



Relief work on Kalobari (Black house),  
Santiniketan

and turn on the light to see it. I believe that's how a householder looks at his wife's face. On some days, I can't find the lantern; when I grope for it and try to light it, I see it has no oil. At such times, I see by lighting a matchstick, then lighting a *bidi*. In case a new idea strikes me, I immediately break the statue and make a new one.'

'And then?'

'And then starts the final act of the play, *hey*. A festive atmosphere—people—piles of materials—you must have heard the clarion call to announce battles in *jatra*,<sup>18</sup> haven't you? That strain keeps resonating within me.

'It's a battle, no less. A challenge, most definitely. You are trying to capture a living, breathing idea with inanimate objects.

'In this battle—' Kinkarda's face shows covert amusement '—either you win, or you face defeat and death. No middle ground for swooning—straightaway death. Either your work lives or dies. Nothing in between—do or die—ha, ha.'

Smoking is now in order. Not a *bidi*, this time a strong cigarette comes out of a yellow packet.

'You know what the work is like—at first, there's the matter of measurements. How big the statue would be—life-size or bigger than that. Accordingly, the armature has to be made. Just an iron frame—that's the skeleton of your sculpture. Next, the work has

<sup>18</sup> Bengali folk theatre.