myself to go back to her campsite and spend the night there. With a groan I literally 'hit the sack'! Half way through the night the tent collapsed again.

By morning the storm had subsided. Leaves and twigs tracks dried out so I had to stop. It was then that I heard some sobbing.

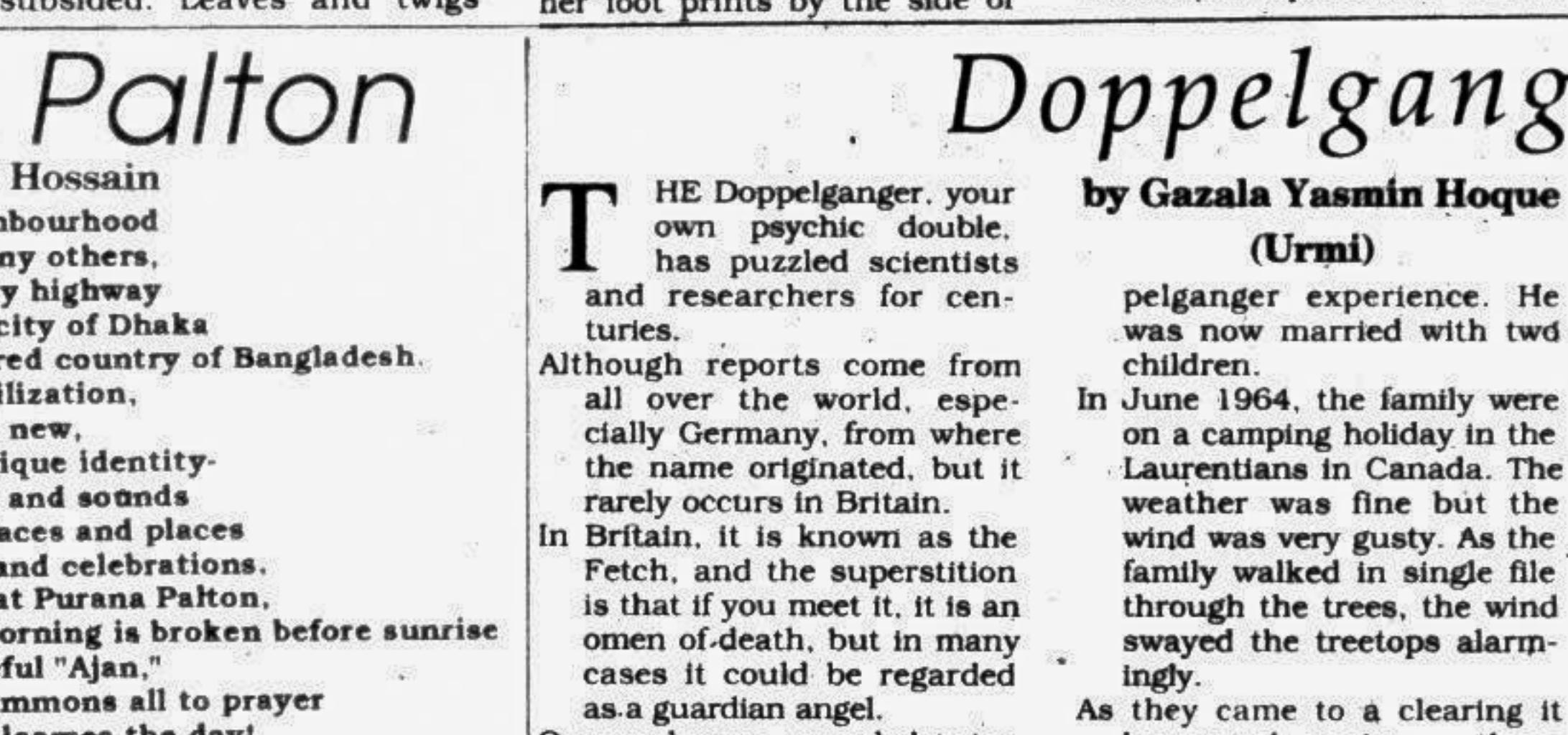
Further on among the foliage, I saw a type of pit, which seemed to be the source of the crying. I peered down but it was too dark to see below as the leaves of the trees cut out the sunlight.

I said, 'Sareeka, are you down there?'

The response was a train of words in a tear stained voice.

'Saadi, you're here. I thought you had left; I tried calling out but I don't think you heard me. I was walking and all of a sudden I fell. I thought that I'd be left here all alone until I.....' Her voice trailed off.

'Calm down girl!' I ordered her and she quietened. Take it



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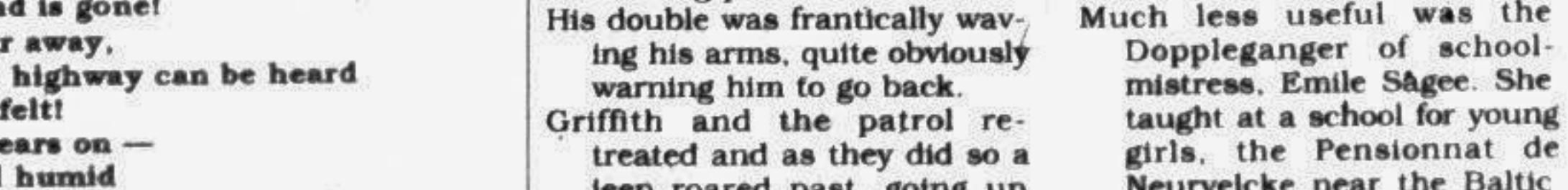
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