

"Meherazad"

November 14, 1964.

Dear Shri Nandi,

Thank you for your kindness in inviting me to write a "Foreword" to your book of poems.

Now the purpose of a "Foreword" is to praise, to recommend. So I am at a loss to know why a lover of Baba wants his expressions of love for Baba praised and recommended. What is it to him if another praises or condemns his personal devotion to his Beloved? Neither will bring nearer one moment the continuous Presence which the lover craves.

But if your verses are other than personal expressions, if they are first attempts in the art of Poetry, and your desire is to become a poet and perhaps serve Baba's great Cause through this form of art — then you must be prepared for the heartbreak of years of writing, critically examining what you have written, discarding or rewriting again and again. I know of no other way of achieving the almost impossible — the writing of a good poem.

Showing your poems to friends who know nothing about the art of Poetry and accepting their praise, and publishing poems that you have not critically examined, is about the surest way to not become a good poet.

I do not want to discourage you, dear brother, rather would I encourage you to the utmost — for a good poem is a grand thing. But it is always the result of your patient labour and study. Just as one cannot pick up a musical instrument and get music out of it (no matter how great is one's desire to do so) but must practise and study for many years, so it is with poetry — one cannot pick up the instrument of language and get poems out of it without years of practise and study.

If you are very gifted, in 10 years you may play this instrument well. In my own case 40 years has not been sufficient.

If it is your desire to be a poet, and, as said, perhaps serve beloved Baba through this art, and if you are prepared to labour to accomplish your desire, why not write in the language into which you were born? There are very few instances in the history of literature of one writing good poetry in a foreign language.

With all best wishes,

Yours in Baba,