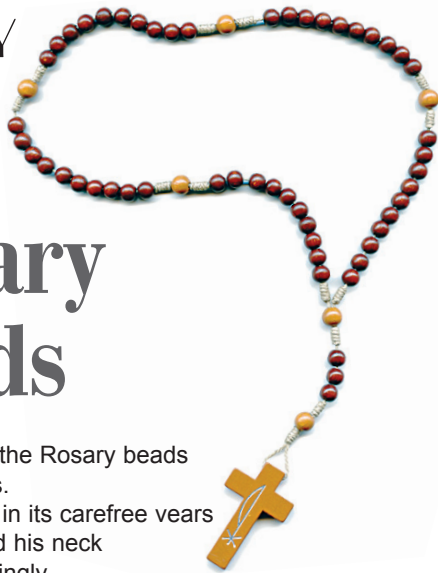


The Rosary Beads



A child handles the Rosary beads
Playfully curious.
It has no needs in its carefree years
Donning it round his neck
He kisses imitatingly
The cross, the beads reverentially.

At the age of reason
He approaches the communion table
Hands clasped in adoration
The beads twined round his fingers.

He learns the meaning of the beads
At his mother's knee.
Ever since the beads remain
In the stressful adolescent years
His companion, dissolving fears.

In youth the travelling Rosary
On finger like a ring.
In bus, in train, in car, at halts
The charm that keeps him from all harm.

In the stormy years of married life
with its ups and downs and joys and strife
The family Rosary keeps them bound
To one another, in a link profound

When the children have gone their several ways
The Rosary beads keep them near always
Fingering the beads the parents pray
For their children night and day

When old age takes over as it inevitably must
What a comfort the Rosary, an inherent trust
And when death approaches at God's behest
The Rosary's entwined as one is laid to rest

A life-time charm the Rosary beads
In times of stress. In times of need
To honour Our Mother, no matter what
It remains with us even as we return do dust.

– Jeannette Cabraal

For your own good

By P. Kulendrakumar

The door bell rang. I looked at the clock, it showed 5.00 am. I looked through the peephole and was surprised to see Roshan standing outside. I opened the door and let him in. He walked in without a nod and sat on the sofa with a long sigh. He was an old friend and we had been in the University together. I remember him as a man of strong character. Somehow, this did not look like the Roshan, I used to know.

He looked up at me and smiled. "I need money" he said apologetically. I sat beside him and asked him, "What for?"

"You know," he replied.

I knew. His wife had met me at the shopping centre one day and told me that Roshan was on drugs. She could not change him, though she had tried her best. I looked at him as he grinned pitifully at me. Then, I sat beside him and placed my hand on his shoulder. He burst into tears. "Help me, Kumar", he sobbed.

Why suffer

I let him cry for a while before I spoke. "Look Roshan, you don't need to suffer like this. Why don't you just surrender to the authorities? They will put you through a rehabilitation program and you will be OK again.

"It is like a jail there", he yelled.

"If you want to get better, you must be prepared to suffer a little." I said.

He glared at me. "Just give me some money, I will come and listen to your sermon tomorrow. I need a fix now," he said sarcastically.

"I have no money." I told him flatly.

"You refuse to help me?" he said sadly.

I nodded.

He got up to go. "OK, I thought you were my friend. Remember how many times I helped you in the University? I used to buy you food, pay your canteen bills. I even lied for you many times," he said.

"That was different, Roshan", I said.

He shrugged his shoulders and



walked to the door. "Wait," I said. He stopped, gave me a stupid grin and sat down. I went into my room and closed the door. Then, I dialed a number to the drug squad.

Annoyed

I took some money and went out again. He reached for it, but I put it into my pocket. He showed annoyance. "Let's talk first," I said. He nodded. I started talking and soon he warmed up. We colleagues always have a lot to talk about. He was carried away.

Suddenly, there was a knock on the door. He froze and looked at me. I jumped up and opened the door. Two police officers came in. I pointed to Roshan silently. One of the officers caught Roshan by the hand and led him away. At the door he turned and looked at me sadly. "We were such good friends, how can you betray me like this?" he said with tears in his eyes.

"It is for your own good." I said. The officers took him away. I did not feel like a hero. I sat down on the sofa and looked at my Shrine. I asked the Gods. "Have I done wrong?"