Although Tagore warned, in the introduction to *Jivansmriti* (*My Reminiscences*), 1912, that to take “my memory pictures ... as an attempt at autobiography would be a mistake,” he also wrote that “It is as literary material that I offer them.” On this basis, excerpts from three autobiographical selections are included in this volume.

Tagore was born during a transitional period in Bengali history, and it caused his later achievements to be a matter of public curiosity, and even of public controversy. His originality in art, his pioneering in education, and his unorthodox religion and views of men and public affairs needed explanation. This, together with his own introspective nature, impelled him to search deeply into his personal history.


At the invitation of Liang Chi-Chao, president of the University Lecture Association of Peking, Tagore delivered a series of lectures in China during April and May of 1924. As a means of introducing or interpreting himself, many of these lectures were given in an autobiographical style. A paper-bound volume, now out of print, was published by Visva-Bharati (1925) containing lecture notes and a few translations from his earlier writings. From these, *My Life* was compiled by Anthony X. Soares for his book, *Lectures and Addresses by Rabindranath Tagore* (Macmillan & Co., Ltd., London, 1928).

*Chhelebela*, the Bengali original of *My Boyhood Days*, is a sequence of memories covering the period from Tagore’s earliest recollections to his first trip abroad in 1878. *Chhelebela* was published in 1940, and its
English translation by Marjorie Sykes was serialized almost simultaneously in the Visva-Bharati Quarterly. My Boyhood Days was published in book form by Visva-Bharati, Calcutta, in April, 1940.

FROM My Life

I was born in 1861, not an important date in world history, but a date belonging to a great period in the history of Bengal. Just as we have our places of pilgrimage where the great rivers meet, symbolizing the spirit of life in nature, and emblematic of the meeting of ideals, we have the currents of three movements in the life of India. These currents met about the time I was born.

One of these movements was religious, introduced by a great-hearted man of gigantic intelligence, Raja Rammohan Roy. He was a revolutionary, and tried to reopen the channel of spiritual life which had been obstructed for many years by the debris of formal and materialistic creeds that were fixed in practices lacking spiritual significance.

A great fight ensued between him and the orthodox who suspected every living idea that was dynamic. People who cling to an ancient past have their pride in the antiquity of their accumulations, and in the sublimity of their high-walled surroundings. They grow nervous and angry when some lover of truth breaks open their enclosure and floods it with the sunshine of thought and life. Ideas cause movement, but they consider all forward movements to be a menace against their warehouse security.

I am proud to say that my father was one of the leaders of that movement, for which he suffered ostracism and social indignities. I was born in this atmosphere of new ideals, but ideals which were older than all the other antiquities of which that age was proud.

But our self-expression must find its freedom not only in spiritual ideas but in literary manifestations, and there was a second movement of equal importance. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, who lived
long enough for me to see him, was the first pioneer in the literary revolution which occurred in Bengal about that time.

Our literature had allowed its creative life to vanish; it lacked movement, and was fettered by a rhetoric as rigid as death. This man was brave enough to challenge the orthodoxy which believed in the security of tombstones and in perfection which can only belong to the dead. He lifted from our language the dead weight of ponderous forms and with a touch of his wand aroused our literature from her age-long sleep. And what beauty she revealed when she awoke in the fullness of her strength and grace.

The third movement which started about this time in my country was national. It was not fully political but began to express our people who were trying to assert their own personality. It was a voice of indignation at the humiliation constantly heaped upon us by those who were not oriental, and who had, especially at that time, the habit of dividing people into good and bad according to what was similar to their life and what was different.

This contemptuous spirit of separateness was causing great damage to our own culture. It generated in the young men of our country distrust of all things that had come to them as an inheritance from their past. Our students, imitating the laughter of their European schoolmasters, laughed at the old Indian pictures and other works of art. The same spirit of rejection, born out of ignorance, was cultivated in other areas of our culture, the result of a hypnotism exercised upon the minds of the younger generation by people who had loud voices and strong arms.

This spirit of revolt had just awakened when I was born, and some people were already trying to suppress it. The movement had leaders from my own family, my brothers and cousins, and they tried to save the people from being insulted and ignored by those who were their fellow men.

We had to find some universal basis, and we had to discover those things which have an everlasting value. The national movement was started to proclaim the fact that we must not be indiscriminate in our rejection of the past. This was not a reactionary movement but a revolutionary one; it set out with great courage to deny and to oppose all pride in mere borrowings.
These three movements had started, and the members of my family took an active part in all three. We were ostracized because of our heterodox opinions about religion; therefore, we enjoyed the freedom of the outcaste. We had to build our world with our own thoughts, we had to build it from the foundation, and therefore had to seek the foundation that was firm.

I was born into a family which had to live its own life, which led me in my young days to seek guidance for my self-expression from my own inner standard of judgment. My medium of expression was Bengali, but the language of the people had to be modulated according to the urging which I as an individual had.

No poet should borrow his medium ready-made from some shop of respectability; he should not only have his own seeds but should prepare his own soil. Each poet has his own language, not because all language is of his own making, but because his individual use transforms it into a special vehicle of his own creation.

All men have poetry in their hearts, and it is necessary for them, as much as possible, to express their feelings. For this they must have a medium, moving and pliant, which can refreshingly become their own, age after age. All great languages undergo change. Those languages which resist the spirit of change are doomed and will never produce great harvests of thought and literature. When forms become fixed, the spirit either weakly accepts its imprisonment or rebels. All revolutions consist of the “within” fighting against invasion from the “without.”

Revolution must come, and men must risk revilement and misunderstanding, especially from those who want to be comfortable, who put their faith in materialism and convention, and who belong truly, not to modern times but to the dead past, when physical flesh and size predominated, and not the mind of man.

This kind of physical dominance is mechanical, and modern machines merely exaggerate our bodies, lengthening and multiplying our limbs. The modern child delights in size, representing an inordinate material power, saying, “Let me have the big toy and no sentiment which can disturb it,” not realizing that we are returning to that antediluvian age which revelled in the production of gigantic physical frames, leaving no place for the free inner spirit.

All great human movements are related to some great idea. Some
say that such a doctrine of spirit has been in its death-throes for over a century and is now moribund, that we have nothing to rely upon but external forces and material foundations. But I say that this doctrine was obsolete long ago. It was exploded in the springtime of life, when mere size was swept off the face of the world and replaced by naked man with his helpless body, but also with his indomitable mind and spirit.

The impertinence of material things is extremely old; the revelation of the spirit in man is truly modern. I am on its side, for I am modern.

When I began my life as a poet, the writers among our educated community took their inspiration from English literature. I suppose it was fortunate for me that I never in my life had what is called an education, that is to say, the kind of school and college training which is considered proper for a boy from a respectable family. Though I cannot say I was altogether free from influences that ruled young minds in those days, my writings were nevertheless saved from imitative forms. I believe it was chiefly because I had the good fortune to escape the school training which could set up for me an artificial standard based upon the prescription of the schoolmaster. In my versification, vocabulary and ideas I yielded myself to the vagaries of an untutored fancy which brought castigation upon me from critics who were learned, and uproarious laughter from the witty. My ignorance combined with my heresy turned me into a literary outlaw.

When I began my career I was ridiculously young; in fact, I was the youngest of the writers of that time who had made themselves articulate. I had neither the protective armor of mature age nor that of a respectable English education, so in my seclusion of contempt and qualified encouragement I had my freedom. Gradually I grew up, and cut my way through derision and occasional patronage into a recognition in which the proportion of praise and blame was much like that of land and water on our earth.

If you ask what gave me boldness when I was young, I should say that one thing was my early acquaintance with the old Vaishnava poems of Bengal, full of freedom in meter and expression. I think I was only twelve when these poems first began to be reprinted. I surreptitiously obtained copies from the desks of my elders. For the
edification of the young, I must confess that this was not right for a boy of my age; I should have been passing my examinations and not following a path that would lead to failure. I must also admit that the greater part of these lyrics was erotic and not quite suited to a boy just about to reach his teens, but my imagination was completely occupied with the beauty of their forms and the music of their words, and their breath, heavily laden with voluptuousness, passed over my mind without distracting it.

This vagabondage in my literary career had another origin: my father was the leader of a new religious movement, a strict monotheism based upon the teachings of the Upanishads, and my countrymen in Bengal thought him almost as bad as a Christian, if not worse. So we were completely ostracized, which probably saved me from another disaster, that of imitating our own past.

Most of the members of my family had some gift: some were artists, some poets, some musicians, and the atmosphere of our home was permeated with the spirit of creation. I had a deep sense, almost from infancy, of nature, a feeling of intimate companionship with the trees and the clouds, and the touch of the seasons. At the same time I had a peculiar susceptibility to human kindness. These craved for expression, and naturally I wanted to give them my own expression, though I was too immature to give them any perfection of form.

Since then I have achieved a reputation in India, but a strong current of antagonism in a large number of my countrymen still persists. Some say that my poems do not spring from the heart of the national traditions; some complain that they are incomprehensible, others that they are unwholesome. In fact, I have never had complete acceptance from my own people, and that too has been a blessing, for nothing is so demoralizing as unqualified success.

This is the story of my career; I wish I could reveal it through my work in my own language. I hope that will be possible some day or other. Languages are jealous. They do not give up their best treasures to those who try to deal with them through an intermediary belonging to an alien rival. You have to court them in person and dance attendance on them. Poems are not like gold or other substantial things that are transferable, and you cannot receive the smiles and glances of your sweetheart through an attorney, however diligent and dutiful he may be.
I have tried to experience the wealth of beauty in European literature. When I was young I approached Dante, unfortunately through a translation. I utterly failed, and felt it my pious duty to stop, so Dante remained closed to me.

I also wanted to know German literature, and by reading Heine in translation, I thought I had caught a glimpse of the beauty there. Fortunately I met a lady missionary from Germany, and asked her help. I worked hard for some months, but being rather quick-witted, which is not a good quality, I was not persevering. I had the dangerous facility which helps one to guess the meaning too easily. My teacher thought I had almost mastered the language, which was not true. I succeeded, however, in getting through Heine, like a sleep-walker easily crossing unknown paths, and I found immense pleasure.

Then I tried Goethe, but that was too ambitious. With the help of the little German I had learned, I went through Faust. I believe I found my entrance to the place, not like one who has keys for all the doors, but as a casual visitor who is tolerated in some guest room, comfortable but not intimate. Properly speaking, I do not know my Goethe; and in the same way many other great luminaries are dark to me. This is as it should be; man cannot reach the shrine if he does not make the pilgrimage. I hope that this may make others want to learn Bengali some day.

In regard to music, I claim to be something of a musician myself. I have composed many songs which have defied the canons of respectable orthodoxy, and good people are disgusted at the impudence of a man who is audacious, because he is untrained. But I persist, and God forgives me because I do not know what I do. Possibly that is the best way of doing things in the sphere of art, for I find that people blame me, but also sing my songs, even if not always correctly. . . .

I have been asked to tell you something of my religion. One of the reasons why I always feel reluctant to speak about this is that I have not achieved my religion by passively accepting a particular creed through some accident of birth. I was born to a family who were pioneers in the revival of a great religion based upon the utterance of Indian sages in the Upanishads. But owing to my idiosyncrasy of temperament, it was impossible for me to accept any religious teaching on the basis that people in my surroundings believed it
to be true. I could not persuade myself to imagine that I had a religion simply because everybody whom I might trust believed in its value.

Thus, my mind was always free from the dominance of any creed that had its sanction in the definite authority of some scripture or in the teaching of some organized body of worshipers; therefore, when I am questioned about religion, I have no prepared ground on which to stand, no training in a systematic approach to the subject.

Essentially, my religion is a poet's religion. Its touch comes to me through the same trackless channels as the inspiration of my music. My religious life and my poetical life have followed the same mysterious line of growth. Somehow they are wedded to each other, and though their betrothal had a long period of ceremony, it was kept secret from me. Then suddenly a day came when their union was revealed to me.

At that time I was living in a village. The day brought all the drifting trivialities of the commonplace. I finished my morning's work, and before going to take my bath I stood for a moment at my window overlooking a market place on the bank of a dry river bed. Suddenly I became conscious of a stirring within me. My world of experience seemed to become lighted, and facts that were detached and dim found a great unity of meaning. The feeling that I had was like what a man, groping through a fog without knowing his destination, might feel when he suddenly discovers that he stands before his own house.

I remember the day in my childhood when, after the painful process of learning my Bengali alphabet, I unexpectedly came to the first simple combination of letters which gave me the words: "It rains, the leaves tremble." I was thrilled with the picture which these words suggested to me. The fragments lost their individual isolation and my mind revelled in the unity of a vision. In a similar manner, on that morning in the village, the facts of my life suddenly appeared to me in a luminous unity. All things that had seemed like vagrant waves were revealed in relation to a boundless sea, and from that time I have been able to maintain the faith that, in all my experience of nature or man, there is the fundamental truth of spiritual reality.

You will understand me if I tell you how unconsciously I had
been traveling toward the realization which I stumbled upon that
day. . . . From my infancy I had the sensitiveness which always kept
my mind conscious of the world around me.

We had a small garden beside our house; it was a fairyland to me,
where miracles of beauty were of everyday occurrence. Every morning
at an early hour I would run out from my bed to greet the first
pink flush of dawn through the trembling leaves of the coconut
trees which stood in a line along the garden boundary. The dewdrops
glistened as the grasss caught the first tremor of the morning breeze.
The sky seemed to bring a personal companionship, and my whole
body drank in the light and peace of those silent hours. I was anxious
never to miss a single morning, because each one was more precious
to me than gold to the miser.

I had been blessed with that sense of wonder which gives a child
his right to enter the treasure-house of mystery in the heart of exist-
ence. I neglected my studies because they took me from my friend
and companion, the world around me; and when I was thirteen I
freed myself from the clutches of an educational system that tried to
imprison me with lessons.

Perhaps this will explain the meaning of my religion. The world
was alive, intimately close to my life. I still remember my repulsion
when a medical student brought me a piece of human windpipe and
tried to excite my admiration for its structure. He tried to convince
me that it was the source of the beautiful human voice, but I
rejected that information with disgust. I did not admire the skill
of the workman, but rather the artist who concealed the machinery
and revealed his unified creation.

God does not care to expose His power written in geological in-
scriptions, but He is proud of the beauty in green grass, in flowers,
in the play of color on the clouds, in the music of running water.

It was good for me that my consciousness was never dulled to the
surrounding world. That the cloud was the cloud, that a flower was
a flower, was enough, because they spoke directly to me, and I could
not be indifferent to them. I still remember the moment, one after-
noon, when coming home from school I jumped from the carriage
and suddenly saw in the sky, behind the upper terrace of our house,
deep dark rain-clouds lavishing cool shadows on the atmosphere.
The marvel of it, the generosity of its presence, gave me a joy
which was freedom, the kind of freedom we feel in the love of a dear friend.

That which merely gives information can be explained in terms of measurement, but that which gives joy cannot be explained by the grouping of atoms and molecules. Somewhere in the arrangement of this world there seems to be a great concern with giving delight, showing that in addition to the meaning of matter and force there is a message conveyed through the magic touch of personality. This touch cannot be analyzed, it can only be felt.

Is it merely because the rose is round and red that it gives me more satisfaction than the gold which could buy the necessities of life, or any number of slaves? You may deny the claim that a rose gives more delight than a piece of gold, but you must remember that I am not speaking about artificial values. If we had to cross a desert whose sand was made of gold, the glitter of those dead particles would become a terror for us, and the sight of a rose would bring us the music of paradise.

The final meaning of the delight which we find in a rose can never be in the roundness of its petals, just as the final meaning of the joy of music cannot be in a phonograph record. Somehow we feel that through a rose the language of love reaches our heart. Do we not carry a rose to our beloved because it has already embodied a message which unlike our language of words cannot be analyzed? Through this gift we utilize a universal language of joy for our own purposes of expression.

Facts and power belong to the outer, not to the inner soul of things. Gladness is the one criterion of truth, and we know we have touched it by the music truth gives, by the joy it sends to the truth in us. It is not as ether waves that we receive our light; the morning does not wait for a scientist to introduce it. In the same way, we touch the reality within us only when we receive love or goodness, not through the erudite discussion of ethical doctrines.

All that I feel about my religion is from vision and not from knowledge. I cannot satisfactorily answer questions about evil, or about what happens after death, and yet I am sure that there have been moments when my soul has become intensely conscious of the infinite. It has been said in our Upanishads that the mind comes
away, baffled, from the supreme truth, and he who knows that truth is saved from all doubts and fears.

In the night we stumble over things and become acutely conscious of their separateness, but the day reveals the unity which embraces them. And the man whose inner vision is bathed in consciousness at once realizes the spiritual unity which reigns over all racial differences, and his mind no longer stumbles over individual facts, accepting them as final. He realizes that peace is an inner harmony and not an outer adjustment, that beauty carries the assurance of our relationship to reality, which waits for its perfection in the response of our love.

FROM My Reminiscences

... Some years ago, when questioned about the events of my past life, I had occasion to pry into this picture-chamber. I expected to be content with selecting a few materials for my life's story, but discovered, as I opened the door, that life's memories are not life's history. Memories are the original work of an unseen artist. The variegated colors are not reflections of outside lights, but belong to the painter himself, and come passion-tinged from his heart, thereby disqualifying the canvas as evidence in a court of law.

But though the attempt to gather precise history from memory's storehouse may be fruitless, there is a fascination in looking over the pictures. This fascination cast its spell on me.

The road and the wayside shelter are not pictures while we travel; they are too necessary, too obvious. When, however, before turning into the evening resthouse, we look back upon the cities, fields, rivers and hills where we have traveled in the morning of our life, they are pictures indeed. Thus, when my opportunity came, I looked back, and was engrossed.

Was this interest only a natural affection for my own past? There must have been some personal feeling, of course, but the pictures
also had an artistic value of their own. No event in my reminiscences is worthy of being preserved for all time, but the quality of the subject is not the only justification for a record. What one has truly felt, if only it can be made sensible to others, is always of importance to one's fellow men. If pictures which have taken shape in memory can be brought out in words, they are worth a place in literature.

It is as literary material that I offer my memory pictures; to take them as an attempt at autobiography would be a mistake. In such a view these reminiscences would appear useless as well as incomplete.

Going out of the house was forbidden to us, in fact we did not have even the freedom of all of its rooms. So we peeped at nature behind barriers. This limitless thing called the Outside was beyond my reach, flashes and sounds and scents of which used to come momentarily and touch me through its interstices. With so many gestures it seemed to want to play with me through the bars, but it was free and I was bound, and there was no way of meeting. So the attraction was all the stronger. The chalk line has been wiped away today, but the confining ring is still there. The distant is just as distant, the outside is still beyond me. . . .

The parapets of our terraced roofs were higher than my head. When I had grown taller, when the tyranny of the servants had relaxed, when, with the coming of a new bride into the house I had achieved some recognition as a companion of her leisure, then I sometimes went up to the terrace in the middle of the day. By that time everybody in the house would have finished their meal, there would be an interval in the business of the household, and over the inner apartments there rested the quiet of the midday. . . .

There was still another place in our house which I have not yet succeeded in discovering. A little girl playmate of my own age called this the "King's palace."* "I have just been there," she would sometimes tell me, but somehow the moment never arrived when she could take me with her. That was a wonderful place, and its playthings were as wonderful as the games that were played there. It seemed to me that it must be somewhere very near, perhaps in the first or second story; the only thing was that I never seemed to get there. How often I asked her, "Only tell me, is it really inside the house or outside?" And she would always reply, "No, no, it's in this very house." I would sit and wonder: "Where then can it
be? Don’t I know all the rooms of the house?” Who the king might be I never inquired; where his palace was still remains a mystery; but this much was clear, the King’s palace was within our house.

Looking back on the days of childhood, the thing that recurs most often is the mystery which filled life and the world. Something undreamed of was lurking everywhere, and the most important question every day was: “When, oh! when would we come across it?” It was as if nature held something in closed hands and was smilingly asking us: “What do you think I have?” The impossible was the thing we had no idea of.

I remember the custard apple seed which I planted in a corner of the south verandah, and watered every day. The thought that the seed might grow into a tree kept me in a state of fluttering wonder. Custard apple seeds still have the habit of sprouting, but no longer to the accompaniment of that feeling of wonder. The fault is not in the custard apple but in the mind.

We once stole some rocks from an elder cousin’s rockery and started a little rockery of our own. The plants which we sowed in its interstices were cared for so excessively that it was only because of their vegetable nature that they managed to put up with it until their untimely death. Words cannot recount the joy and wonder which this miniature mountaintop held for us. We had no doubt that our creation would be also wonderful to our elders. The day that we tested this, however, the hillock in the corner of our room, with all its rocks and vegetation, vanished. The knowledge that the schoolroom floor was not a proper foundation for the erection of a mountain was imparted so rudely, and with such suddenness, that it gave us a considerable shock. The weight from the stones, of which the floor was relieved, settled on our minds when we realized the gulf between our fancies and the will of our elders. . . .

PRACTICING POETRY

That blue manuscript book was soon filled, like the hive of some insect, with a network of variously slanting lines and the strokes of
letters. The eager pressure of the boy writer got frayed, and twisted up claw-like as if to hold fast the writing within, till at last, down what river Baitaraní I know not, its pages were swept away by merciful oblivion. Anyhow, they escaped the pangs of a passage through the printing press and need fear no birth into this vale of woe.

I cannot claim to have been a passive witness of the spread of my reputation as a poet. Though Satkari Babu was not a teacher of our class, he was very fond of me. He had written a book on natural history —I hope no unkind humorist will try to find a reason for such fondness. He sent for me one day and asked: "So you write poetry, do you?" I did not conceal the fact. From that time on, he would occasionally ask me to complete his quatrains by adding a couplet of my own.

Gobinda Babu of our school was dark, short and fat; he was the superintendent. He sat in his black suit with his account books in an office room on the second floor. We were all afraid of him because he was the rod-bearing judge. On one occasion I escaped from some bullies, five or six older boys, into his room. I had no witnesses on my side except my tears. I won my case, and from then on Govinda Babu had a soft corner in his heart for me.

One day he called me into his room during recess. I went in fear and trembling but had no sooner stepped before him than he also accosted me with the question: "So you write poetry?" I admitted it, and he commissioned me to write a poem on some high moral precept which I forget. The amount of condescension and affability implied can only be appreciated by those who were his pupils. When I handed him the verses next day, he took me to the highest class and made me stand before the boys. "Recite," he demanded. And I recited loudly.

The only praiseworthy thing about this moral poem was that it soon got lost. Its moral effect on the class was far from encouraging; the sentiment it aroused was not admiration for its author. Most of the boys were certain that it was not my own composition. One said he could produce the book from which it was copied, but was not pressed to do so; the process of proving is such a nuisance to those who want to believe. Also, the number of seekers after poetic fame began to increase, alarmingly, and their methods were not those which are recognized as roads to moral improvement.

Nowadays there is nothing strange in a youngster writing verses.
The glamour of poesy is gone. I remember how the few women who wrote poetry in those days were looked upon as miraculous creations of the Deity. If one hears today that a young lady does not write poems one feels skeptical. Poetry now appears many years before the highest Bengali class is reached, and no modern Gobinda Babu would have taken any notice of the poetic exploit I have just recalled.

BEREAVEMENTS

... When my mother died I was quite a child. She had been ailing for a long time, and we did not even know when her malady had taken a fatal turn. She used to sleep on a separate bed in the same room with us. Then she was taken for a boat trip on the river, and on her return a room on the third floor of the inner apartments was set apart for her.

On the night she died we were asleep in our room downstairs. Suddenly, our old nurse ran in weeping and crying: "O my little ones, you have lost your all!" My sister-in-law rebuked her and led her away in order to save us the sudden shock in the middle of the night. Half awakened by her words, I felt my heart sink, but could not tell what had happened. When, in the morning, we were told of her death, I could not realize all that it meant for me.

As we went out to the verandah we saw my mother laid on a bedstead in the courtyard; there was nothing in her appearance which showed death to be terrible. The aspect which death wore in that morning light was as lovely as a calm and peaceful sleep, and the gulf between life and its absence was not evident to us.

Only when her body was taken out by the main gateway, and we followed the procession to the cremation ground, did a storm of grief pass through me at the thought that mother would never return by this door and take again her accustomed place in the affairs of her household. As the day wore on, and we returned from the cremation, we turned into our lane and I looked up toward my father's room on the third floor. He was still in the front verandah sitting motionless in prayer. . . .
CHAPTER II

(Editor's note. The palanquin is a conveyance, usually for one person, consisting of an enclosed litter borne on the shoulders of men by means of poles.)

The palanquin belonged to the days of my grandmother. Lordly in appearance, it was large enough to have eight bearers for each pole, but when the wealth and glory of the family faded like the clouds at sunset, the palanquin bearers, with their gold bracelets, thick earrings, and sleeveless red tunics, disappeared along with it. The body of the palanquin was decorated with colored line drawings, some of which were not defaced; the surface was stained and discolored, and the stuffing was coming out of the upholstery. It lay in a corner of the countinghouse verandah as though it were a piece of commonplace lumber. I was seven or eight years old.

I was not yet, therefore, old enough to do any serious work, and the old palanquin had been dismissed from any useful service. Perhaps it was this mutual inactivity that attracted me to it. It was an island in the midst of the ocean, and on holidays I became Robinson Crusoe. There I sat within its closed doors, delightfully safe from prying eyes.

Outside my retreat, our house was full of relatives and other people. From all parts of the house I could hear the shouts of servants at work: Pari the maid returning from the bazaar through the front courtyard, her vegetables in a basket on her hip; Dukhon the bearer carrying Ganges water in a yoke across his shoulder; the weaver woman going into the inner apartments to trade the newest style of sari; Dinu the goldsmith, who received a monthly wage, sitting in the room next to the lane, blowing his bellows and carrying out the orders of the family, now coming to the countinghouse to present his bill to Kailash Mukherjee, who has a quill pen stuck behind his ear. The carder sits on the courtyard cleaning the mattress-stuffing on his twanging bow. Mukundalal the durwan is outside rolling on the ground with the one-eyed wrestler, trying out a new wrestling fall. He
slaps his thighs loudly, and repeats his movements twenty or thirty times, dropping on all fours. There sits a crowd of beggars waiting for their regular dole.

The day wears on, the heat grows intense, the clock in the gatehouse strikes the hour. Inside the palanquin, however, the day does not acknowledge the authority of clocks. Our noontime is that of former days, when the drum at the great door of the king’s palace would announce the breaking up of the court, and the king would go to bathe in sandal-scented water. On holiday noons, those in charge of me eat their meal and go to sleep. I sit alone; my palanquin travels on imaginary journeys. My bearers, sprung from the air at my bidding, eating the salt of my imagination, carry me wherever my fancy leads. We pass through strange lands, and I name each country from books I have read. My imagination cuts a road through a deep forest. Tiger eyes blaze from the thickets, my flesh creeps and tingles. With me is Biswanath the hunter; his gun speaks—Crack! Crack!—and then all is still. Sometimes my palanquin becomes a peacock-boat, floating on the ocean until the shore is out of sight. The oars dip into the water with a gentle plash, the waves swing and swell around us. The sailors cry to us to beware, a storm is coming. By the tiller stands Abdul the sailor, with his pointed head, shaven moustache and close-cropped hair. I know him, for he brings hilsa fish and turtle eggs from the Padma for my elder brother.

CHAPTER VII

... Through the morning all kinds of studies were heaped upon me, but as the burden grew greater, my mind contrived to get rid of the fragments. Making a hole in the enveloping net, my parrot-learning slipped through its meshes and escaped, and the opinion that Master Nilkamal expressed about his pupil’s intelligence was not the kind to be made public.

In another part of the verandah is the old tailor, his thick-lensed spectacles on his nose, bent over his sewing, and at the prescribed hours going through the ritual of his Namáz. I watch him and think
what a lucky fellow Nāmut is. Then, with my head whirling from
doing sums, shade my eyes with my slate, look down and see in
front of the entrance porch, Chandrabhān the durwan, combing his
long beard with a wooden comb, dividing it in two and looping it
around each ear. The assistant durwan, a slender boy, is sitting near
by, a bracelet on his arm, cutting tobacco. The horse has already
finished his morning allowance of gram, and the crows are hopping
around, pecking at the scattered grains. Our dog's (Johnny's) sense
of duty is aroused and he barks them away.

I had planted a custard-apple seed in the dust which continual
sweeping had piled in one corner of the verandah. I watched ex-
citedly for the sprouting of the new leaves, and as soon as Master
Nilkamal had gone, I ran to examine and water it. In the end my
hopes went unfulfilled; the same broom that gathered the dust to-
gether dispersed it again to the four winds.

Now the sun climbs higher, and the slanting shadows cover only
half the courtyard. The clock strikes nine. Govinda, short and dark,
with a dirty yellow towel slung over his shoulder, takes me off for a
bath. Promptly at half past nine comes our monotonous, unvarying
meal: the daily ration of rice, dal and fish curry—it was not much to
my taste.

The clock strikes ten. From the main street comes the hawker's
cry of "Green mangoes!" and awakens wistful dreams. Farther and
farther in the distance resounds the clanging of the brass-peddler.
The lady of the neighboring house is drying her hair on the roof,
and her two little girls are playing with shells. They have plenty
of leisure, for girls are not yet obliged to go to school, and I think
"How fine to be born a girl." As it is, the old horse draws me in the
rickety carriage to my Andamans, and from ten to four I am doomed
to exile.

At half past four I return from school. The gymnastic master has
come, and for about an hour I exercise on the parallel bars. He has
no sooner gone than the drawing master arrives.

Gradually, the rusty daylight fades, the blurred noises of the eve-
ning sound like a dreamy hum resounding over the demon city of
brick and mortar. In the study an oil lamp is burning; Master Aghor
has come and the English lesson begins. The black-covered reader
is lying in wait for me on the table. The cover is loose; the pages
are stained and a little torn; I have tried writing my name in English in it, in the wrong places, and all in capital letters. As I read I nod, then jerk myself awake with a start, but miss far more than I read. When finally I tumble into bed I have at last a little time for myself, and there I listen for endless stories of the king's son traveling over an endless, trackless plain.
Tagore came into close contact, both in India and abroad, with practically all the eminent thinkers, intellectuals, and artists of his day—men like Henri Bergson, George Bernard Shaw, Thomas Mann, and Robert Frost. Fortunately, some of these interviews, or rather exchanges of views on matters of mutual interest, were recorded and published. The four conversations published here took place during Tagore's world tour of 1930.

The meeting with H. G. Wells occurred in Geneva early in June, 1930, and was recorded by Dr. Sudhin Ghose and this editor.

Tagore and Einstein met through a common friend, Dr. Mendel. Tagore visited Einstein at his residence at Kaputh in the suburbs of Berlin on July 14, 1930, and Einstein returned the call and visited Tagore at the Mendel home. Both conversations were recorded by this editor.

Tagore's contact with Rolland dated from 1919 when Rolland wrote to compliment Tagore on his condemnation of narrow nationalism. At Rolland's request, Tagore signed his name to La Déclaration pour l'indépendance de l'esprit, which was probably the first organized attempt to mobilize intellectual opinion all over the world against war. Their first meeting took place in April, 1921, in Paris. The conversation reproduced here took place in August, 1930, in Geneva.

Except for the July 14 conversation with Einstein, which was published in The Religion of Man (George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., London), Appendix II, pp. 222–225, the other conversations were published in Asia (March, 1937), pp. 151–154.
Tagore and Einstein

Tagore: I was discussing with Dr. Mendel today the new mathematical discoveries which tell us that in the realm of infinitesimal atoms chance has its play; the drama of existence is not absolutely predestined in character.

Einstein: The facts that make science tend toward this view do not say good-by to causality.

Tagore: Maybe not, yet it appears that the idea of causality is not in the elements, but that some other force builds up with them an organized universe.

Einstein: One tries to understand in the higher plane how the order is. The order is there, where the big elements combine and guide existence, but in the minute elements this order is not perceptible.

Tagore: Thus duality is in the depths of existence, the contradiction of free impulse and the directive will which works upon it and evolves an orderly scheme of things.

Einstein: Modern physics would not say they are contradictory. Clouds look as one from a distance, but if you see them near by, they show themselves as disorderly drops of water.

Tagore: I find a parallel in human psychology. Our passions and desires are unruly, but our character subdues these elements into a harmonious whole. Does something similar to this happen in the physical world? Are the elements rebellious, dynamic with individual impulse? And is there a principle in the physical world which dominates them and puts them into an orderly organization?

Einstein: Even the elements are not without statistical order; elements of radium will always maintain their specific order, now and ever onward, just as they have done all along. There is, then, a statistical order in the elements.

Tagore: Otherwise the drama of existence would be too desultory. It is the constant harmony of chance and determination which makes it eternally new and living.

Einstein: I believe that whatever we do or live for has its causality; it is good, however, that we cannot see through to it.
Tagore: There is in human affairs an element of elasticity also, some freedom within a small range which is for the expression of our personality. It is like the musical system in India, which is not so rigidly fixed as western music. Our composers give a certain definite outline, a system of melody and rhythmic arrangement, and within a certain limit the player can improvise upon it. He must be one with the law of that particular melody, and then he can give spontaneous expression to his musical feeling within the prescribed regulation. We praise the composer for his genius in creating a foundation along with a superstructure of melodies, but we expect from the player his own skill in the creation of variations of melodic flourish and ornamentation. In creation we follow the central law of existence, but if we do not cut ourselves adrift from it, we can have sufficient freedom within the limits of our personality for the fullest self-expression.

Einstein: That is only possible where there is a strong artistic tradition in music to guide the people's mind. In Europe, music has come too far away from popular art and popular feeling and has become something like a secret art with conventions and traditions of its own.

Tagore: You have to be absolutely obedient to this too complicated music. In India the measure of a singer's freedom is in his own creative personality. He can sing the composer's song as his own, if he has the power creatively to assert himself in his interpretation of the general law of the melody which he is given to interpret.

Einstein: It requires a very high standard of art to realize fully the great idea in the original music, so that one can make variations upon it. In our country the variations are often prescribed.

Tagore: If in our conduct we can follow the law of goodness, we can have real liberty of self-expression. The principle of conduct is there, but the character which makes it true and individual is our own creation. In our music there is a duality of freedom and prescribed order.

Einstein: Are the words of a song also free? I mean to say, is the singer at liberty to add his own words to the song which he is singing?

Tagore: Yes. In Bengal we have a kind of song—kirtan, we call it—which gives freedom to the singer to introduce parenthetical comments, phrases not in the original song. This occasions great enthusi-
asm, since the audience is constantly thrilled by some beautiful, spontaneous sentiment added by the singer.

**Einstein:** Is the metrical form quite severe?

**Tagore:** Yes, quite. You cannot exceed the limits of versification; the singer in all his variations must keep the rhythm and the time, which is fixed. In European music you have a comparative liberty with time, but not with melody.

**Einstein:** Can the Indian music be sung without words? Can one understand a song without words?

**Tagore:** Yes, we have songs with unmeaning words, sounds which just help to act as carriers of the notes. In North India music is an independent art, not the interpretation of words and thoughts, as in Bengal. The music is very intricate and subtle and is a complete world of melody by itself.

**Einstein:** It is not polyphonic?

**Tagore:** Instruments are used, not for harmony, but for keeping time and for adding to the volume and depth. Has melody suffered in your music by the imposition of harmony?

**Einstein:** Sometimes it does suffer very much. Sometimes the harmony swallows up the melody altogether.

**Tagore:** Melody and harmony are like lines and colors in pictures. A simple linear picture may be completely beautiful; the introduction of color may make it vague and insignificant. Yet color may, by combination with lines, create great pictures, so long as it does not smother and destroy their value.

**Einstein:** It is a beautiful comparison; line is also much older than color. It seems that your melody is much richer in structure than ours. Japanese music also seems to be so.

**Tagore:** It is difficult to analyze the effect of eastern and western music on our minds. I am deeply moved by the western music; I feel that it is great, that it is vast in its structure and grand in its composition. Our own music touches me more deeply by its fundamental lyrical appeal. European music is epic in character; it has a broad background and is Gothic in its structure.

**Einstein:** This is a question we Europeans cannot properly answer, we are so used to our own music. We want to know whether our own music is a conventional or a fundamental human feeling,
whether to feel consonance and dissonance is natural or a convention which we accept.

**Tagore:** Somehow the piano confounds me. The violin pleases me much more.

**Einstein:** It would be interesting to study the effects of European music on an Indian who had never heard it when he was young.

**Tagore:** Once I asked an English musician to analyze for me some classical music and explain to me what elements make for the beauty of a piece.

**Einstein:** The difficulty is that the really good music, whether of the East or of the West, cannot be analyzed.

**Tagore:** Yes, and what deeply affects the hearer is beyond himself.

**Einstein:** The same uncertainty will always be there about everything fundamental in our experience, in our reaction to art, whether in Europe or in Asia. Even the red flower I see before me on your table may not be the same to you and me.

**Tagore:** And yet there is always going on the process of reconciliation between them, the individual taste conforming to the universal standard.

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**Tagore and Rolland**

**Tagore:** Do you think that Geneva is likely to play an important role in the world of international relationship?

**Rolland:** It may, but a good deal depends on factors over which Geneva has no control.

**Tagore:** The League of Nations seems to me to be but one of the various forces which are at work here. At the present moment it is by no means the most instrumental for the readjustment of international relationships. It may or may not develop into a power for bringing greater harmony in the political world. I have much faith in the various international groups and societies and the individuals working in this place, and my hope is that they will eventually create
in Geneva a genuine center of international activities which will shape the politics of the future.

ROLLAND: We find a large number of people eagerly looking for a message from the East. India, they think—and I may add, rightly—is the country that can in this epoch give that message to the world.

TAGORE: It is curious to note how India has furnished probably the first internationally minded man of the nineteenth century. I mean Raja Rammohun Roy; he had a passion for truth. He came from an orthodox Brahmin family, but he broke all bonds of superstition and formalism. He wanted to understand Buddhism, went to Tibet, studied Hebrew, Greek, Arabic, Persian, English, French; he traveled widely in Europe, and died in Bristol. Spiritual truth for him did not mean a sort of ecclesiasticism confined within sectarian sanctuaries; nor did he think that it could be inflicted upon people outside the sect by men who have professional rights to preach it as a doctrine. He realized that a bond of spiritual unity links the whole of mankind and that it is the purpose of religion to reach down to that fundamental unity of human relationship, of human efforts and achievements.

ROLLAND: I have often wondered at the spirit of religious toleration in India; it is unlike anything we have known in the West. The cosmic nature of your religion and the composite character of your civilization make this possible. India has allowed all kinds of religious faith and practice to flourish side by side.

TAGORE: Perhaps that has also been our weakness, and it is due to an indiscriminate spirit of toleration that all forms of religious creeds and crudities have run riot in India, making it difficult for us to realize the true foundation of our spiritual faith. The practice of animal sacrifice, for instance, has nothing to do with our religion, yet many people sanction it on the ground of tradition. Similar aberrations of religion can be found in every country. Our concern in India today is to remove them and intensify the larger beliefs which are our true spiritual heritage.

ROLLAND: In Christian scriptures, too, this theme of animal sacrifice dominates. Take the opening chapters: God gave preference to Abel because he had offered a lamb for sacrifice.

TAGORE: I have never been able to love the God of the Old Testament.
ROLLAND: . . . The emphasis is wrongly placed, and the attitude is not spiritual in the larger sense.

TAGORE: We should stress always the “larger sense.” Truth cannot afford to be tolerant where it faces positive evil; it is like sunlight, which makes the existence of evil germs impossible. As a matter of fact, Indian religious life suffers today from the lack of a wholesome spirit of intolerance, which is characteristic of creative religion. Even a vogue of atheism may do good to India today, even though my country will never accept atheism as her permanent faith. It will sweep away all noxious undergrowths in the forest, and the tall trees will remain intact. At the present moment even a gift of negation from the West will be of value to a large section of the Indian people.

ROLLAND: I believe that scientific rationalism will help to solve India’s question.

TAGORE: I know that India can never believe in mere intellectual determination for any long period of time; balance and harmony will certainly be restored. That is why a temporary swing in one direction may help us to arrive at the central adjustment of spiritual life. Science should come to our aid to be humanized by us at the end.

ROLLAND: Science is probably the most international element in the modern world; that is, the spirit of cooperation in scientific research. But we have today poison gas at the disposal of politicians. It is tragic that scientists are at the disposal of military powers who are not in the least interested in the progress of human thought and culture. . . . The problem today is not so much the antagonism of nations as the clash between different classes in the body of a nation itself. This does not, of course, justify or minimize to any degree the real curse of aggressive nationalism and the spirit of war.

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Tagore and Wells

Tagore: The tendency in modern civilization is to make the world uniform. Calcutta, Bombay, Hong Kong and other cities are more or less alike, wearing big masks which represent no country in particular.

Wells: Yet don't you think this very fact is an indication that we are reaching out for a new world-wide human order which refuses to be localized?

Tagore: Our individual physiognomy need not be the same. Let the mind be universal. The individual should not be sacrificed.

Wells: We are gradually thinking now of one human civilization on the foundation of which individualities will have great chance of fulfillment. The individual, as we take him, has suffered from the fact that civilization has been split up into separate units, instead of being merged into a universal whole, which seems to be the natural destiny of humankind.

Tagore: I believe the unity of human civilization can be better maintained by the linking up in fellowship and cooperation of the different civilizations of the world. Do you think there is a tendency to have one common language for humanity?

Wells: One common language will probably be forced on mankind whether we like it or not. Previously a community of fine minds created a new dialect. Now it is necessity that will compel us to accept a universal language.

Tagore: I quite agree. The time for five-mile dialects is fast vanishing. Rapid communication makes for a common language. Yet this common language probably would not exclude national languages. There is again the curious fact that just now, along with the growing unities of the human mind, the development of national self-consciousness is leading to the formation or rather revival of national languages everywhere. Don't you think that in America, in spite of constant touch between America and England, the English language is tending toward a definite modification and change?

Wells: I wonder if that is the case now. Forty or fifty years ago this would have been the case, but now in literature and in common speech it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish between Eng-
lish and American. There seems to be much more repercussion in
the other direction. Today we are elaborating and perfecting physical
methods of transmitting words. Translation is a bother. Take your
poems—do they not lose much by that process? If you had a
method of making them intelligible to all people at the same time,
it would be really wonderful.

TAGORE: Music of different nations has a common psychological
foundation, and yet that does not mean that national music should
not exist. The same thing is, in my opinion, probably true for litera-
ture.

WELLS: Modern music is going from one country to another with-
out loss—from Purcell to Bach, then Brahms, then Russian music,
then oriental. Music is of all things in the world the most interna-
tional.

TAGORE: May I add something? I have composed more than three
hundred pieces of music. They are all sealed from the West because
they cannot properly be given to you in your own notation. Per-
haps they would not be intelligible to your people even if I could get
them written down in European notation.

WELLS: The West may get used to your music.

TAGORE: Certain forms of tunes and melodies which move us pro-
foundly seem to baffle western listeners; yet, as you say, perhaps closer
acquaintance with them may gradually lead to their appreciation in
the West.

WELLS: Artistic expression in the future will probably be quite
different from what it is today; the medium will be the same and
comprehensible to all. Take radio, which links together the world.
And we cannot prevent further invention. Perhaps in the future,
when the present clamor for dialects and national languages in broad-
casting subsides and new discoveries in science are made, we shall
be conversing with one another through a common medium of
speech yet undreamt of.

TAGORE: We have to create the new psychology needed for this
age. We have to adjust ourselves to the new necessities and condi-
tions of civilization.

WELLS: Adjustments, terrible adjustments!

TAGORE: Do you think there are any fundamental racial difficulties?

WELLS: No. New races are appearing and reappearing, perpetual
fluctuations. There have been race mixtures from the earliest historical times; India is the supreme example of this. In Bengal, for instance, there has been an amazing mixture of races in spite of castes and other barriers.

Tagore: There is the question of race pride. Can the West fully acknowledge the East? If mutual acceptance is not possible, then I shall be very sorry for that country which rejects another’s culture. Study can bring no harm, though men like Dr. Haas and Henri Matisse seem to think that the eastern mind should not go outside eastern countries, and then everything will be all right.

Wells: I hope you disagree. So do I!

Tagore: It is regrettable that any race or nation should claim divine favoritism and assume inherent superiority to all others in the scheme of creation.

Wells: The supremacy of the West is only a question of probably the past hundred years. Before the battle of Lepanto the Turks were dominating the West; the voyage of Columbus was undertaken to avoid the Turks. Elizabethan writers and even their successors were struck by the wealth and the high material standards of the East. The history of western ascendancy is very brief indeed.

Tagore: Physical science of the nineteenth century probably has created this spirit of race superiority in the West. When the East assimilates this physical science, the tide may turn and take a normal course.

Wells: Modern science is not exactly European. A series of accidents and peculiar circumstances prevented some of the eastern countries from applying the discoveries made by humanists in other parts of the world. They themselves had once originated and developed a great many of the sciences that were later on taken up by the West and given greater perfection. Today, Japanese, Chinese and Indian names in the world of science are gaining due recognition.

Tagore: India has been in a bad situation.

Wells: When Macaulay imposed a third-rate literature and a poor system of education on India, Indians naturally resented it. No human being can live on Scott’s poetry. I believe that things are now changing. But, remain assured, we English were not better off. We were no less badly educated than the average Indian, probably even worse.
TAGORE: Our difficulty is that our contact with the great civilization of the West has not been a natural one. Japan has absorbed more of the western culture because she has been free to accept or reject according to her needs.

WELLS: It is a very bad story indeed, because there have been such great opportunities for knowing each other.

TAGORE: And then, the channels of education have become dry river beds, the current of our resources having systematically been diverted along other directions.

WELLS: I also am a member of a subject race. I am taxed enormously. I have to send my check—so much for military aviation, so much for the diplomatic machinery of government! You see, we suffer from the same evils. In India the tradition of officialdom is, of course, more unnatural and has been going on for a long time. The Moguls, before the English came, seem to have been as indiscriminate as our own people.

TAGORE: And yet there is a difference. The Mogul government was not scientifically efficient and mechanical to a degree. The Moguls wanted money, and so long as they could live in luxury they did not wish to interfere with the progressive village communities in India. The Muslim emperors did not dictate terms and force the hands of Indian educators and villagers. Now, for instance, the ancient educational systems of India are completely disorganized, and all indigenous educational effort has to depend on official recognition.

WELLS: “Recognition” by the state, and good-by to education!

TAGORE: I have often been asked what my plans are. My reply is that I have no scheme. My country, like every other, will evolve its own constitution; it will pass through its experimental phase and settle down into something probably quite different from what you or I expect.
Note on the Nature of Reality

Einstein: Do you believe in the Divine as isolated from the world?
Tagore: Not isolated. The infinite personality of man comprehends the universe. There cannot be anything that cannot be subsumed by the human personality, and this proves that the truth of the universe is human truth. I have taken a scientific fact to illustrate this—Matter is composed of protons and electrons, with gaps between them; but matter may seem to be solid. Similarly, humanity is composed of individuals, yet they have their interconnection of human relationship, which gives living solidarity to man's world. The entire universe is linked up with us in a similar manner, it is a human universe. I have pursued this thought through art, literature and the religious consciousness of man.

Einstein: There are two different conceptions about the nature of the universe: (1) The world as a unity dependent on humanity. (2) The world as a reality independent of the human factor.
Tagore: When our universe is in harmony with man, the eternal, we know it as truth, we feel it as beauty.

Einstein: This is a purely human conception of the universe.
Tagore: There can be no other conception. This world is a human world—the scientific view of it is also that of the scientific man. There is some standard of reason and enjoyment which gives it truth, the standard of eternal man, whose experiences are through our experiences.

Einstein: This is a realization of the human entity.
Tagore: Yes, one eternal entity. We have to realize it through our emotions and activities. We realize the supreme man who has no individual limitations through our limitations. Science is concerned with that which is not confined to individuals; it is the impersonal human world of truths. Religion realizes these truths and links them up with our deeper needs; our individual consciousness of truth gains universal significance. Religion applies values to truth, and we know truth as good through our own harmony with it.

Einstein: Truth, then, or beauty, is not independent of man?
Tagore. No.
EINSTEIN: If there would be no human beings any more, the Apollo of Belvedere would no longer be beautiful?
TAGORE: No.
EINSTEIN: I agree with regard to this conception of beauty, but not with regard to truth.
TAGORE: Why not? Truth is realized through man.
EINSTEIN: I cannot prove that my conception is right, but that is my religion.
TAGORE: Beauty is in the ideal of perfect harmony which is in the universal being; truth the perfect comprehension of the universal mind. We individuals approach it through our own mistakes and blunders, through our accumulated experience, through our illumined consciousness—how, otherwise, can we know truth?
EINSTEIN: I cannot prove scientifically that truth must be conceived as a truth that is valid independent of humanity; but I believe it firmly. I believe, for instance, that the Pythagorean theorem in geometry states something that is approximately true, independent of the existence of man. Anyway, if there is a reality independent of man there is also a truth relative to this reality; and in the same way the negation of the first engenders a negation of the existence of the latter.
TAGORE: Truth, which is one with the universal being, must essentially be human, otherwise whatever we individuals realize as true can never be called truth—at least the truth which is described as scientific and can only be reached through the process of logic; in other words, by an organ of thoughts which is human. According to Indian philosophy there is Brahman the absolute truth, which cannot be conceived by the isolation of the individual mind or described by words, but can only be realized by completely merging the individual in its infinity. But such a truth cannot belong to science. The nature of truth which we are discussing is an appearance—that is to say what appears to be true to the human mind and therefore is human, may be called maya, or part illusion.
EINSTEIN: So according to your conception, which may be the Indian conception, it is not the illusion of the individual, but of humanity as a whole.
TAGORE: In science we go through the discipline of eliminating the personal limitations of our individual minds and thus reach that
comprehension of truth which is in the mind of the universal man.

EINSTEIN: The problem begins, whether truth is independent of our consciousness.

TAGORE: What we call truth lies in the rational harmony between the subjective and objective aspects of reality, both of which belong to the super-personal man.

EINSTEIN: Even in our everyday life we feel compelled to ascribe a reality independent of man to the objects we use. We do this to connect the experiences of our senses in a reasonable way. For instance, if nobody is in this house, yet that table remains where it is.

TAGORE: Yes, it remains outside the individual mind, but not outside the universal mind. The table which I perceive is perceptible by the same kind of consciousness which I possess.

EINSTEIN: Our natural point of view in regard to the existence of truth apart from humanity cannot be explained or proved, but it is a belief which nobody can lack—no primitive beings even. We attribute to truth a super-human objectivity; it is indispensable for us, this reality which is independent of our existence and our experience and our mind—though we cannot say what it means.

TAGORE: Science has proved that the table as a solid object is an appearance, and therefore that which the human mind perceives as a table would not exist if that mind were naught. At the same time it must be admitted that the fact that the ultimate physical reality of the table is nothing but a multitude of separate revolving centers of electric forces also belongs to the human mind.

In the apprehension of truth there is conflict between the universal human mind and the same mind confined in the individual. The perpetual process of reconciliation is being carried on in our science and philosophy and in our ethics. In any case, if there be any truth absolutely unrelated to humanity then for us it is absolutely non-existing.

It is not difficult to imagine a mind to which the sequence of things happens not in space, but only in time like the sequence of notes in music. For such a mind its conception of reality is akin to the musical reality in which Pythagorean geometry can have no meaning. There is the reality of paper, infinitely different from the reality of literature. For the kind of mind possessed by the moth, which eats that paper, literature is absolutely non-existent, yet for man’s mind literature
has a greater value of truth than the paper itself. In a similar manner, if there be some truth which has no sensuous or rational relation to the human mind it will ever remain as nothing so long as we remain human beings.

**Einstein:** Then I am more religious than you are!

**Tagore:** My religion is in the reconciliation of the super-personal man, the universal human spirit, in my own individual being. This has been the subject of my Hibbert Lectures, which I have called "The Religion of Man."
To non-Bengali readers, Tagore's fame as a mystical poet, and his interest in education and public affairs, have contributed to the idea that when he did not sing, he preached. In reality, however, there is something in Tagore which is less intense and less formal, but just as exacting—his wit. In his humorous fables and sketches, an intellectual detachment and irony mingle with deep human feeling, and although any translation can only remotely suggest the flavor of the original, two are included in this volume as examples of an art form in which Tagore revealed an important part of himself and his concerns.

The Trial of the Horse is really the trial of man, whose cupidity and craftiness are perversions of nature's design. The gods frown at man's treatment of the horse, but man, in the Imperial tradition, protests that the harness is fitted for equestrian prosperity. This sketch (Ghoda) was originally composed in 1918, and later published in a book of sketches called Lipika (1922). Translated by Surendranath Tagore, it was included in The Parrot's Training and Other Stories (Visva-Bharati, Calcutta, 1944).

Big News, a parable of today, expresses the imminent conflict between the oars that labor and the sail that claims to direct the boat while doing so little. Though the boatman wants them both, the account has to be settled. And that is the big news: the need for a drastic readjustment. This sketch (Bado Khabar) is a portion of a dialogue taken from Galpa-Salpa, a collection of tales and fancies, disguised as grandfatherly prattle, which Tagore dictated in 1941, shortly before his death. It was translated into English by this editor, and included in The Parrot's Training and Other Stories.
Brahma, the creator, was nearing the end of his task of creation when a new idea struck him.

He sent for the Storekeeper and said: "O keeper of the stores, bring to my factory a quantity of each of the five elements. For I am ready to create another creature."

"Lord of the universe," the Storekeeper replied, "when in the first flush of creative extravagance you began to turn out such exaggerations as elephants and whales and pythons and tigers, you took no count of the stock. Now, all the elements that have density and force are nearly used up. The supply of earth and water and fire has become inconveniently scanty, while of air and ether there is as much as is good for us and a good deal more."

The four-headed deity looked perplexed and pulled at his four pairs of moustaches. At last he said: "The limitedness of material gives all the more scope to originality. Send me whatever you have left."

This time Brahma was excessively sparing with earth, water and fire. The new creature was not given either horns or claws, and his teeth were only meant for chewing, not for biting. The prudent care with which fire was used, made him a necessity in war without making him warlike.

This animal was the Horse.

The reckless expenditure of air and ether in his composition was amazing. And, in consequence, he perpetually struggled to outreach the wind, to outrun space itself. Other animals ran only when they had a reason, but the horse would run for no reason whatever, as if to run out of his own skin. He had no desire to chase, or to kill, but only to fly on and on until he dwindled into a dot, melted into a swoon, blurred into a shadow, and vanished into vacancy.

The Creator was glad. He had given habitation to his other creatures, forests to some, caves to others, but because of his enjoyment of the disinterested spirit of energy in the Horse, he gave him an open meadow under the eye of heaven.
By the side of this meadow lived Man.

Man has his delight in pillaging and piling things, and is never happy until they grow into a burden. When he saw this new creature pursuing the wind and kicking at the sky, he said to himself: "If only I could bind and secure this Horse, I could use his broad back for carrying my loads."

So one day he caught the Horse.

Man then put a saddle on the Horse's back and a spiky bit in his mouth. The horse regularly had hard rubbing and scrubbing to keep him fit, and there were the whip and spurs to remind him that it was wrong to have his own will.

Man also put high walls around the Horse, lest the creature might escape if left at large.

So it came to pass, that while the Tiger who had his forest remained in the forest, the Lion who had his cave remained in the cave, the Horse who once had his open meadow came to spend his days in a stable. Air and atmosphere had roused in the horse longings for deliverance, but Man swiftly delivered him into bondage.

When he felt that bondage did not suit him, the Horse kicked at the stable walls.

This hurt his hoofs more than it hurt the wall, yet some of the plaster came off and the wall lost its beauty.

Man felt aggrieved.

"What ingratitude!" he cried. "Do I not give him food and drink? Do I not keep highly-paid men-servants to watch over him day and night? Indeed, he is difficult to please."

In their desperate attempts to please the Horse, the men-servants fell upon him and so vigorously applied all their winning methods that he lost his power to kick, and a great deal more besides.

Then Man called his friends and neighbors together, and said to them exultingly: "Friends, did you ever see so devoted a steed as mine?"

"Never!" they replied. "He seems as still as ditch water and as mild as the religion you profess."

The Horse, as is well known, had no horns, no claws, no adequate teeth, at his birth. When on top of this, all kicking at the walls and
even into emptiness had been stopped, the only way to give vent to his feelings was to neigh.

But that disturbed Man's sleep.

Moreover, this neighing was not likely to impress the neighbors as devotion and thankfulness. So Man invented devices to shut the Horse's mouth.

But the voice cannot be completely suppressed as long as mistake is made of leaving any breath in the body; therefore a spasmodic moaning now and then came from his throat.

One day this noise reached Brahma's ears.

The Creator woke from his meditation. It gave him a start when he glanced at the meadow and saw no sign of the Horse.

"This is all your doing," cried Brahma, in anger to Yama, the god of death: "You have taken away the Horse!"

"Lord of all creatures!" Death replied: "All your worst suspicions you keep only for me. But most of the calamities in your beautiful world will be explained if you turn your eyes in the direction of Man."

Brahma looked below. He saw a small enclosure, walled in, from which came the dolorous moaning of his Horse.

Brahma frowned in anger.

"Unless you set free my Horse," he said, "I shall take care that he grows teeth and claws like the Tiger."

"It would be ungodly," cried Man "to encourage ferocity. All the same, if I may speak the plain truth about a creature of your own making, this Horse is not fit to be set free. It was for his eternal good that I built him this stable—this marvel of architecture."

Brahma was persistent.

"I bow to your wisdom," said Man, "but if, after seven days, you still think that your meadow is better for him than my stable, I will humbly admit defeat."

After this, Man set to work.

He let the Horse go free, but hobbled his front legs, and the result was so diverting that it was enough to make even a frog burst his sides with laughter.

Brahma, from the height of heaven, could see the comic gait of
his Horse, but not the tragic rope which hobbled him. He was mortified to find an earthly creature openly exposing his divine maker to ridicule.

"It was an absurd blunder of mine," he cried, "closely touching the sublime."

"Grandsire," said Man with a pathetic show of sympathy, "what can I do for this unfortunate creature? If there is a meadow in your heaven, I am willing to take the trouble to transport him thither."

"Take him back to your stable!" cried Brahma in dismay.

"Merciful God!" cried Man, "what a great burden it will be for mankind!"

"It is the burden of humanity," muttered Brahma.

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Big News

Said Kusmi: "You will give me all the big news; you promised to didn't you, Dadamashay? How else could I get educated?"

Answered Dadamashay: "But there would be such a sack of big news to carry, and so much rubbish in it."

"Why not leave those out."

Then little else would remain, and you would regard that remainder as small news. But that would be the real news."

"Give it to me—the real news."

"So I will."

"Well, Dadamashay, let me see what skill you have. Tell me the big news of these days, making it ever so small."

"Listen."

"Work was proceeding in peace."

In a mahajani boat a row started between the sail and the oars.

The oars came clattering to the court of the Boatman, and said: "This cannot be endured any longer. That braggart sail of yours, swelling himself, calls us chhoto lok because, tied night and day to the lower planks, we must toil, pushing the waters as we proceed,
while he moves by whim, not caring for the push of anyone’s hand. And so he is a hara lok. You must decide who is more worthy. If we are chhoto lok, the inferior ones, we shall resign in a body. Let us see how you make your boat move.”

The Boatman, seeing danger ahead, called the oars aside and whispered secretly: “Do not give ear to his words, brothers. That sail speaks an empty language. If you strong fellows did not work away, staking life and death, the boat would lie altogether inert. And that sail sits there in hollow luxury, perched on the top. At the slightest touch of stormy wind he flops, folds himself up, lies low on the boat’s thatch. Then all his vain flutterings are silenced, not a word from him at all. But in weal and woe, in danger and in crisis, on the way to the market and the ghat, you are my constant support. It is a pity that you have to carry that useless burden of luxury to and fro. Who says you are chhoto lok?”

But the Boatman was afraid, lest these words be overheard by the sail. So he came to him and whispered into his ear: “Mr. Sail, none can ever be compared with you. Who says that you drive the boat? That is the work of laborers. You move at your own pleasure, and your pals and comrades follow you at your slightest gesture. Whenever you feel out of breath, you flop down easily, and rest. Do not lend your ear, friend, to the parleying of those low-brdc oars; so firmly have I tied them up, that splutter as they may, they cannot but work as slaves.”

Hearing this, the sail stretched himself, and yawned mightily.

But the signs were not good. Those oars are hard-boned fellows; they now lie aslant, but who knows when they will stand up straight, slap at the sail and shatter his pride into shreds. Then the world will know that it is the oars who make the boat move, come storm or tornado, whether it be upstream or at ebb tide.

Asked Kusmi: “Your big news, is it so small as this? You are joking.”

Said Dadamashay: “Joking it seems to be, but soon this news will become big indeed.”

“And then?”

“Then your Dadamashay will practice keeping time with the strokes of those oars.”

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"And I?"

"Where the oars creak too much, you will pour a drop of oil."

Dadamashay continued: "True news appears small, like the seeds. And then comes the tree with its branches and foliage. Do you understand now?"

"So I do," said Kusmi. Her face showed that she had not understood. But Kusmi had one virtue: she would not admit to her Dadamashay that she did not understand. That she is less clever than Iru Mashi is better kept concealed.
Tagore was sixteen when he made his first appearance on the stage; his brother Jyotirindranath had written a comedy based on Molière’s *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*, and Rabindranath was given the leading role. When he was twenty, his first play, *Valmiki Pratibha (The Genius of Valmiki)*, was staged in the family residence at Calcutta. From that time on, Tagore independently wrote and produced plays which were quite distinct from the main body of Bengali drama. His plays achieved a kind of lyrical action, a rhythmic treatment of emotions which moved around one idea. He was impressed more with music than action, more with idea than story. He said himself that the main principle in his plays was “the play of feeling and not of action.” It is important to state this because it is precisely this lyricism and this music, in addition to the many dance scenes, which, at the same time that they constitute the genius of the writing, defy translation.

Tagore’s early plays reach their highest dramatic point in *Visarjan*, 1890. The English translation which Tagore approved but slightly revised in 1917 as *Sacrifice* shows several departures from the original Bengali. Different scenes are amalgamated, subplots are omitted, and long declamations are severely cut. It is interesting to note that Edward Thompson, after seeing Tagore himself act the part of Raghupati, wrote: “How moving he can be as an actor only this generation can realize.”

With *Dakghar (Post Office)* in 1912, Tagore’s plays became more philosophical-symbolical. The original Bengali version was performed late in 1917 before an audience which included the then less known Mahatma Gandhi. It is probably the only Tagore play which was successfully performed abroad before it was staged in India (The Irish Theatre staged it in London in 1914). Yeats said of *Post Office* that, “on the stage, the
little play shows that it is very perfectly constructed and conveys to the right audience an emotion of gentleness and peace.” The play was also popular in Berlin and Paris. Dakghar was translated into English in 1914, at least in its first drafts, by Devavrata Mookerjee, but was slightly revised by Tagore.

Chandalika represents Tagore’s later drama (1933). It is based on a Buddhist legend in which Ananda, the Buddha’s famous disciple, stopped one hot day and asked for some water from a chandalika, a girl belonging to the lowest (“untouchable”) caste. The girl gave him water and in so doing fell in love; she induced her mother, who practiced primitive magic, to work a spell on the monk. It was successful, and Ananda came to the girl’s house at night, but as the girl prepared the bed, he was overcome with shame and prayed to the Buddha who answered by breaking the magic spell, thus allowing Ananda to leave the house. Tagore transformed the legend into a drama of intense spiritual conflict in which a very sensitive girl who has been condemned by birth to a despised caste is suddenly awakened to the consciousness of her destiny as a woman. By asking her for water, the Buddhist monk teaches her to judge herself, not by the artificial standards of society, but by her capacity for love and service. Since her own self is the most she can give, and since no one is more worthy of her gift, she yearns to offer herself to the monk. But when the mother works her primitive spell and Ananda appears, degraded and shamed, at her door, Prakriti throws herself at his feet and asks forgiveness. The mother revokes the spell, but dies in the process, and the chandalika who learns that love does not claim possession, but gives freedom, is redeemed a second time.

Krishna Kripalani prepared an English translation of Chandalika in 1938 for the Visva-Bharati Quarterly, and Marjorie Sykes translated it into English in 1950 for her edition of Three Plays by Rabindranath Tagore (Geoffrey Cumberlege: Oxford University Press). The translation offered here, for the first time in print, is based on the two previous translations, with some changes by Robert Steele and Donald Junkins, of Boston University. Some of the metaphors in Tagore’s Bengali text have been omitted in order that the clarity of the original might be preserved. Likewise, some words have been added, not to inject new or different meaning, but to preserve the force of the Bengali text. Omissions which occur both here and in the other English translations are explained in the Notes, page 385.
Sacrifice

A Temple in Tippera

(Enters Gunavati, the Queen)

Gunavati: Have I offended thee, dread Mother? Thou grantest children to the beggar woman, who sells them to live, and to the adulteress, who kills them to save herself from infamy, and here am I, the Queen, with all the world lying at my feet, hankering in vain for the baby-touch at my bosom, to feel the stir of a dearer life within my life. What sin have I committed, Mother, to merit this,—to be banished from the mothers’ heaven?

(Enters Raghupati, the priest)

O Master, have I ever been remiss in my worship? And my husband, is he not godlike in his purity? Then why has the Goddess who weaves the web of this world-illusion assigned my place in the barren waste of childlessness?

Raghupati: Our Mother is all caprice, she knows no law, our sorrows and joys are mere freaks of her mind. Have patience, daughter, today we shall offer special sacrifice in your name to please her.

Gunavati: Accept my grateful obeisance, father. My offerings are already on their way to the temple,—the red bunches of hibiscus and beasts of sacrifice.

[They go out

(Enter Govinda, the King; Jaising, the servant of the temple; and Aparna, the beggar girl)

Jaising: What is your wish, Sire?

Govinda: Is it true that this poor girl’s pet goat has been brought by force to the temple to be killed? Will Mother accept such a gift with grace?

Jaising: King, how are we to know from whence the servants collect our daily offerings of worship? But, my child, why is this weeping? Is it worthy of you to shed tears for that which Mother herself has taken?

Aparna: Mother! I am his mother. If I return late to my hut, he refuses his grass, and bleats, with his eyes on the road. I take
him up in my arms when I come, and share my food with him. He knows no other mother but me.

JAISING: Sire, could I make the goat live again, by giving up a portion of my life, gladly would I do it. But how can I restore that which Mother herself has taken?

APARNA: Mother has taken? It is a lie. Not mother, but demon.

JAISING: Oh, the blasphemy!

APARNA: Mother, art thou there to rob a poor girl of her love? Where is the throne before which to condemn thee? Tell me, King.

GOVINDA: I am silent, my child. I have no answer.

APARNA: This blood-streak running down the steps, is it his? Oh, my darling, when you trembled and cried for dear life, why did your call not reach my heart through the whole deaf world?

JAISING (to the image): I have served thee from my infancy, Mother Kali, yet I understand thee not. Does pity only belong to weak mortals, and not to gods? Come with me, my child, let me do for you what I can. Help must come from man when it is denied by the gods.  

[JAISING and APARNA go out

(Enter Raghubati; Nakshatra, who is the King's brother; and the courtiers)

ALL: Victory be to the King!

GOVINDA: Know you all, that I forbid shedding of blood in the temple from today for ever.

MINISTER: You forbid sacrifice to the Goddess?

GENERAL NAYAN RAI: Forbid sacrifice?

NAKSHATRA: How terrible! Forbid sacrifice?

RAGHUPATI: Is it a dream?

GOVINDA: No dream, father. It is awakening. Mother came to me, in a girl's disguise, and told me that she cannot suffer blood.

RAGHUPATI: She has been drinking blood for ages. Whence comes this loathing all of a sudden?

GOVINDA: No, she never drank blood, she kept her face averted.

RAGHUPATI: I warn you, think and consider. You have no power to alter laws laid down in scriptures.

GOVINDA: God's words are above all laws.
RAGHUPATI: Do not add pride to your folly. Do you have the effrontery to say that you alone have heard God's words, and not I?

NAKSHATRA: It is strange that the King should have heard from gods and not the priest.

GOVINDA: God's words are ever ringing in the world, and he who is wilfully deaf cannot hear them.

RAGHUPATI: Atheist! Apostate!

GOVINDA: Father, go to your morning service, and declare to all worshipers that from hence they will be punished with banishment who shed creatures' blood in their worship of the Mother of all creatures.

RAGHUPATI: Is this your last word?

GOVINDA: Yes.

RAGHUPATI: Then curse upon you! Do you, in your enormous pride, imagine that the Goddess, dwelling in your land, is your subject? Do you presume to bind her with your laws and rob her of her dues? You shall never do it. I declare it,—I who am her servant.

[ Goes

NAYAN RAI: Pardon me, Sire, but have you the right?

MINISTER: Sin can never have such a long lease of life. Could they be sinful,—the rites that have grown old at the feet of the Goddess?

(The King is silent)

NAKSHATRA: Indeed they could not be.

MINISTER: Our ancestors have performed these rites with reverence; can you have the heart to insult them?

(The King remains silent)

NAYAN RAI: That which has the sanction of ages, have you the right to remove it?

GOVINDA: No more doubts and disputes. Go and spread my order in all my lands.

MINISTER: But, Sire, the Queen has offered her sacrifice for this morning's worship; it is come near the temple gate.

GOVINDA: Send it back.

[ He goes

MINISTER: What is this?

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NAKSHATRA: Are we, then, to come down to the level of Buddhists, and treat animals as if they have their right to live? Preposterous! [They all go out

(Enters Raghupati,—Jaising following him with a jar of water to wash his feet)

JAISING: Father.
RHAGUPATI: Go!
JAISING: Here is some water.
RHAGUPATI: No need of it!
JAISING: Your clothes.
RHAGUPATI: Take them away!
JAISING: Have I done anything to offend you?
RHAGUPATI: Leave me alone. The shadows of evil have thickened. The King's throne is raising its insolent head above the temple altar. Ye gods of these degenerate days, are ye ready to obey the King's laws with bowed heads, fawning upon him like his courtiers? Have only men and demons combined to usurp gods' dominions in this world, and is Heaven powerless to defend its honor? But there remain the Brahmins, though the gods be absent; and the King's throne will supply fuel to the sacrificial fire of their anger. My child, my mind is distracted.

JAISING: Whatever has happened, father?
RHAGUPATI: I cannot find words to say. Ask the Mother Goddess who has been defied.

JAISING: Defied? By whom?
RHAGUPATI: By King Govinda.

JAISING: King Govinda defied Mother Kali?
RHAGUPATI: Defied you and me, all scriptures, all countries, all time, defied Mahākāli, the Goddess of the endless stream of time,—sitting upon that puny little throne of his.

JAISING: King Govinda?
RHAGUPATI: Yes, yes, your King Govinda, the darling of your heart. Ungrateful! I have given all my love to bring you up, and yet King Govinda is dearer to you than I am.

JAISING: The child raises its arms to the full moon, sitting upon his father's lap. You are my father, and my full moon is King Govinda. Then it is true, what I hear from people, that our King
forbids all sacrifice in the temple? But in this we cannot obey him.

RAGHUPATI: Banishment is for him who does not obey.

JAISING: It is no calamity to be banished from a land where Mother's worship remains incomplete. No, so long as I live, the service of the temple shall be fully performed. [They go out

(Enter Gunavati and her attendant)

gunavati: What is it you say? The Queen's sacrifice turned away from the temple gate? Is there a man in this land who carries more than one head on his shoulders, that he could dare think of it? Who is that doomed creature?

attendant: I am afraid to name him.

gunavati: Afraid to name him, when I ask you? Whom do you fear more than me?

attendant: Pardon me.

gunavati: Only last evening court minstrels came to sing my praise, Brahmins blessed me, the servants silently took their orders from my mouth. What can have happened in the meantime that things have become completely upset,—the Goddess refused her worship, and the Queen her authority? Was Tripura a dream-land? Give my salutation to the priest, and ask him to come. [Attendant goes out

(Enters Govinda)

gunavati: Have you heard, King? My offerings have been sent back from Mother's temple.

govinda: I know it.

gunavati: You know it, and and yet bear the insult?

govinda: I beg to ask your pardon for the culprit.

gunavati: I know, King, your heart is merciful, but this is no mercy. It is feebleness. If your kindness hampers you, leave the punishment in my hand. Only, tell me, who is he?

govinda: It is I, my Queen. My crime was in nothing else but having given you pain.

gunavati: I do not understand you.

govinda: From today shedding of blood in gods' temples is forbidden in my land.
GUNAVATI: Who forbids it?
GOVINDA: Mother herself.
GUNAVATI: Who heard it?
GOVINDA: I.
GUNAVATI: You! That makes me laugh. The Queen of all the world comes to the gate of Tripura's King with her petition.
GOVINDA: Not with her petition, but with her sorrow.
GUNAVATI: Your dominion is outside the temple limit. Do not send your commands there, where they are impertinent.
GOVINDA: The command is not mine, it is Mother's.
GUNAVATI: If you have no doubt in your decision, do not cross faith. Let me perform my worship according to my light.
GOVINDA: I promised my Goddess to prevent sacrifice of life in her temple, and I must carry it out.
GUNAVATI: I also promised my Goddess the blood of three hundred kids and one hundred buffaloes, and I will carry it out. You may leave me now.
GOVINDA: As you wish. [He goes out

(Enters Raghupati)

GUNAVATI: My offerings have been turned back from the temple, father.
RAGHUPATI: The worship offered by the most ragged of all beggars is not less precious than yours, Queen. But the misfortune is that Mother has been deprived. The misfortune is that the King's pride is growing into a bloated monster, obstructing divine grace, fixing its angry red eyes upon all worshipers.
GUNAVATI: What will come of all this, father?
RAGHUPATI: That is only known to her, who fashions this world with her dreams. But this is certain, that the throne which casts its shadow upon Mother's shrine will burst like a bubble, vanishing in the void.
GUNAVATI: Have mercy and save us, father.
RAGHUPATI: Ha, ha! I am to save you,—you, the consort of a King who boasts of his kingdom in the earth and in heaven as well, before whom the gods and the Brahmins must—Oh, shame! Oh, the evil age, when the Brahmin's futile curse recoils upon himself, to sting him into madness.

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(About to tear his sacrificial thread)

GUNAVATI (preventing him): Have mercy upon me.
RAGHUPTA: Then give back to Brahmins what are theirs by right.
GUNAVATI: Yes, I will. Go, master, to your worship and nothing will hinder you.
RAGHUPTA: Indeed your favor overwhelsms me. At the merest glance of your eyes gods are saved from ignominy and the Brahmin is restored to his sacred offices. Thrive and grow fat and sleek till the dire day of judgment comes. [Goes out

(Re-enters King Govinda)

GOVINDA: My Queen, the shadow of your angry brows hides all light from my heart.
GUNAVATI: Go! Do not bring curse upon this house.
GOVINDA: Woman's smile removes all curse from the house, her love is God's grace.
GUNAVATI: Go, and never show your face to me again.
GOVINDA: I shall come back, my Queen, when you remember me.
GUNAVATI (clinging to the King's feet): Pardon me, King. Have you become so hard that you forget to respect woman's pride? Do you not know, beloved, that thwarted love takes the disguise of anger?
GOVINDA: I would die, if I lost my trust in you. I know, my love, that clouds are for moments only, and the sun is for all days.
GUNAVATI: Yes, the clouds will pass by, God's thunder will return to his armory, and the sun of all days will shine upon the traditions of all time. Yes, my King, order it so, that Brahmins be restored to their rights, the Goddess to her offerings, and the King's authority to its earthly limits.
GOVINDA: It is not the Brahmin's right to violate the eternal good. The creature's blood is not the offering for gods. And it is within the rights of the King and the peasant alike to maintain truth and righteousness.
GUNAVATI: I prostrate myself on the ground before you; I beg at your feet. The custom that comes through all ages is not the King's own. Like heaven's air, it belongs to all men. Yet your Queen begs it of you, with clasped hands, in the name of your people.
Can you still remain silent, proud man, refusing entreaties of love in favor of duty which is doubtful? Then go, go, go from me. [They go

(Enter Raghupati, Jaising, and Nayan Rai)

RAGHUPATI: General, your devotion to Mother is well known.
NAYAN RAI: It runs through generations of my ancestors.
RAGHUPATI: Let this sacred love give you indomitable courage. Let it make your sword-blade mighty as God's thunder, and win its place above all powers and positions of this world.
NAYAN RAI: The Brahmin's blessings will never be in vain.
RAGHUPATI: Then I bid you collect your soldiers and strike Mother's enemy down to the dust.
NAYAN RAI: Tell me, father, who is the enemy?
RAGHUPATI: Govinda.
NAYAN RAI: Our King?
RAGHUPATI: Yes, attack him with all your force.
NAYAN RAI: It is evil advice. Father, is this to try me?
RAGHUPATI: Yes, it is to try you, to know for certain whose servant you are. Give up all hesitation. Know that the Goddess calls, and all earthly bonds must be severed.
NAYAN RAI: I have no hesitation in my mind. I stand firm in my post, where my Goddess has placed me.
RAGHUPATI: You are brave.
NAYAN RAI: Am I the basest of Mother's servants, that the order should come for me to turn traitor? She herself stands upon the faith of man's heart. Can she ask me to break it? Then today comes to dust the King, and tomorrow the Goddess herself.

JAISING: Noble words!
RAGHUPATI: The King, who has turned traitor to Mother, has lost all claims to your allegiance.
NAYAN RAI: Drive me not, father, into a wilderness of debates. I know only one path,—the straight path of faith and truth. This stupid servant of Mother shall never swerve from that highway of honor. [Goes out

JAISING: Let us be strong in our faith as he is, Master. Why ask the aid of soldiers? We have the strength within ourselves for the task given to us from above. Open the temple gate wide, father.
Sound the drum. Come, come, O citizens, to worship her who takes all fear away from our hearts. Come, Mother’s children.

(Citizens come)

FIRST CITIZEN: Come, come, we are called.
ALL: Victory to Mother!

(They sing and dance)

The dread Mother dances in the battlefield,
Her lolling tongue burns like a red flame of fire,
Her dark tresses fly in the sky, sweeping away the sun and stars,
Red streams of blood run from her cloud-black limbs,
And the world trembles and cracks under her tread.

JAISING: Do you see the beasts of sacrifice coming toward the temple,
driven by the Queen’s attendants?

(They cry)

Victory to Mother! Victory to our Queen!
RAGHUPATI: Jaising, make haste and get ready for the worship.
JAISING: Everything is ready, father.
RAGHUPATI: Send a man to call Prince Nakshatra in my name.

[Jaising goes. Citizens sing and dance

GOVINDA: Silence, Raghupati! Do you dare to disregard my order?
RAGHUPATI: Yes, I do.
GOVINDA: Then you are not for my land.
RAGHUPATI: No, my land is there, where the King’s crown kisses the dust. No! Citizens! Let Mother’s offerings be brought in here.

(They beat drums)

GOVINDA: Silence! (To his attendants.) Ask my General to come. Raghupati, you drive me to call soldiers to defend God’s right. I feel the shame of it; for the force of arms only reveals man’s weakness.

RAGHUPATI: Skeptic, are you so certain in your mind that Brahmins have lost the ancient fire of their sacred wrath? No, its flame will burst out from my heart to burn your throne into ashes. If it does not, then I shall throw into the fire the scriptures, and my
Brahmin pride, and all the arrant lies that fill our temple shrines in the guise of the divine.

(Enter General Nayan Rai and Chandpal, who is the second in command of the army)

GOVINDA: Stand here with your soldiers to prevent the sacrifice of life in the temple.

NAYAN RAI: Pardon me, Sire. The King’s servant is powerless in the temple of God.

GOVINDA: General, it is not for you to question my order. You are to carry out my words. Their merits and demerits belong only to me.

NAYAN RAI: I am your servant, my King, but I am a man above all. I have reason and my religion. I have my King,—and also my God.

GOVINDA: Then surrender your sword to Chandpal. He will protect the temple from the pollution of blood.

NAYAN RAI: Why to Chandpal? This sword was given to my forefather by your royal ancestors. If you want it back, I will give it up to you. Be witness, my fathers, who are in the heroes’ paradise—the sword that you made sacred with your loyal faith and bravery, I surrender to my King. [Goes out]

RAGHUPATI: The Brahmin’s curse has begun its work already.

(Enters Jaising)

Jaising: The beasts have been made ready for the sacrifice.

GOVINDA: Sacrifice?

Jaising: King, listen to my earnest entreaties. Do not stand in the way, hiding the Goddess, man as you are.

RAGHUPATI: Shame, Jaising! Rise up and ask my pardon. I am your Master. Your place is at my feet, not the King’s. Fool! Do you ask the King’s sanction to do God’s service? Leave alone the worship and the sacrifice. Let us wait and see how his pride prevails in the end. Come away. [They go out]

(Enters Aparna)

APARNA: Where is Jaising? He is not here, but only you,—the image whom nothing can move. You rob us of all our best without uttering a word. We pine for love, and die beggars for want of
it. Yet it comes to you unasked, though you need it not. Like a grave, you hoard it under your miserly stone, keeping it from the use of the yearning world. Jaising, what happiness do you find from her? What can she speak to you? O my heart, my famished heart!

(Enters Raghupati)

RAGHU PATI: Who are you?
APARNA: I am a beggar girl. Where is Jaising?
RAGHU PATI: Leave this place at once. I know you are haunting this temple to steal Jaising's heart from the Goddess.
APARNA: Has the Goddess anything to fear from me? I fear her.

[She goes out

(Enter Jaising and Prince Nakshatra)

NAKSHATRA: Why have you called me?
RAGHU PATI: Last night the Goddess told me in a dream that you shall become king within a week.
NAKSHATRA: Ha, ha, this is news indeed.
RAGHU PATI: Yes, you shall be king.
NAKSHATRA: I cannot believe it.
RAGHU PATI: You doubt my words?
NAKSHATRA: I do not want to doubt them. But suppose, by chance, it never comes to pass.
RAGHU PATI: No, it shall be true.
NAKSHATRA: But, tell me, how can it ever become true?
RAGHU PATI: The Goddess thirsts for the King's blood.
NAKSHATRA: The King's blood?
RAGHU PATI: You must offer it to her before you can be king.
NAKSHATRA: I know not where to get it.
RAGHU PATI: There is King Govinda.—Jaising, keep still.—Do you understand? Kill him in secret. Bring his blood, while warm, to the altar.—Jaising, leave this place if you cannot remain still—
NAKSHATRA: But he is my brother, and I love him.
RAGHU PATI: Your sacrifice will be all the more precious.
NAKSHATRA: But, father, I am content to remain as I am. I do not want the kingdom.
RAGHU PATI: There is no escape for you, because the Goddess com-
mands it. She is thirsting for blood from the King's house. If your brother is to live, then you must die.

NAKSHATRA: Have pity on me, father.
RAGHUPATI: You shall never be free in life, or in death, until her bidding is done.
NAKSHATRA: Advise me, then, how to do it.
RAGHUPATI: Wait in silence. I will tell you what to do when the time comes. And now, go. [Nakshatra goes]
JAINING: What is it that I heard? Merciful Mother, is it your bidding?
To ask brother to kill brother? Master, how could you say that it was Mother's own wish?
RAGHUPATI: There was no other means but this to serve my Goddess.
JAINING: Means? Why means? Mother, have you not your own sword to wield with your own hand? Must your wish burrow underground, like a thief, to steal in secret? Oh, the sin!
RAGHUPATI: What do you know about sin?
JAINING: What I have learnt from you.
RAGHUPATI: Then come and learn your lesson once again from me.
Sin has no meaning in reality. To kill is but to kill—it is neither sin nor anything else. Do you not know that the dust of this earth is made of countless killings? Old Time is ever writing the chronicle of the transient life of creatures in letters of blood.
Killing is in the wilderness, in the habitations of man, in birds' nests, in insects' holes, in the sea, in the sky; there is killing for life, for sport, for nothing whatever. The world is ceaselessly killing; and the great Goddess Kali, the spirit of ever-changing time, is standing with her thirsty tongue hanging down from her mouth, with her cup in hand, into which is running the red lifeblood of the world, like juice from the crushed cluster of grapes.
JAINING: Stop, Master. Is, then, love a falsehood and mercy a mockery, and the one thing true, from beginning of time, the lust for destruction? Would it not have destroyed itself long ago? You are playing with my heart, my Master. Look there, she is gazing at me with her sweet mocking smile. My bloodthirsty Mother, wilt thou accept my blood? Shall I plunge this knife into my breast and make an end to my life, as thy child, for evermore? The lifeblood flowing in these veins, is it so delicious to thee?
O my Mother, my bloodthirsty Mother!—Master, did you call me? I know you wanted my heart to break its bounds in pain overflowing my Mother's fee. This is the true sacrifice. But the King's blood! The Mother, who is thirsting for our love, you accuse of bloodthirstiness!

RAGHUPATI: Then let the sacrifice be stopped in the temple.

JAISING: Yes, let it be stopped.—No, no, Master, you know what is right and what is wrong. The heart's laws are not the laws of scripture. Eyes cannot see with their own light—the light must come from the outside. Pardon me, Master, pardon my ignorance. Tell me, father, is it true that the Goddess seeks the King's blood?

RAGHUPATI: Alas, child, have you lost your faith in me?

JAISING: My world stands upon my faith in you. If the Goddess must have the King's blood, let me bring it to her. I will never allow a brother to kill his brother.

RAGHUPATI: But there can be no evil in carrying out God's wishes.

JAISING: No, it must be good, and I will earn the merit of it.

RAGHUPATI: But, my boy, I have reared you from your childhood, and you have grown close to my heart. I can never bear to lose you, by any chance.

JAISING: I will not let your love for me be soiled with sin. Release Prince Nakshatra from his promise.

RAGHUPATI: I shall think, and decide tomorrow. [He goes

JAISING: Deeds are better, however cruel they may be, than the hell of thinking and doubting. You are right, my Master; truth is in your words. To kill is no sin, to kill brother is no sin, to kill the king is no sin.—Where do you go, my brothers? To the fair at Nishiput? There the women are to dance? Oh, this world is pleasant! And the dancing limbs of the girls are beautiful. In what careless merriment the crowds flew through the roads, making the sky ring with their laughter and song. I will follow them.

(Enters Raghubati)

RAGHUPATI: Jaising.

JAISING: I do not know you. I drift with the crowd. Why ask me to stop? Go your own way.

RAGHUPATI: Jaising.

JAISING: The road is straight before me. With an alms-bowl in hand
and the beggar girl as my sweetheart I shall walk on. Who says that the world’s ways are difficult? Anyhow we reach the end—the end where all laws and rules are no more, where the errors and hurts of life are forgotten, where is rest, eternal rest. What is the use of scriptures, and the teacher and his instructions?—My Master, my father, what wild words are these of mine? I was living in a dream. There stands the temple, cruel and immovable as truth. What was your order, my teacher? I have not forgotten it. (Bringing out the knife.) I am sharpening your words in my mind, till they become one with this knife in keenness. Have you any other order to give me?

RAGHUPATI: My boy, my darling, how can I tell you how deep is my love for you?

JAIISING: No, Master, do not tell me of love. Let me think only of duty. Love, like the green grass, and the trees, and life’s music, is only for the surface of the world. It comes and vanishes like a dream. But underneath is duty, like the rude layers of stone, like a huge load that nothing can move. [They go out

(Enter Govinda and Chandpal)

CHANDPAL: Sire, I warn you to be careful.

GOVINDA: Why? What do you mean?

CHANDPAL: I have overheard a conspiracy to take away your life.

GOVINDA: Who wants my life?

CHANDPAL: I am afraid to tell you, lest the news become to you more deadly than the knife itself. It was Prince Nakshatra, who—

GOVINDA: Nakshatra?

CHANDPAL: He has promised to Raghupati to bring your blood to the Goddess.

GOVINDA: To the Goddess? Then I cannot blame him. For a man loses his humanity when it concerns his gods. You go to your work and leave me alone. [Chandpal goes out

(Addressing the image.) Accept these flowers, Goddess, and let your creatures live in peace. Mother, those who are weak in this world are so helpless, and those who are strong are so cruel. Greed is pitiless, ignorance blind, and pride takes no heed when it crushes the small under its foot. Mother, do not raise your sword and lick your lips for blood; do not set brother against
brother, and woman against man. If it is your desire to strike me by the hand of one I love, then let it be fulfilled. For the sin has to ripen to its ugliest limits before it can burst and die a hideous death; and when the King’s blood is shed by a brother’s hand, then lust for blood will disclose its demon face, leaving its disguise as a goddess. If such be your wish I bow my head to it.

(Jaising rushes in)

Jaising: Tell me, Goddess, dost thou truly want the King’s blood? Ask it in thine own voice, and thou shalt have it.

A Voice: I want King’s blood.

Jaising: King, say your last prayer, for your time has come.

Govinda: What makes you say it, Jaising?

Jaising: Did you not hear what the Goddess said?

Govinda: It was not the Goddess. I heard the familiar voice of Raghupati.

Jaising: The voice of Raghupati? No, no! Drive me not from doubt to doubt. It is all the same, whether the voice comes from the Goddess, or from my Master.—

(He unsheathes his knife, and then throws it away)

Listen to the cry of thy children, Mother. Let there be only flowers, the beautiful flowers for thy offerings—no more blood. They are red even as blood—these bunches of hibiscus. They have come out of the heart-burst of the earth, pained at the slaughter of her children. Accept this. Thou must accept this. I defy thy anger. Blood thou shalt never have. Redden thine eyes. Raise thy sword. Bring thy furies of destruction. I do not fear thee.—King, leave this temple to its Goddess, and go to your men. [Govinda goes Alas, alas, in a moment I gave up all that I had, my Master, my Goddess.

(Raghupati comes)

Raghupati: I have heard all. Traitor, you have betrayed your master.

Jaising: Punish me, father.

Raghupati: What punishment will you have?

Jaising: Punish me with my life.
RACHUPATI: No, that is nothing. Take your oath touching the feet of the Goddess.
JAISING: I touch her feet.
RACHUPATI: Say, I will bring kingly blood to the altar of the Goddess before it is midnight.
JAISING: I will bring kingly blood to the altar of the Goddess before it is midnight. [They go out

(Enters Gunavati)

GUNAVATI: I failed. I had hoped that if I remained hard and cold for some days he would surrender. Such faith I had in my power, vain woman that I am. I showed my sullen anger, and remained away from him; but it was fruitless. Woman's anger is like a diamond's glitter; it only shines, but cannot burn. I wish it were like thunder, bursting upon the King's house, startling him from his sleep, and dashing his pride to the ground.

(Enters the boy Druva)

GUNAVATI: Where are you going?
DROVA: I am called by the King. [Goes out
GUNAVATI: There goes the darling of the King's heart. He has robbed my unborn children of their father's love, usurped their right to the first place in the King's breast. O Mother Kali, your creation is infinite and full of wonders, only send a child to my arms in merest whim, a tiny little warm living flesh to fill my lap, and I shall offer you whatever you wish. (Enters Nakshatra.) Prince Nakshatra, why do you turn back? I am a mere woman, weak and without weapon; am I so fearful?
NAKSHATRA: No, do not call me.
GUNAVATI: Why? What harm is in that?
NAKSHATRA: I do not want to be a king.
GUNAVATI: But why are you so excited?
NAKSHATRA: May the King live long, and may I die as I am—a prince.
GUNAVATI: Die as quick as you can; have I ever said anything against it?
NAKSHATRA: Then tell me what you want of me.
GUNAVATI: The thief that steals the crown is awaiting you—remove him. Do you understand?

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NAKSHATRA: Yes, except who the thief is.
GUNAVATTI: That boy, Druva. Do you not see how he is growing in
the King’s lap, till one day he reaches the crown?
NAKSHATRA: Yes, I have often thought of it. I have seen my brother
putting his crown on the boy’s head in play.
GUNAVATTI: Playing with the crown is a dangerous game. If you do
not remove the player, he will make a game of you.
NAKSHATRA: Yes, I do not like it.
GUNAVATTI: Offer him to Kali. Have you not heard that Mother is
thirsting for blood?
NAKSHATRA: But, sister, this is not my business.
GUNAVATTI: Fool, can you feel yourself safe, so long as Mother is not
appeased? Blood she must have; save your own, if you can.
NAKSHATRA: But she wants the King’s blood.
GUNAVATTI: Who told you that?
NAKSHATRA: I know it from one to whom the Goddess herself sends
her dreams.
GUNAVATTI: Then that boy must die for the King. His blood is more
precious to your brother than his own, and the King can only be
saved by paying the price, which is more than his life.
NAKSHATRA: I understand.
GUNAVATTI: Then lose no time. Run after him. He is not gone far.
But remember. Offer him in my name.
NAKSHATRA: Yes, I will.
GUNAVATTI: The Queen’s offerings have been turned back from
Mother’s gate. Pray to her that she may forgive me. [They go out
(Enters Jaising)

JAISING: Goddess, is there any little thing that yet remains out of the
wreck of thee? If there be but a faintest spark of thy light in the
remotest of the stars of evening, answer my cry, though thy voice
be the feeblest. Say to me, “Child, here I am.”—No, she is no-
where. She is naught. But take pity upon Jaising, O Illusion, and
for him become true. Art thou so irredeemably false, that not
even my love can send the slightest tremor of life through thy
nothingness? O fool, for whom have you upturned your cup of
life, emptying it to the last drop?—for this unanswering void—
truthless, merciless, and motherless?

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Aparna, they drive you away from the temple: yet you come back over and over again. For you are true, and truth cannot be banished. We enshrine falsehood in our temple, with all devotion; yet she is never there. Leave me not, Aparna. Sit here by my side. Why are you so sad, my darling? Do you miss some god, who is god no longer? But is there any need of god in this little world of ours? Let us be fearlessly godless and come closer to each other. They want our blood. And for this they have come down to the dust of our earth, leaving their magnificence of heaven. For in their heaven there are no men, no creatures, who can suffer. No, my girl, there is no Goddess.

Aparna: Then leave this temple, and come away with me.

Jaising: Leave this temple? Yes, I will leave. Alas, Aparna, I must leave. Yet I cannot leave it, before I have paid my last dues to the—But let that be. Come closer to me, my love. Whisper something to my ears which will overflow this life with sweetness, flooding death itself.

Aparna: Words do not flow when the heart is full.

Jaising: Then lean your head on my breast. Let the silence of two eternities, life and death, touch each other. But no more of this. I must go.

Aparna: Jaising, do not be cruel. Can you not feel what I have suffered?

Jaising: Am I cruel? Is this your last word to me? Cruel as that block of stone, whom I called Goddess? Aparna, my beloved, if you were the Goddess, you would know what fire is this that burns my heart. But you are my Goddess. Do you know how I know it?

Aparna: Tell me.

Jaising: You bring to me your sacrifice every moment, as a mother does to her child. God must be all sacrifice, pouring out his life in all creation.

Aparna: Jaising, come, let us leave this temple and go away together.

Jaising: Save me, Aparna, have mercy upon me and leave me. I have only one object in my life. Do not usurp its place.

[Rushes out]
APARNA: Again and again I have suffered. But my strength is gone. My heart breaks. [She goes out

(Enter Raghupati and Prince Nakshatra)

RAGHUPATI: Prince, where have you kept the boy?
NAKSHATRA: He is in the room where the vessels for worship are kept. He has cried himself to sleep. I think I shall never be able to bear it when he wakes up again.

RAGHUPATI: Jaising was of the same age when he came to me. And I remember how he cried till he slept at the feet of the Goddess—the temple lamp dimly shining on his tear-stained child-face. It was a stormy evening like this.

NAKSHATRA: Father, delay not. I wish to finish it all while he is sleeping. His cry pierces my heart like a knife.

RAGHUPATI: I will drug him to sleep if he wakes up.

NAKSHATRA: The King will soon find it out, if you are not quick. For, in the evening, he leaves the care of his kingdom to come to this boy.

RAGHUPATI: Have more faith in the Goddess. The victim is now in her own hands and it shall never escape.

NAKSHATRA: But Chandpal is so watchful.

RAGHUPATI: Not more so than our Mother.

NAKSHATRA: I thought I saw a shadow pass by.

RAGHUPATI: The shadow of your own fear.

NAKSHATRA: Do we not hear the sound of a cry?

RAGHUPATI: The sound of your own heart. Shake off your despondency, Prince. Let us drink this wine duly consecrated. So long as the purpose remains in the mind it looms large and fearful. In action it becomes small. The vapor is dark and diffused. It dissolves into water-drops that are small and sparkling. Prince, it is nothing. It takes only a moment,—not more than it does to snuff a candle. That life’s light will die in a flash, like lightning in the stormy night of July, leaving its thunderbolt forever deep in the King’s pride. But, Prince, why are you so silent?

NAKSHATRA: I think we should not be too rash. Leave this work till tomorrow night.

RAGHUPATI: Tonight is as good as tomorrow night, perhaps better.

NAKSHATRA: Listen to the sound of footsteps.
RAGHUPATI: I do not hear it.
NAKSHATRA: See there—the light.
RAGHUPATI: The King comes. I fear we have delayed too long.

*(King comes with attendants)*

GOVINDA: Make them prisoners. *(To Raghupati.*) Have you anything to say?
RAGHUPATI: Nothing.
GOVINDA: Do you admit your crime?
RAGHUPATI: Crime? Yes, my crime was that, in my weakness, I delayed in carrying out Mother’s service. The punishment comes from the Goddess. You are merely her instrument.
GOVINDA: According to my law, my soldiers shall escort you to exile, Raghupati, where you shall spend eight years of your life.
RAGHUPATI: King, I never bent my knees to any mortal in my life. I am a Brahmin. Your caste is lower than mine. Yet, in all humility, I pray to you, give me only one day’s time.
GOVINDA: I grant it.
RAGHUPATI *(mockingly)*: You are the King of all kings. Your majesty and mercy are alike immeasurable. Whereas I am a mere worm, hiding in the dust. *[He goes out]*
GOVINDA: Nakshatra, admit your guilt.
NAKSHATRA: I am guilty, Sire, and I dare not ask for your pardon.
GOVINDA: Prince, I know you are tender of heart. Tell me, who beguiled you with evil counsel?
NAKSHATRA: I will not take other names, King. My guilt is my own. You have pardoned your foolish brother more than once, and once more he begs to be pardoned.
GOVINDA: Nakshatra, leave my feet. The judge is still more bound by his laws than his prisoner.
ATTENDANTS: Sire, remember that he is your brother, and pardon him.
GOVINDA: Let me remember that I am a king. Nakshatra shall remain in exile for eight years, in the house we have built, by the sacred river, outside the limits of Tripura. *(Taking Nakshatra’s hands.)* The punishment is not yours only, brother, but also mine—the more so because I cannot share it bodily. The vacancy that you leave in the palace will prick my heart every day with a thousand needles. May the gods be more friendly to you, while you are away from us. *[They all go out]*
(Enter Raghupati and Jaising)

RAGHUPATI: My pride wallows in the mire. I have shamed my Brahminhood. I am no longer your master, my child. Yesterday I had the authority to command you. Today I can only beg your favor. That light is extinct in me, which gave me the right to defy King's power. The earthen lamp can be replenished and lighted again and again, but the star once extinguished is lost for ever. I am that lost star. Life's days are mere tinsel, most trifling of God's gifts, and I had to beg for one of those days from the King with bent knees. Let that one day be not in vain. Let its infamous black brows be red with the King's blood before it dies. Why do you not speak, my boy? Though I forsake my place as your master, yet have I not the right to claim your obedience as your father,—I who am more than a father to you, because father to an orphan? But that man is the most miserable of all beggars who has to beg for love. You are still silent, my child? Then let my knees bend to you, who were smaller than my knees when you first came to my arms.

JASING: Father, do not torture the heart that is already broken. If the Goddess thirsts for kingly blood, I will bring it to her before tonight. I will pay all my debts, yes, every farthing. Keep ready for my return. I will delay not. [Goes out

(Storm outside)

RAGHUPATI: She is awake at last, the Terrible. Her curses go shrieking through the town. The hungry Furies are shaking the cracking branches of the world-tree with all their might, for the stars to break and drop. My Mother, why didst thou keep thine own people in doubt and dishonor so long? Leave it not for thy servant to raise thy sword. Let thy mighty arm do its own work! —I hear steps.

(Enters Aparna)

APARNA: Where is Jaising?

RAGHUPATI: Away, evil omen. (Aparna goes out.) But if Jaising never comes back? No, he will not break his promise. Victory to thee, Great Kali, the giver of all success!—But if he meet with obstruction? If he be caught and lose his life at the guards' hands?
—Victory to thee, watchful Goddess, Mother invincible! Do not allow thy repute to be lost, and thine enemies to laugh at thee. If thy children must lose their pride and faith in their Mother, and bow down their heads in shame before the rebels, who then will remain in this orphaned world to carry thy banner?—I hear his steps. But so soon? Is he coming back foiled in his purpose? No, that cannot be. Thy miracle needs not time, O Mistress of all time, terrible with thy necklace of human skulls.

(Jaising rushes in)

Jaising, where is the blood?

Jaising: It is with me. Let go my hands. Let me offer it myself (entering the temple). Must thou have kingly blood, Great Mother, who nourishest the world at thy breast with life?—I am of the royal caste, a Kshatriya. My ancestors have sat upon thrones, and there are rulers of men in my mother's line. I have kingly blood in my veins. Take it, and quench thy thirst for ever.

(Stabs himself, and falls)

Raghupati: Jaising! O cruel, ungrateful! You have done the blackest crime. You kill your father!—Jaising, forgive me, my darling. Come back to my heart, my heart's one treasure! Let me die in your place.

(Enters Aparna)

Aparna: It will madden me. Where is Jaising? Where is he?

Raghupati: Come, Aparna, come, my child, call him with all your love. Call him back to life. Take him to you, away from me, only let him live.

(Aparna enters the temple and swoons)

(Beating his forehead on the temple floor.) Give him, give him, give him!—Give him back to me! (Stands up addressing the image.) Look how she stands there, the silly stone—deaf, dumb, blind—the whole sorrowing world weeping at her door—the noblest hearts wrecking themselves at her stony feet! Give me back my Jaising! Oh, it is all in vain. Our bitterest cries wander in emptiness—the emptiness that we vainly try to fill with these stony images of delusion. Away with them! Away with these
our impotent dreams, that harden into stones, burdening our world!

(He throws away the image, and comes out into the courtyard.
   Enters Gunavati)

GUNAVATI: Victory to thee, great Goddess!—But where is the Goddess?
RAGHUPATI: Goddess there is none.
GUNAVATI: Bring her back, Father. I have brought her my offerings.
   I have come at last, to appease her anger with my own heart’s blood. Let her know that the Queen is true to her promise. Have pity on me, and bring back the Goddess only for this night. Tell me—where is she?
RAGHUPATI: She is nowhere—neither above nor below.
GUNAVATI: Master, was not the Goddess here in the temple?
RAGHUPATI: Goddess?—If there were any true Goddess anywhere in the world, could she bear this thing to usurp her name?
GUNAVATI: Do not torture me. Tell me truly. Is there no Goddess?
RAGHUPATI: No, there is none.
GUNAVATI: Then who was here?
RAGHUPATI: Nothing, nothing.

(Aparna comes out from the temple)

APARNA: Father!
RAGHUPATI: My sweet child! “Father,” did you say? Do you rebuke me with that name? My son, whom I have killed, has left that one dear call behind him in your sweet voice.
APARNA: Father, leave this temple. Let us go away from here.

(Enters the King)

GOVINDA: Where is the Goddess?
RAGHUPATI: The Goddess is nowhere.
GOVINDA: But what blood-stream is this?
RAGHUPATI: Jaising, who loved you so dearly, has killed himself.
GOVINDA: Killed himself? Why?
RAGHUPATI: To kill the falsehood that sucks the lifeblood of man.
GOVINDA: Jaising is great. He has conquered death. My flowers are for him.
GUNAVATI: My King!
GOVINDA: Yes, my love.
GUNAVATI: The Goddess is no more.
GOVINDA: She has burst her cruel prison of stone, and come back to
the woman's heart.
APARNA: Father, come away.
RAGHUPATI: Come, child. Come, Mother. I have found thee. Thou
art the last gift of Jaising.

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ACT I

(Madhav's House)

MADHAV: What a state I am in! Before he came, nothing mattered;
I felt so free. But now that he has come, goodness knows from
where, my heart is filled with his dear self, and my home will
be no home to me when he leaves. Doctor, do you think he—
PHYSICIAN: If there's life in his fate, then he will live long. But what
the medical scriptures say, it seems—
MADHAV: Great heavens, what?
PHYSICIAN: The scriptures have it: "Bile or palsy, cold or gout spring
all alike."
MADHAV: Oh, get along, don't fling your scriptures at me; you only
make me more anxious; tell me what I can do.
PHYSICIAN (taking snuff): The patient needs the most scrupulous care.
MADHAV: That's true; but tell me how.
PHYSICIAN: I have already mentioned, on no account must he be let
out of doors.
MADHAV: Poor child, it is very hard to keep him indoors all day long.
PHYSICIAN: What else can you do? The autumn sun and the damp
are both very bad for the little fellow—for the scriptures have it:
"In wheezing, swooning, or in nervous fret,
In jaundice or leaden eyes—"
MADHAV: Never mind the scriptures, please. Eh, then we must shut the poor thing up. Is there no other method?
PHYSICIAN: None at all: for "In the wind and in the sun—"
MADHAV: What will your "in this and in that" do for me now? Why don't you let them alone and come straight to the point? What's to be done, then? Your system is very, very hard for the poor boy; and he is so quiet too with all his pain and sickness. It tears my heart to see him wince, as he takes your medicine.
PHYSICIAN: The more he winces, the surer is the effect. That's why the sage Chyabana observes: "In medicine as in good advice, the least palatable is the truest." Ah, well! I must be trotting now.

(Exit)

MADHAV: Well, I'm jiggered, there's Gaffer now.
GAFFER: Why, why, I won't bite you.
MADHAV: No, but you are a devil to send children off their heads.
GAFFER: But you aren't a child, and you've no child in the house; why worry then?
MADHAV: Oh, but I have brought a child into the house.
GAFFER: Indeed, how so?
MADHAV: You remember how my wife was dying to adopt a child?
GAFFER: Yes, but that's an old story; you didn't like the idea.
MADHAV: You know, brother, how hard all this getting money has been. That somebody else's child would sail in and waste all this money earned with so much trouble—Oh, I hated the idea. But this boy clings to my heart in such a queer sort of way—
GAFFER: So that's the trouble! and your money goes all for him and feels jolly lucky it does go at all.
MADHAV: Formerly, earning was a sort of passion with me; I simply couldn't help working for money. Now, I make money, and as I know it is all for this dear boy, earning becomes a joy to me.
GAFFER: Ah, well, and where did you pick him up?
MADHAV: He is the son of a man who was a brother to my wife by village ties. He has had no mother since infancy; and now the other day he lost his father as well.
GAFFER: Poor thing: and so he needs me all the more.
MADHAV: The doctor says all the organs of his little body are at
loggerheads with each other, and there isn’t much hope for his life. There is only one way to save him and that is to keep him out of this autumn wind and sun. But you are such a terror! What with this game of yours at your age, too, to get children out of doors!

GAFFER: God bless my soul! So I’m already as bad as autumn wind and sun, eh? But, friend, I know something, too, of the game of keeping them indoors. When my day’s work is over I am coming in to make friends with this child of yours. [Exit

(Amal enters)

AMAL: Uncle, I say, Uncle!

MADHAV: Hullo! Is that you, Amal?

AMAL: Mayn’t I be out of the courtyard at all?

MADHAV: No, my dear, no.

AMAL: See there, where Auntie grinds lentils in the quern, the squirrel is sitting with his tail up and with his wee hands he’s picking up the broken grains of lentils and crunching them. Can’t I run up there?

MADHAV: No, my darling, no.

AMAL: Wish I were a squirrel!—it would be lovely. Uncle, why won’t you let me go about?

MADHAV: The doctor says it’s bad for you to be out.

AMAL: How can the doctor know?

MADHAV: What a thing to say! The doctor can’t know and he reads such huge books!

AMAL: Does his book-learning tell him everything?

MADHAV: Of course, don’t you know!

AMAL (with a sigh): Ah, I am so stupid! I don’t read books.

MADHAV: Now, think of it; very, very learned people are all like you; they are never out of doors.

AMAL: Aren’t they really?

MADHAV: No, how can they? Early and late they toil and moil at their books, and they’ve eyes for nothing else. Now, my little man, you are going to be learned when you grow up; and then you will stay at home and read such big books, and people will notice you and say, ‘He’s a wonder.’

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AMAL: No, no Uncle; I beg of you, by your dear feet—I don't want to be learned; I won't.

MADHAV: Dear, dear; it would have been my saving if I could have been learned.

AMAL: No, I would rather go about and see everything that there is.

MADHAV: Listen to that! See! What will you see, what is there so much to see?

AMAL: See that far-away hill from our window—I often long to go beyond those hills and right away.

MADHAV: Oh, you silly! As if there's nothing more to be done but just get up to the top of that hill and away! Eh! You don't talk sense, my boy. Now listen, since that hill stands there upright as a barrier, it means you can't get beyond it. Else, what was the use in heaping up so many large stones to make such a big affair of it, eh!

AMAL: Uncle, do you think it is meant to prevent us crossing over? It seems to me because the earth can't speak it raises its hands into the sky and beckons. And those who live far off and sit alone by their windows can see the signal. But I suppose the learned people—

MADHAV: No, they don't have time for that sort of nonsense. They are not crazy like you.

AMAL: Do you know, yesterday I met some one quite as crazy as I am.

MADHAV: Gracious me, really, how so?

AMAL: He had a bamboo staff on his shoulder with a small bundle at the top, and a brass pot in his left hand, and an old pair of shoes on; he was making for those hills straight across that meadow there. I called out to him and asked, "Where are you going?" He answered, "I don't know; anywhere!" I asked again, "Why are you going?" He said, "I'm going out to seek work." Say, Uncle, have you to seek work?

MADHAV: Of course I have to. There are many about looking for jobs.

AMAL: How lovely! I'll go about like them too, finding things to do.

MADHAV: Suppose you seek and don't find. Then—

AMAL: Wouldn't that be jolly? Then I should go farther! I watched that man slowly walking on with his pair of worn-out shoes. And when he got to where the water flows under the fig tree,
he stopped and washed his feet in the stream. Then he took out from his bundle some gram-flour, moistened it with water and began to eat. Then he tied up his bundle and shouldered it again; tucked up his cloth above his knees and crossed the stream. I've asked Auntie to let me go up to the stream, and eat my gram-flour just like him.

**MADHAV:** And what did your Auntie say to that?

**AMAL:** Auntie said, "Get well and then I'll take you over there."

Please, Uncle, when shall I get well?

**MADHAV:** It won't be long, dear.

**AMAL:** Really, but then I shall go right away the moment I'm well again.

**MADHAV:** And where will you go?

**AMAL:** Oh, I will walk on, crossing so many streams, wading through water. Everybody will be asleep with their doors shut in the heat of the day and I will tramp on and on seeking work far, very far.

**MADHAV:** I see! I think you had better be getting well first; then—

**AMAL:** But then you won't want me to be learned, will you, Uncle?

**MADHAV:** What would you rather be, then?

**AMAL:** I can't think of anything just now; but I'll tell you later on.

**MADHAV:** Very well. But mind you, you aren't to call out and talk to strangers again.

**AMAL:** But I love to talk to strangers!

**MADHAV:** Suppose they had kidnapped you?

**AMAL:** That would have been splendid! But no one ever takes me away. They all want me to stay in here.

**MADHAV:** I am off to my work—but, darling, you won't go out, will you?

**AMAL:** No, I won't. But, Uncle, you'll let me be in this room by the roadside. [Exit Madhav]

**DAIRYMAN:** Curds, curds, good nice curds.

**AMAL:** Curdseller, I say, Curdseller.

**DAIRYMAN:** Why do you call me? Will you buy some curds?

**AMAL:** How can I buy? I have no money.

**DAIRYMAN:** What a boy! Why call out then? Ugh! What a waste of time!

**AMAL:** I would go with you if I could.
DAIRYMAN: With me?
AMAL: Yes, I seem to feel homesick when I hear you call from far down the road.

DAIRYMAN (lowering his yoke-pole): Whatever are you doing here, my child?
AMAL: The doctor says I'm not to be out, so I sit here all day long.
DAIRYMAN: My poor child, whatever has happened to you?
AMAL: I can't tell. You see, I am not learned, so I don't know what's the matter with me. Say, Dairyman, where do you come from?
DAIRYMAN: From our village.
AMAL: Your village? Is it very far?
DAIRYMAN: Our village lies on the river Shamli at the foot of the Panch-mura hills.
AMAL: Panch-mura hills! Shamli river! I wonder. I may have seen your village. I can't think when, though!
DAIRYMAN: Have you seen it? Been to the foot of those hills?
AMAL: Never. But I seem to remember having seen it. Your village is under some very old big trees, just by the side of the road—isn't that so?
DAIRYMAN: That's right, child.
AMAL: And on the slope of the hill cattle grazing.
DAIRYMAN: How wonderful! Cattle grazing in our village! Indeed there are!
AMAL: And your women with red saris fill their pitchers from the river and carry them on their heads.
DAIRYMAN: Good, that's right! Women from our dairy village do come and draw their water from the river; but then it isn't everyone who has a red sari to put on. But, my dear child, surely you must have been there for a walk some time.
AMAL: Really, Dairyman, never been there at all. But the first day the doctor lets me go out, you are going to take me to your village.
DAIRYMAN: I will, my child, with pleasure.
AMAL: And you'll teach me to cry curds and shoulder the yoke like you and walk the long, long road?
DAIRYMAN: Dear, dear, did you ever? Why should you sell curds? No, you will read big books and be learned.
AMAL: No, I never want to be learned—I'll be like you and take my
he stopped and washed his feet in the stream. Then he took out from his bundle some gram-flour, moistened it with water and began to eat. Then he tied up his bundle and shouldered it again; tucked up his cloth above his knees and crossed the stream. I’ve asked Auntie to let me go up to the stream, and eat my gram-flour just like him.

MADHAV: And what did your Auntie say to that?
AMAL: Auntie said, “Get well and then I’ll take you over there.” Please, Uncle, when shall I get well?
MADHAV: It won’t be long, dear.
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AMAL: But then you won’t want me to be learned, will you, Uncle?
MADHAV: What would you rather be, then?
AMAL: I can’t think of anything just now; but I’ll tell you later on.
MADHAV: Very well. But mind you, you aren’t to call out and talk to strangers again.
AMAL: But I love to talk to strangers!
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[Exit Madhav

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you and walk the long, long road?
DAIRYMAN: Dear, dear, did you ever? Why should you sell curds?
No, you will read big books and be learned.
AMAL: No, I never want to be learned—I'll be like you and take my
curds from the village by the red road near the old banyan tree,
and I will hawk it from cottage to cottage. Oh, how do you cry
—"Curds, curds, fine curds"? Teach me the tune, will you?

DAIRYMAN: Dear, dear, teach you the tune; what a notion!

AMAL: Please do. I love to hear it. I can't tell you how queer I feel
when I hear you cry out from the bend of that road, through
the line of those trees! Do you know I feel like that when I hear
the shrill cry of kites from almost the end of the sky?

DAIRYMAN: Dear child, will you have some curds? Yes, do.

AMAL: But I have no money.

DAIRYMAN: No, no, no, don't talk of money! You'll make me so
happy if you take some curds from me.

AMAL: Say, have I kept you too long?

DAIRYMAN: Not a bit; it has been no loss to me at all; you have taught
me how to be happy selling curds. [Exit

AMAL (intoning): Curds, curds, fine curds—from the dairy village—
from the country of the Panch-mura hills by the Shamli bank. Curds, good curds; in the early morning the women make the
cows stand in a row under the trees and milk them, and in the
evening they turn the milk into curds. Curds, good curds. Hello,
there's the watchman on his rounds. Watchman, I say, come
and have a word with me.

WATCHMAN: What's all this row about? Aren't you afraid of the
likes of me?

AMAL: No, why should I be?

WATCHMAN: Suppose I march you off, then?

AMAL: Where will you take me to? Is it very far, right beyond the
hills?

WATCHMAN: Suppose I march you straight to the King?

AMAL: To the King! Do, will you? But the doctor won't let me go
out. No one can ever take me away. I've got to stay here all day
long.

WATCHMAN: The doctor won't let you, poor fellow! So I see! Your face
is pale and there are dark rings round your eyes. Your veins
stick out from your poor thin hands.

AMAL: Won't you sound the gong, Watchman?

WATCHMAN: The time has not yet come.