

It's a fine morning. The sky is a little cloudy. It's neither sultry nor rainy. For the past few days, Kinkarda's mood is also upbeat. I approach his house with the intention of having a big *adda* session.

He squats on the bed. In a posture known as 'sitting like a babu'. His favourite posture. The head is slightly tilted towards the front. Even without looking up he says, 'Come, Somendranath.' Not an abbreviated distortion of the name; he pronounces the full name. It's amusing to hear my name that way.

There's *bidi* in the tin box, but the matchbox has vanished. For a long time, a futile search goes on under the pillow, across the bed, within a sheaf of papers. Instead of irritation, an amused look lights up his face.

'My matchbox grows wings at times, *hey*. But it flies off in only one direction.'

The moment he yells in that direction, the matchbox emerges from there. After scrutinising the *bidi* for a moment, he holds it between his lips. As he is about to light it, two women appear at the door. In an instant, the *bidi* drops off his mouth, the matchbox goes into his pocket. They are from this very neighbourhood. Our colleagues' wives.

They have come to Kinkarda with a humble request on behalf of the Andrews Palli's Women's Association. That he has arrived here is the good fortune of the



Paddy Fields

Watercolour on paper, 19.1 x 28.1 cm

Collection: Kala Bhavana, Santiniketan