

**‘A Chance Meeting’ by Rabindranath Tagore**  
**Translated by Md. Rezaul Haque**

A chance meeting in a railway compartment,  
 I hadn't thought would ever be possible.

In the past I had often seen her  
 in a red-coloured sari –  
 as red as the pomegranate flower;  
 that day she had put on a black silk dress,  
 covering her champak-thin white face  
 with the *aanchal* resting on her head.<sup>1</sup>  
 The black colour seemed to have drawn  
 a deep circle of aloofness around her.  
 My whole being shook,  
 finding so familiar a person so reserved.

Dropping the newspaper abruptly,  
 she greeted me with a *namaskaar*.<sup>2</sup>  
 The way to intimacy opened;  
 we began to talk –  
 How are you? How is everything going? etc.  
 With a distant look in her eyes,  
 she sat looking out of the window,  
 gave curt answers to some of my questions,  
 and utterly ignored some others.  
 Through the shaking of her hand,  
 she made me understand –  
 there's no point in talking,  
 it's far better to keep silent.

I was sitting on a different bench with her companions.  
 At one time she gestured me to come closer.  
 It was so bold of her, I thought,  
 and sat on the same bench.  
 Under the cover of the noise in the compartment  
 she said softly:  
 Don't take it otherwise please,  
 we don't have time enough to waste.  
 I'll get down at the very next stop;  
 you'll go far,

<sup>1</sup> *Aanchal* is the loose end of a sari.

<sup>2</sup> *Namaskaar* is an Indian way of greeting.

we won't meet ever again.  
So, I'll hear your answer to the question  
I've waited for so long to ask.  
Will you answer it honestly?  
I said, I will.  
Looking at the sky outside, she said,  
Are those days of ours gone forever, not a shred left?  
I kept silent for a while  
and then said:  
All the stars  
lie hidden in day light.  
I doubted if I had spoken the truth.  
She said: It's alright; now go back to your seat.  
Everyone got down at the next stop.  
I moved on, alone.