

Impact Factor: 8.67

ISSN:0976-8165

*The Criterion*

# THE CRITERION

AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL IN ENGLISH

Bi-Monthly Peer-Reviewed eJournal

**15** YEARS OF OPEN ACCESS

VOL. 15 ISSUE-6 DECEMBER 2024

Editor-In-Chief: **Dr. Vishwanath Bite**  
Managing Editor: **Dr. Madhuri Bite**

[www.the-criterion.com](http://www.the-criterion.com)

AboutUs: <http://www.the-criterion.com/about/>

Archive: <http://www.the-criterion.com/archive/>

ContactUs: <http://www.the-criterion.com/contact/>

EditorialBoard: <http://www.the-criterion.com/editorial-board/>

Submission: <http://www.the-criterion.com/submission/>

FAQ: <http://www.the-criterion.com/fa/>



ISSN 2278-9529

**Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal**  
[www.galaxyimrj.com](http://www.galaxyimrj.com)

## Hello, My Dear (A Play in One Act)

P R Gopalakrishnan  
Kerala.

### SCENE I

*It's about 9 am. The road to a college. Many students and a few lady teachers, including HEMA and NANDA, of the college, are walking it. SHYAMMOHAN, 30, on high booze, is standing by a tree by the road. As he sees the passing HEMA, he is frenetic.*

SHYAMMOHAN: Hello Ragi, how is you?

*HEMA stops for a moment, glances at him and then walks up. Some passersby look at him and move off.*

SHYAMMOHAN (*angrily*): Now you don't know me. But until a few days ago I was everything for you. You bloody cheat. I won't allow you to have a peaceful life when a fire is burning inside me.

*Some boy students including ASHOK gather before him.*

Hello, my dear young men, see the fast walking teacher. Until a few days ago she was mine. Now she is another's. I was used to keeping off girls. But she drew me towards her and one fine morning ditched me for another man. She had no compunction at all to push me into a void and walk away with her new man. The man may be good. But the poor fellow must know that his wife is a cheat. I should see that he throws her away. Until then I have no rest.

*The on looking students have various expressions on their faces. SHYAMMOHAN stops talking, stands still for a few moments and then sits down. The students walk off.*

### SCENE II

*The next day, the same scene and time. Some students and a few teachers including HEMA and NANDA are walking the road. SHYAMMOHAN, on booze, is standing by the tree. As HEMA passes him he gets agitated.*

SHYAMMOHAN: Hello, my dear Ragi, you are happy?

*HEMA is caught by his words.*

You bloody cheat. I won't allow you to have a happy life after pushing me into a void, nay a hell.

NANDA (*to HEMA*): Whom does the man address? It seems he is taken over by a lost love.

HEMA: Poor man. Someone must have cheated him.

NANDA: But why does he give vent to his feelings at this spot. Has it something to do with his fiancée?

HEMA: I think he has lost his mind.

NANDA: No. He is only on booze.

HEMA: Anyway it's a sad plight.

NANDA: He is shaken to the core. Otherwise he wouldn't get boozed at this time of the day.

HEMA: I too feel.

### SCENE III

*SHYAMMOHAN continues his attack on RAGI at the same time and venue for a few more days as HEMA passes him and then he is not seen there for some days. Then, an afternoon as the students and the teachers including HEMA are walking the road, on their way back from the college, he is there by the tree and, at the sight of HEMA, he loses control.*

SHYAMMOHAN: Hello, my dear Ragi, how is you? You are happy? I won't allow you to be happy. I will reveal you to your now man.

*Some boy students including ASHOK gather before him and now he is vigorous.*

Hello students, see, your teacher is a cheat. How could she then teach you anything good?

*ASHOK moves towards him.*

ASHOK: Hello, sir, may I know who you are and why the teacher is a cheat?

SHYAMMOHAN (*pointing his finger at the moving HEMA*): See, her going up without caring for me. I will teach her a lesson. (*SHYAMMOHAN is exhausted.*) We were colleagues and we were too close like . . .for long. Then, a day she ditched me for another man.

ASHOK: But sir, is it our teacher?

SHYAMMOHAN: Yeah. She is my Ragi.

ASHOK (*aside*): He is out of senses.

*ASHOK and the other students move off.*

### SCENE IV

*The next day, the same time and venue. SHYAMMOHAN, in unbuttoned shirt, is standing by the tree. HEMA followed by ASHOK are walking the road on their way back from the college and SHYAMMOHAN is enraged at the sight of Hema.*

SHYAMMOHAN: Hello, my dear Ragi. You have no time or mind to even glance at me. But until a few days ago I was everything for you.

*ASHOK walks fast and joins HEMA.*

ASHOK (to HEMA): Excuse me, madam.

*HEMA turns o him.*

You know the man?

HMEA: I feel I have seen him once somewhere.

ASHOK: He is out of senses and he takes you as someone else. Hence his utterances when you pass him.

HEMA: Is it?

ASHOK: It seems he has a lost love and he is giving vent to his feelings on her.

HEMA: I too feel.

Could you find out who he is?

ASHOK: I will try.

### *SCENE V*

*The next day, the same time and venue. After his usual attack on RAGI, as HEMA and ASHOK pass him, SHYAMMOHAN, exhausted, sits down by the tree. ASHOK moves towards him and sits by him. SHYAMMOHAN notices ASHOK.*

SHYAMMOHAN: Who are you my dear young man?

ASHOK: We met yesterday.

SHYAMMOHAN: Am sorry. I forgot you.

ASHOK: May I know about you sir?

SHYAMMOHAN: I am an officer with State Bank of India. And, am on French leave from office.

ASHOK: I see.

SHYAMMOHAN: Am a lost man.

ASHOK: Come. Please tell me.

SHYAMMOHAN: Ragi was my everything. And, with her exit from my life I am left with nothing to pull on. I feel a void.

ASHOK: There are many girls in the world. Can't you fill the gap with one of them?

SHYAMMOHAN: You say it because you haven't felt the pain that is devouring me.

ASHOK: But sir, I feel such pains when I read some novels.

SHYAMMOHAN: That's good.

ASHOK: Sir, she has gone off. Then why should you waste yourself on her?

SHYAMMOHAN: No. she is in me.

*Pause.*

ASHOK (*getting up*): See you.

*ASHOK walks away.*

### **SCENE VI**

*The staff room of the college. HEMA is sitting at her table reading a book. ASHOK enters.*

HEMA: Hello Ashok.

ASHOK: I talked to him. He is a bank officer on French leave from office over his lost love. His fiancée's name is Ragi.

I wish there is someone to bring him out of the void he is in.

HEMA: How do you take him?

ASHOK: I feel he is a good man. Once he is out from the shock he will be alright.

HEMA: I think his fiancée is an acquaintance of mine and I feel like helping him come off the situation with the help of my brother who is a psychologist. But how to approach him?

ASHOK: We will talk to him tomorrow.

HEMA: We should get into him.

### **SCENE VII**

*The next day afternoon. HEMA and ASHOK are walking the road on their way back from the college. SHYAMMOHAN is standing by the tree. As soon as he sees the moving HEMA, he loses control.*

SHYAMMOHAN: Hello, my dear bloody cheat, I know what is in store for you. You will soon feel the pain of separation that I now do. You will be a widow.

My God! No. I should not curse her.

*SHYAMMOHAN is exhausted and he sits down. After walking a few more steps HEMA turns back.*

HEMA (to ASHOK): Come. We will meet him.

*HEMA and ASHOK move towards SHYAMMOHAN. ASHOK sits by SHYAMMOHAN and HEMA looks on SHYAMMOHAN with a sad face. Long pause.*

ASHOK: Sir, do you remember me?

SHYAMMOHAN: Yeah. What should you have?

ASHOK: Sir, madam likes to talk to you.

*SHYAMMOHAN looks at HEMA.*

SHYAMMOHAN: What she has to do with me?

ASHOK: It seems you were addressing her for the last few days.

SHYAMMOHAN: No. I have nothing to do with her.

HEMA: I know the Ragi you talk about. When you have known her well you wouldn't be that depressed over her.

SHYAMMOHAN: Is it?

HEMA: Will you join us for a cup of tea?

*Pause.*

SHYAMMOHAN: Yeah. I will.

*HEMA and ASHOK walk off and SHYAMMOHAN follows them.*

### ***SCENE VIII***

*HEMA, ASHOK and SHYAMMOHAN are sitting at a corner table in a restaurant.*

*A boy enters.*

BOY: What should you have madam?

HEMA: Tea and banana fry for three.

*The boy exits.*

HEMA: I am Hema, a teacher at the college. I live nearby with my parents. I have an elder brother. He is a psychologist in Chennai. He is now at home on leave from office. His family is in London. Now tell me about you.

SHYAMMOHAN: I am Shyammohan. I am an officer with State Bank of India in the city and I live in a flat there.

We are two children. My elder brother is an IT man and he is with his family in Bengaluru. My father is no more. My mother is with my brother.

HEMA: I know you are in the bank. The other month I visited your branch while accompanying a friend there. Then I saw you sitting at a table behind the counter.

SHYAMMOHAN: So you know me already?

HEMA (*with a smile*): Yeah.

Ragi was my classmate for graduation. During my visit to your office I met with her. She is not as good as one might think she is.

SHYAMMOHAN: But I can't forget her.

*Pause.*

HEMA: Will you be frank to me about her?

SHYAMMOHAN: Have no doubts.

*Pause. The boy returns with the ordered items and exits.*

HEMA: Now have tea.

*They all drink tea and eat the fry. SHYAMMOHAN is relaxed.*

HEMA: Sir, will you please call on me at my home tomorrow? I will be fully at home. We will discuss it all in detail. Here is my card.

*HEMA hands him her card and he puts it into his shirt pocket.*

SHYAMMOHAN: I will. It sounds strange that you have a mind for me.

*HEMA has a smile on her face.*

### **SCENE IX**

*About 10 am, the next day. HEMA's parlour. SHYAMMOHAN enters and HEMA gladly receives him.*

HEMA: Please take your seat.

*SHYAMMOHAN sits on a sofa and HEMA on the opposite sofa.*

*Pause.*

It seems you are too tired. You had breakfast?

SHYAMMOHAN: No. I felt like. . . having a peg. But I refrained from . . . Anyway, I am hungry.

HEMA: Then please come.

.....

*The dining hall. HEMA's brother DIVAKAR is having food. HEMA and SHYAMMOHAN enter. HEMA sits by DIVAKAR and SHYAMMOHAN opposite them.*

HEMA: Divakar, this is my friend Shyammohan. He is an officer with State Bank of India.

DIVAKAR: So glad to meet you Mr. Shyammohan. I am a psychologist in Chennai. I am on leave from office for a holiday in Jammu and Kashmir starting tomorrow.

SHYAMMOHAN: Glad to meet you sir.

*A woman servant enters, serves food to HEMA and SHYAMMOHAN and exits.*

.....

*HEMA's study, a spacious room with some glassed shelves containing books. HEMA and SHYAMMOHAN are sitting on opposite chairs at a table.*

HEMA: How is the food?

SHYAMMOHAN: Very good.

I had no food, I mean regular food, for days. I don't know how to thank you for the kindness.

*Pause.*

HEMA: Now about Ragi. She was my classmate for BA.

SHYAMMOHAN: I see.

HEMA: Better to start with your version of her.

SHYAMMOHAN: She is my colleague in the bank. For six months she and I were with the bills section of the branch, she the clerk and myself the officer in charge. We were dealing with the export and import bills and often we had to interact on them.

One morning, a few days after we were at the section, she brought me a few éclairs saying her brother who was working in Bombay had brought them. I thanked her for the gift and the next day or the other I bought her some éclairs and she gladly accepted them.



You see, while at college I was used to keeping off girls when my friends freely mingled with them. This was partly due to my shyness and indrawn nature. And, I continued the practice in the bank too.

Now, after a few days Ragi found interest in chatting with me and she succeeded in drawing me towards her through her chats. Gradually the interaction between us increased. She would often ask me for éclairs and I found interest in having them for her.

In a short time we were too close and our colleagues started gossiping on us. Though the stories fell into my ears I didn't feel like interfering with them, because by now I had developed an attachment towards her and I felt she was equally attached to me.

HEMA: Then what happened?

SHYAMMOHAN: One morning she brought me her marriage invitation saying, "As you are my best friend, you are my first invitee." I was stunned by her so cool and somewhat cruel-like attitude towards me. I felt my head swam. Soon I left office after informing the manager that I was unwell with headache.

Then on I am on French leave from office for I couldn't withstand the separation and I did not know how to face my colleagues over the embarrassment.

HEMA: And you found solace in liquor?

SHYAMMOHAN: Yeah.

HEMA: I collect from your version that you were too sincere towards her and she took advantage of the situation.

How long the friendship continued?

SHYAMMMOHAN: For an year.

HEMA: May I ask you . . ?

SHYAMMOHAN: Yes, please.

HEMA: Did you at any point of time during the friendship feel like proposing to her?

SHYAMMOHAN: Very much. But I was now beset with a serious family problem; we were embroiled in a court case on our ancestral property. Before solving it I couldn't think of marrying. But as we were that attached to each other I could not for any reason keep off her.

HEMA: You see, when a boy and a girl are drawn towards each other and a strong friendship develops between them either of them or both may feel like living together. Then, either of them proposes to the other and if the proposal is accepted chances are for it to materialize with or without approval of the families on both sides.

But, a friendship, though too close, between a boy and a girl need not always lead to marriage.

Here the friendship did not either lead to marriage or recede. It continued in full swing until the out of the blue announcement to you of her marriage with another man. And, the shock you had over the announcement threw you out of gear.

While at college Ragi enjoyed courting boys. After enjoying one boy's company for days she would ditch him for another. Then she would have still another one only to ditch him shortly for yet another one and so on.

Some were smitten by separation from her and one of them left the college over the pain. But she had no regrets at all.

Another thing. No doubt, even if you had proposed to her she wouldn't have accepted you as her husband, for hers was only affected love aimed at drawing pleasure from your dance attendance on her.

When viewed from another angle, you shouldn't have continued the friendship that long without proposing to her, if your ultimate aim was to marry her. So, she is not to blame for the abrupt breakup of the relation you feel she is guilty of. She needn't have taken the relation as anything more than a close friendship.

That she was a flirt is another matter, though her flirtatious nature might have prompted her to draw you towards her.

You fell a prey to her designs because of your indecisiveness in proposing to her. Had you made a timely proposal to her and she refused to accept it, the matter would have ended there, without causing you much pain.

Did you talk to your friends about the affair?

SHYAMMOHAN: I have a close friend. When I once talked to him about it, he made fun of me for falling into the charms of a girl. I was piqued about his attitude. So I kept off him the further developments.

HEMA: But for your shyness and indrawn nature you would have talked it out with some other friends.

Also, your indrawn nature made you get deep into the affair, without considering the consequences. And, as you had no past experience with girls you so soon fell into her charms.

When she has no concern at all for you why should you waste yourself on your memories of her? The other day I heard you curse her. And, the next moment you regretted for doing it. That shows the good in you. The society needs people like you. Give her up from your mind for ever and think of a future without her.

*Long pause.*

SHYAMMOHAN: You have reasoned the whole thing out. And, I feel my immature approach pushed me into the situation.

HEMA: The realization will help you weather the situation.

You were used to having liquor before the event?

SHYAMMOHAN: No. I was a teetotaler.

HEMA: Then you can give it up for ever.

What's your academic qualification?

SHYAMMOHAN: I am an MA in English.

HEMA: That's good. What is your hobby?

SHYAMMOHAN: Reading and watching movies.

HEMA: Do you now read or watch movies?

SHYAMMOHAN: Not, after the fall.

HEMA: Had you continued with your hobbies they would have distracted your mind from Ragi when you felt you were losing her.

What kind of books you read?

SHYAMMOHAN: Novels and short stories. Sometimes plays too.

HEMA: So, you were a voracious reader. No doubt, you can retract your mind to your hobbies.

*Pause.*

SHYAMMOHAN: It may take time.

HEMA: No. You can do it right now, I feel.

You buy or borrow books?

SHYAMMOHAN: As I am well off I purchase.

HEMA: Then, you will have a good collection of books.

SHYAMMOHAN: Yeah. A good number of books.

*Pause.*

HEMA: Will you do me a favour?

SHYAMMOHAN: Please say.

HEMA: Read a book in a week's time.

SHYAMMOHAN: I will try.

HEMA (*pointing her finger to the book shelves*): I have a collection of books including those of my brother. As he is a psychologist his books are on his subject. If you like, you may read the books.

SHYAMMOHAN: I should read some psychology books.

*HEMA opens the bookshelves. SHYAMMOHAN searches the shelves and picks out two books.*

HEMA: Very good selections on psychology.

SHYAMMOHAN: What kind of books you read?

HEMA: Mostly on my subject history and some on related topics. Now I don't have much time to spare on general reading.

You go through the books.

And, you are lunching with me. So let me help the cook to prepare the dishes.

*SHYAMMOHAN has a smile on his face. HEMA exits and returns after an hour.*

SHYAMMMOHAN (*showing a book to Hema*): I have taken an autobiography.

HEMA: Very good.

I feel you have cooled down.

SHYAMMOHAN: Have I?

HEMA: Yeah.

Will you read one of the books before we meet next?

SHYAMMOHAN: I will.

You are on leave from office today?

HEMA: Yeah.

SHYAMMOHAN: For me?

HEMA: Yeah.

SHYAMMOHAN: Why you are that kind towards me?

HEMA: I like to help you tide over the crisis.

SHYAMMOHAN: Two diametrically opposite personalities, one a cheat and the other a benefactor.

HEMA: Am I a benefactor?

SHYAMMOHAN: If not, what else?

*Hema has a smile on her face.*

### **SCENE X**

*The afternoon of the day. HEMA's parlour. Sitting on opposite sofas HEMA and DIVAKAR are reading newspapers.*

DIVAKAR (*lifting his eyes from the newspaper*): Tell me about your friend.

HEMA (*lifting her eyes from the newspaper*): As I told you he is an officer with State Bank of India. I saw him once recently while accompanying a friend to his office.

For many days standing under a tree by the road to the college, he was, on high booze, giving vent to his feelings on his fiancée who jilted him for another. He was in shock over his lost love.

And the funny part was that he was doing it just as I was passing him on my way to or back from the college.

His fiancée and colleague Ragi, was my classmate for BA. I met with her during my visit to his office. She was a flirt while at college and some were struck by separation from her. So I had a curiosity to know about his failed relation with her. Also, I wished to help him tide over the crisis. And, with the help of one of my boy students I talked to him and befriended him.

DIVAKAR: How is he now?

HEMA: He is now off the shock. But it may take some time before he cools down fully.

DIVAKAR: Your intention is good. But he needs someone or something else in place of his lost love to anchor his mind on.

HEMA: Until the calamity he was a voracious reader. So I have asked him to concentrate on books and I gave some books to read. And, he may soon call on after reading the books.

DIVAKAR: He may return to his hobby. But. . . I fear his mind may shift from his fiancée to you. And, if it happens?

How is he otherwise?

HEMA: He is a good man.

DIVAKAR: If he is good and you can accept him into your life there shall be no problem. But if his mind gets anchored to you and you reject him, he may fall into another, this time, inescapable void. So be prepared to accept him into your life, if he desires it, to prevent such a catastrophe.

*Long pause.*

HEMA: I feel I can't keep off him until he comes off the crisis.

DIVAKAR (*with a smile*): That's good.

### SCENE XI

*After ten days. It's 10 pm, Sunday. HEMA and SHYAMMOHAN are sitting in HEMA's study. SHYAMMOHAN places three books on the table.*

SHYAMMOHAN: I read all the books.

HEMA: How do you find them?

SHYAMMOHAN: The psychological books are good and useful. I feel I should have read some psychology books earlier.

HEMA: About the autobiography, do you feel the author's urge for survival?

SHYAMMOHAN: I do.

HEMA: The condemned man struggles for survival and he succeeds. That's life.

SHYAMMOHAN: I realize.

I said goodbye to liquor.

HEMA: That's good. I see life in your eyes. You will feel more life when you have joined back for duty.

SHYAMMOHAN: I will be back to office in a few days.

Your care and advice have brought me so far.

You are a goddess for me.

HEMA: Not a human being?

SHYAMMOHAN: A very good one on the face of the earth.

*HEMA has a smile on her face.*

HEMA: You are good and sincere. So I like you.

You like me?

*Pause.*

SHYAMMOHAN: I don't know. No. I do.

HEMA: Shall I talk to my brother about you?

SHYAMMOHAN: You mean?

HEMA (*with an amorous look on SHYAMMOHAN*): I mean everything.

*Pause.*

SHYAMMOHAN: I can't believe my eyes and ears.

*His eyes well up with tears.*

### ***CURTAIN***

#### **Third-person Biographical Note:**

P R Gopalakrishnan was born at Mulanthuruthi, Travancore-Cochin (now Kerala), in 1950. He had his schooling at Chottanikkara and Mulanthuruthi, Pre Degree and B Sc (Mathematics) at the Maharaja's College, Ernakulam, Kochi, and a Post-graduate Diploma in Journalism at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. For 28 years he was on the service of the erstwhile State Bank of Travancore. He resides at Chottanikkara, Kerala. Some of his writings have been published in 'The Criterion'.