

PARABELS OF MAHAVIR

HARINDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAYA



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NARRATION

KIRANBHAI

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**IN SACRED MEMORY
DEDICATED TO**

**Shri Babubhai Motilal Dahyabhai
Jhaveri**

WITH DEEP GRATITUDE

**BACHUBHAI
JAGDISH
VIDYABEN**

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FOREWORD

The memorable first milestone of the long untired journey was laid in the year 1968 in a little cabin 7×3½ on the Fifth Floor of Al Sabah Court which stands on Marine Drive, Bombay—the first milestone to mark the starting of an enchanting work : parables and sayings of Lord Mahavir in verse-form, prose and play-form, exquisite parables which literally intoxicated my heart and mind, rendering the labour across five years of consistent and concentrated creation, a labour of dedication at the feet of the Divine Master Mahavir.

How was the Work first conceived? I must express sheer unqualified gratefulness to Kiranbhai in whose quiet cabin I sat day after day, taking down scraps of notes which served as shorthand—while he read out or recounted parable after parable with undescrivable vividness. While I listened in dumb admiration to Kiranbhai I felt I was literally whisked away to the age of Mahavir, the Golden Lord, on whose very presence I seemed to sit building up the structure of my writings interweaving through them eternal truths embodied in the sacred Jain Scriptures.

I experienced sheer calm excitement of elevated consciousness. All credit goes to Kiranbhai who has himself for years been a acknowledged guru, guide or philosopher friend of thousands of persons

who have been listening with rapt attention to his superb Talks at Shri Godiji's Temple at Pydhoni or elsewhere.

Hundreds of his friends and admirers, including myself, accept him as a first-rate **savant**, a scholar of high distinction; a sort of walking encyclopaedia. He has proved that he is thoroughly versed in various philosophies; Egyptian, Tibetan, Talmud, Kabala, Tarot, I ching, to mention but a few—in short he is learned in both Oriental and occidental religions, beliefs, rituals, traditions and various sorts of mysticism. He is deeply interested in the occult laws of the interrelationships between macrocosm and microcosm, Yes! together Kiranbhai and I without the least desire to publicize it, have journeyed across 2500 years, laying milestone upon milestone of literary creation. And we have been travelers who never experienced fatigue—since being true travelers, it never struck us to count our footsteps.

At last after long and patient waiting the first volume is about to see the light of the day—the first of several more volumes to follow. The books will be issued by Shri Kiran Publishers specially brought about by Kiranbhai to make the memorable Parables reach out to the world.

We kneel before the Golden Master, Lord Mahavir, the Light of light, invoking Him in all humility to bless our effort and crown it with success.

Harindranath Chattopadhyaya

INTRODUCTION

A single parable has power to transmute human soul to the heights unknown. These religious parables cover spiritual truths of undreamt dimensions. Only he who can read inbetween lines may have some glimpse.

Parables of Mahavir are not fiction. Whatever we have presented here are a few of the precious jewels from the vast ocean of Jain Scriptures.

The credit goes to Dr. Harindranath to present these parables beautifully in English version. He is a poet of global renown and a marvel of versatility. Born in April 1898 at the tender age of eight, he started composing in English. When his first book of poems, *The Feast of Youth*, appeared in 1918, Sri Aurobindo paid him a warm tribute and praised the poems as 'the beginnings of a supreme poetic utterance of the Indian soul in the rhythms of the English tongue'. And Rabindranath Tagore said : "My mentle falls on Harindranath." Since then, many collections of his poems were published. He represented India at the World Conference of thirty Poets held in Montreal in 1967. The President of India conferred on him the signal honour of Padma Bhusan

He also has his deep spiritual longings. He stayed with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for three years and at the ashram of Bhagawan Raman Maharshi for months together.

I have retained and shall always retain in my memory the spiritual thrilled hours Dr. Harindranath and I spent at morning in my little cabin, where in I have also spent hours in contemplation of the Divine. It was a most memorable experience indeed. It would be no exaggeration to say that while we worked together at the Jain Parables-almost feverishly and breathlessly, we seemed in the presence of the Divine and were blessed for our creative effort. Surely ! without these Blessings, the work could not have continued so triumphantly.

Needless to say that we are continuing the great Work. The K. H. Publication hope to bring in light volume after volume with unflagging interest and regularity.

The responsibility of narration of these parables is mine. I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to all those who joined me in preparation of Jain Parables.

With my Peace and Love.

KIRANBHAI

PREFACE

Ahimsa and Syadvad, non-injury to living beings in any form are the basic teachings of Bhagwan MAHAVIR the 24th Tirthankar. He practised and preached Love for all the creatures of the whole universe. His life was full of Compassion, Truth and Austerity. He was the symbol of Sublime Love.

His life was the climax of human achievement, exposition of the great potentialities of the soul power. His transcendental meditation of the highest order and of the purest form help any individual, irrespective of caste or creed to attain soul perfection. What is needed is its proper assimilation and translation into practical life. The message of Bhagwan Mahavir is for the mankind as a whole.

His parables are full with fragrance of Universal Love and help for internal cleanliness of the soul by removing carnal desires and evil passions.

We hope let these Parables help to dedicate ourselves to the Teachings of Bhagwan Mahavir.

Be Peace to ALL.

MUNI ARUNVIJAY

THE BIRTH OF THE GOLDEN BABE

THE BIRTH OF THE GOLDEN BABE

When the golden Lord Mahavir was in his mother's womb, she beheld fourteen dreams. The mother's name was Trishala. She was a beautiful woman ! Queen of king Siddhartha, a calm and radiant being who was loved by his people. The queen had already given birth to a son whose name was Nandivardhan; and to a daughter whose name was Sudarshana. The people of the Kingdom said : "The queen is beautiful; so is the princess beautiful. The king is handsome; so is the prince handsome."

And now, when the news spread everywhere that the queen Trishala was with child, they were very happy. "I wonder whether it is going to be a son again", a passerby thought aloud.

"What does it matter whether it is going to be a son or a daughter, anyway", another remarked.

"In any case, the queen is lovely and what she brings into the world must surely turn out to be lovely", said an old woman to an old man, her neighbour, while sitting on her doorstep.

"In any case, the king is handsome and whether it be a girl or a boy, there is bound to be a royal light in its face", remarked the old man to the old woman, while he smoked a leaf pipe.

"How well matched they are : King Siddhartha and queen Trishala !" remarked a newly married bride to her bridegroom....

A young fellow who overheard her said : "So are you, although you be not king and queen and have no Kingdom", and he laughed !

News came to the palace that the people were anxiously waiting for the new arrival.

News went out of the palace that the queen had fourteen dreams which flowed into her like to a strange procession

Fourteen Dreams :

- The first was a Lion
- The second was an Elephant
- The third was a Bull
- The fourth was Laxmi, Goddess of Wealth.
- The fifth was a Garland of Flowers.
- The sixth was the Moon
- The seventh was the Sun
- The eighth was a Big Banner
- The ninth was a round pot filled with Nectar
- The tenth was a Lotus Lake
- The eleventh was an Ocean
- The twelfth was a Flying Chariot of the gods
- The thirteenth was a Heap of Gems
- The fourteenth was a Fire without Smoke.

And queen Trishala said that the dreams entered through her mouth into her belly....

And not only did the news of these fourteen dreams go out to the subjects of King Siddhartha and queen Trishala....

But it also reached the ears of Nature :

It made earth dance with joy !

It filled the fields with bright green laughter !

Everywhere excited birds did not know whether to sit on branches and sing at the top of their voices; or to fly across the blue air, cutting it with the flapping of merry wings !

The sky looked lovingly over the palace with millions of stars that are the eyes of the sky; and their crystal beams pierced through the palace-top and reached, through the roof, the bed-chamber in which the queen was resting on a soft silken bed.

And the clouds floated over the kingdom like milch-cows with udders heavy with milk. They rained lovely showers which fed the harvests earth was getting ready for the kingdom.

But the most wonderful thing that happened was the way in which, even without being asked, other kings from other kingdoms arrived to bend before his throne and offer him homage saying :

"We have heard the glad tidings and have come all the way from our distant kingdoms to offer our affectionate blessings to the babe who is about to arrive.

Something tells us he is going to rule, some day, not over kingdoms of the kind kings we rule, but over the most precious Kingdom of kingdoms. : the human heart.

The hearts of millions and millions, and for ages and ages ! since he himself has come out of

ages and ages to mark a new Golden Age for all alike on earth.

The kings who had come from a-far seemed to be under some spell which had brought them to king Siddhartha's kingdom....

Their eyes were filled with light while they knelt before him in deep humility.

There lived in Siddhartha's kingdom an astrologer, a learned seer who knew the stars by heart; when he talked of the planets you thought he was their neighbour.

The king sent a palanquin to fetch him to the palace.

And the astrologer arrived with his long red-cloth-covered book of starry arithmetic : which is to say that he could count the stars on his finger-tips the instant he looked into the pages of the book; and, along with the stars, he counted the destinies of men which those stars worked out.

Said the king : "We have great faith in your calculations ! Do tell us something about the babe in the womb of the royal mother."

The astrologer put his finger on the seventh page of the book and read without stopping at any word : "The babe will be a boy; yet he will not be a human creature !"

Those who heard this were shocked "What !" exclaimed the king. "What do you mean ? not be a human creature ?"

Did the astrologer suggest he would be a creature of the jungle ?

" O King ! he who is about to come will be a god, a god in every sense of the word ! He who is about to come into the world is the Lord of Bounty, Vardhamana, for whom it has been waiting for a long long time "

The babe within the womb heard what the astrologer said. He did not move inside, since he did not wish to disturb his mother; he did not want to trouble her, moving from side to side in the womb. He lay still, very still for one hour, two hours, three hours, and then - the queen, who waited anxiously for her babe to stir inside, began to get nervous. She thought the babe was dead. She sobbed loudly; the king sobbed, too; and, with them, sobbed Nandivardhan, the prince; and Sudarshana, the princess. The rumour spread like wild fire; and the whole kingdom sobbed along with the royal family. Even Nature sobbed - she who had, only a while ago, shown her joy through birds that started singing; and fields which laughed a lavish green laughter; and stars which peeped through the palace-roof to see the queen resting on a soft silken bed; and clouds which poured and poured and fed the harvests when they heard the news of the fourteen dreams which had entered the queen who was shortly going to be a mother.

The babe inside the womb saw clearly the picture of the world since he was a divine babe. He saw the sky and the ocean and the earth; he knew every star and grain of sand by heart. He

measured the length and the breadth of the kingdom over which his father, the king, ruled.

He measured the heart of his mother, the queen; and knew that it was sad because she thought he was dead inside her; all because he lay utterly still, holding his breath so that she should not be troubled in the womb.

But it all turned out to be otherwise. "I must tickle her a little so that she knows I am quite alive!" the babe thought to himself. So he tickled one corner of her womb with his tiny finger.

The queen's face flushed with the dawn of hope: "It lives! it lives!" she said with excitement! And the king took up the queen's words with equal excitement and shouted "It lives! it lives!" and these two words were taken up by the prince and the princess; and then by the king's retinue of servants; and within a little while, by the subjects of the entire Kingdom....

The fields which had begun to fade, had once again turned green with harvests. The sky put on a robe of such blueness as it had never worn before! The ocean leaped and crashed with wild joy and its waves clapped their hands and shouted to the hills: "It lives! It lives!" The winds blew across the palace top and whistled "It lives! It lives!"

But nobody and nothing knew the truth. The babe in the womb quietly thought to himself; "The whole world lives, but it does not know it lives in me!"

And then the babe who was a golden boy whispered to his mother, the queen : "Mother ! without seeing me you love me so dearly ! What would you do, then, if, after I came into your world and grew up and then left you; father and brother and sister and kingdom, renouncing the world which you all love ? No ! I shall not renounce the world until that moment comes when I can say to myself: "I am free to renounce it after I have fulfilled my duty towards you who will soon be bringing me into what men call the world."

The Golden Child was born...

The Golden Master Mahavir had come to reveal Himself to the world of time and space, in order to spread His message of peace.

There was rejoicing everywhere.

Once again the king ordered that his chariot go fetch the astrologer, who arrived once again with his red-covered-book of starry arithmetic.

"Pray, astrologer ! will you tell us what were the fourteen dreams our queen Mother dreamed when the golden babe came into her body nine months ago"

And the queen recounted all her fourteen dreams :

- (1) Lion : Golden Power.
- (2) Elephant : Golden Dignity.
- (3) Bull : Golden capacity to draw the Chariot of Religion.
- (4) Lakshmi : Golden Goddess who will spread prosperity over the world.

- (5) Garland : a chain of fragrant flowers to adorn a Golden Life about to start for your kingdom and the world.
- (6) Full Moon : a ripe and rounded Golden Motherhood of love for all.
- (7) Sun : Golden Omniscience which will put an end to the darkness of ignorance.
- (8) Big Banner : Golden Eternity of fame and glory.
- (9) Round pot : a rounded existence filled to the brim with the Golden Nectar of Peace.
- (10) Lotus Lake : Golden Aloofness from the world while being in the midst of it.
- (11) Ocean : Golden Magnanimity of heart.
- (12) Flying Chariot : Golden Mission of carrying the world across vast distances of existences.
- (13) Heap of Gems : Golden Virtues without end.
- (14) Fire without smoke : Golden Fire burning without smoke inside the heart, lending warmth to the world.

In Short : The fourteen dreams signify the Birth of the Golden Master, Mahavir.

A MAHAVIR PARABLE

A MAHAVIR PARABLE

PART ONE

*After initiation Mahavir walked from town to town,
covering great distances between dawn and dusk.*

Long league on league, without fatigue,
The great Mahavir trod
In lonely quest of his own self,
Another name for God !

Arriving at a certain town
He rested for a while :
The townsfolk flocked around him, and
Drew nectar from his smile.

"I wish to go to the next town,
Pray, tell me how to go,
I wish to take the shorter route,
The shortest that you know."

The townsfolk said in one accord :
"O Sire ! we wish to say :
The shorter route is most unsafe,
Prefer the longer way.

"Nobody takes the shorter route
Since there, along it lies
A twining serpent who has twin
Volcanic holes for eyes;

"Holes that are horribly alive
 With poison-lava red
 As reddest lightning with a power
 To strike wayfarers dead !

"That serpent has been there for years,
 His length is packed with ire,
 And every time he hisses, he
 Ejects a jet of fire.

"He is unvanquishable, he
 Is mighty and supreme....
 Nay, do not take the shorter route,
 Not even in a dream !"

Mahavir pondered for a while....
 In silence absolute
 He stood, then suddenly exclaimed;
 "I'll take the shorter route !

"I have a duty to perform,
 I hope to walk above
 The serpent's wrath, the serpent's hate,
 I hope to teach him love.

"I hope to make his venom change
 To nectar beyond price;
 I hope to teach him deathless life
 Through love and sacrifice.

"I'll teach him truth and soon transform
 His nature—sure, I will !
 So, now you know, I've got to go
 A duty to fulfil !"

While townsfolk marvelled at his words,
Their hearts were sore and sad,
Some thought him over-confident,
While others thought him mad.

"Well, Sire ! if you must go the way
Others have gone before you,
You'll go—but we are sorry for
That mother's womb which bore you !"

Initiate Mahavir went
Brimming with inspiration,
To give the serpent, thing of hate,
Love's high initiation.

The instant that he set his foot
Along the route of danger,
He heard the serpent hiss and say :
"You shall be stricken, Stranger !"

But Mahavir, unruffled, said :
"Compassion floods my pores
To meet you and to greet you, since
I am a friend of yours."

The serpent hissed a twisted flame,
His eyes went rolling red:
"You are a stranger, you are not
A friend of mine...." he said.

"Go back to there from where you came,
Your presence drives me mad.
To linger longer here is death:
I've nothing more to add.

Mahavir did not turn a hair:
 "I'm not afraid of doom !
 You said: to linger longer here
 Is death—but death for whom ?"

The serpent overwrought and taut
 Struck at his foot to slay him.

**Mahavir was a game of God,
 The serpent could not play him !**

Thrice did the serpent strike his foot,
 Black venom in his bite;
 The wounds began to gush with blood,
 Not red—but crystal white.

Since it was sacred milk that flowed
 Within his veins, and not
 Mere ordinary mortal blood
 As the blind serpent thought.



PART TWO

Before the Lord the serpent's pride
Began to cringe and crouch.
A cataract of nectar poured
Into his poison-pouch.

Nay, he began to be convinced,—
Though men might deem it odd!—
That he, whom he had bitten, was
A veritable god !

A god no creature and no thing
In all the world could hurt,
And, least of all, and least of all,
A serpent's poison-spurt.

The serpent slowly felt his blood
Turning both sweet and strange,
While yielding venom he received
Rare nectar in exchange.

Mahavir stood most image-like
Before the serpent's eyes
That gradually seemed to grow
Compassionate and wise.

The serpent said : "You are a god
With whom I tried, in vain,
To try my strength; but now, I swear.
I'll never try again !

"I thought I was a giant whom
Nobody dare defeat,
But you, O Lord ! have crushed my power
And shattered my conceit.

"Your presence is the presence of
A being thrice divine :
You are no stranger, you are not,
But a true friend of mine !

"Since, canceling all hate, you have
Awakened love within
This callous serpent-length of me :
Dark synonym for sin.

"Sweet Friend ! you have decided to
Transform me and unfold
Before me my forgotten past,
My myriad births of old."

The serpent sobbed in burning shame
And sighed in deep regret.
Then, for the first time in his life,
His serpent eyes were wet,

Were wet with sad repentant tears
Which made Mahavir say :
"Repentant tears are holy tears
That wash all sins away.

"Now let me tell you once for all,
It never is too late
To launch upon a life of truth
And change the course of fate."

The serpent said : Forgive me, Sire !
For my uncouth behaviour :
Be by my side, you are my guide,
You are my only saviour !"

Mahavir placed his quiet palm
Upon the serpent's hood
Assuring him, in simple words,
His life was changed for good !

"Your life has changed and you shall soon
Take heaven itself by storm.
Know that you are some future sage
In this, your present form.

"And this, your serpent form, shall pass
After being bled and tortured....
Yet, every wound you bear shall be
A ripe fruit in God's orchard !"

And now the serpent thought it time
To purify his soul :
Straightway, he sped and hid his head
Inside his serpent-hole.

He hid his head, he hid his hood
In utter grief, and swore
That he would hate, that he would hurt,
That he would bite no more !

Outside the hole the serpent stretched
His serpent length for good
Inside that hole in utter dark
He hid both head and hood.

Since he, the serpent, had, by now
Decided to remain
Ascetic-wise, nor ever use
His filthy fangs again !

Mahavir quietly remarked :
"Receiving heavenly grace
Soon, very soon, the serpent shall
With God come face to face.

But he shall have to pay the price
Of pain, before he does,
About him, lo ! already I
Can hear sweet angels buzz.

I hear sweet angels buzz with joy
Since the divine Protector
Has blessed him and transformed his gall
To nothing short of nectar."



PART THREE

The townsfolk watched the distant scene
With hushed abated breath
And marvelled at the Stranger who
Was unafraid of death,

Of certain death awaiting him
Along the shorter route.
They saw the way the Stranger met
The challenge of the brute;

That serpent who, for years, had slain
Poor travellers who took
That selfsame route; had slain them with
His fiery serpent look !

But in the Stranger's case they saw
The serpent, fuming wild,
Strike at his feet and while he did,
That Stranger only smiled !

Seeing the light upon his face,
The splendour in his eyes,
They gathered that he was a god
Come down from paradise

To serve the earth and save the earth
From serpent-lust and hate :
Some whispered : "He is wonderful !"
And other's "He is great !"

And now they knew the route was safe,
 So they approached the spot
 But, as they did, the Stranger seemed
 To be a distant dot;

A distant dot against the sky
 Which paled and disappeared :
 The townsfolk clapped their hands in glee
 And cheered and cheered and cheered !

The serpent with both head and hood
 Stuck in his serpent-hole,
 Lay stretched in penance undisturbed,
 Displaying self-control.

He did not move, he did not budge,
 One inch; he did not hiss :
 The towns-folk wishpered each to each :
 "What miracle is this !

They found he could perform no more
 His deadly feats and tricks.
 So they began to strike him with
 Unfeeling stones and sticks.

The serpent did not budge or stir,
 He sensed an inward power
 While sticks continued blow on blow.
 And stones began to shower.

They wounded and insulted him,
 Then left him lying alone.
 The serpent did not, in distress,
 So much as even moan.

Calmly he thought, "My wounded form
 Shall render me divine :
 Some day my wounds shall burn like lamps
 To light some holy shrine."

Then quietly he went within
 The quietness inside
 His state of penance and of prayer,
 Then quietly he died.



BHAGWAN MAHAVIR'S IMPOSSIBLE VOW

A FEW WORDS

This is one of the most celebrated Parables of Bhagwan Mahavir, the last prophet of the religion of the Jains.

Bhagwan Mahavir was a contemporary of the Lord Gautam Buddha who was the younger of the Two.

All such parables possess deep insight and an almost unfathomable depth. One has to read between the events and words they embody, if their inmost significance and meaning are to be captured, even if it be somewhat vaguely.

This parable is unique, one of the most unique among Jain parables. Meditating one-pointedly on it, one awakens the psyche, realising that it is stained richly with the glow of Divinity.

It is, in short, a hint at the human will sublimated to the point of its marriage with the Divine Will.

"The Impossible Vow" deals with its final fulfilment rendering the impossible possible through Vasumati, the Princess, who, after months of unspeakable trial and tribulation, succeeds in attaining liberation crowning her Head of the Nuns of Mahavir's Religious Order.

BHAGWAN MAHAVIR'S IMPOSSIBLE VOW

So, to Koshambi Town Mahavir came :
Hiding, behind a mask of form and name,
The naked crying hunger of the Soul
To reach a seemingly impossible goal.
He heard the simple honest folk remark :

FIRST

His eyes resemble torches in the dark.

SECOND

He seems a thing of splendour, chaste and fresh.

THIRD

There is calm flowering about his flesh.

FOURTH

His presence scatters paradisaal balm.

FIFTH

He seems to bear a world upon his palm
Kindled to inward glow....

SIXTH

He seems a friend
To lonely roadways winding without end

SEVENTH

Why ! he himself is like a road that runs
Across the sky, greeted by moons and suns.

EIGHTH

Why ! he himself is as a sky which spreads
Love's angel-canopy above our heads !

NINTH

Surely he is the true dividing line
Standing between the human and divine.

TENTH

Lo ! he has come to save us and uplift
Our sinking souls....

ELEVENTH

He seems a heavenly gift
Granted to us by centuries of Grace.

TWELFTH

We taste ascension when we see his face.

Shatanik was a much respected king;
The redness of the ruby in his ring
Was of his people's laughter, not their blood..
He loved long roadways that he trod; the mud
Of his dear earth, his kingdom; and he watched,
With all a poet's rapture, heavens blotched
With passing clouds; he watched the rising sun
Incarnadine horizon-fringes. None
Could guage the gladness of his being when
He gazed into the lonesome eyes of men
In quest of something far-away, above
Their little gaze unconsciously in love
With Beauty; even though they hardly knew,
Shatanik loved the green of grass; the blue

Vastness of sky; the scintillating spangle
 Of moon-wooded seas; the seven-tinted bangle
 Of the rare rainbow round the wrist of space...
 Mrigavati, his queen, was steeped in grace,
 Her nature brimmed with bounty; when she smiled
 She drew the hearts of woman, man and child
 Who thought she was a being half-divine,
 Worthy of being installed within a shrine.

.....

When Mahavir arrived, both king and queen
 Observed : though he was seen he was unseen,
 A simultaneous Image as of One
 For whom the light of heaven had begun.
 He walked for miles and miles and did not speak :
 His very silence rippled, a unique
 River of calm inviting all to dip
 Within its depths in high companionship.
 Even to gaze upon his form began
 For multitudes the sense as of one Man,
 One Singlehood untroubled and unsplit
 Into the many; lonely Infinite
 Cancelling all sense of finite.

All who saw

Mahavir, felt he was himself the Law
 Manoeuvring creation; even though
 He had as yet a long long way to go
 Ere he could reach the goal. He took a pledge
 Fire-terrible, sharp as a razor's edge;
 Mahavir had set out alone to carve

A destiny of godhead which already
Was imaged through his presence....

"I will starve"

He said, "and yet, my footfalls shall be steady
Along this obstinate journey I have chosen....
Nothing, in this ephemeral world, shall cozen,
No self-persuasion; no compelling force,
These feet to alter their decided course.
Yea ! I shall starve, by way of discipline,
To rouse the drowsed magnificence within.
I shall pursue my goal; I shall not tire
Of going through the cruel test of fire
Which my ordeal is..I shall not rest
Until I have gone through the master-test,
Of my resolve....

Behold ! Mahavir was

Even as a listening, illumined pause.
Four months had passed; man's calendar stood beaten
While dates of passing days began to bleed,
Since not one morsel had Mahavir eaten,
The Golden Lord born of ascetic breed !
Breathing of abstinence and penance, such
As was a fire to extinguish fire.
Naught on the earth could break his oath or touch
His obstinate heart with undivine desire.
Now while he walked he seemed a funeral-pyre
Consuming his own body; yet his will
Continued all unbroken, rooted deep
Like to a tranquil heaven-aspiring hill
Vigilant in a world of dreamless sleep.
The teeming town, the greatest and the least,

With love prepared for him a royal feast
 Of costliest viands : rice and curds and fruit,
 Honey and milk and saffron-flavoured sweet;
 But Mahavir, whose oath was absolute,
 While, thanking the whole Town, refused to eat.
 Depression gripped the townsfolk and the town
 Seemed darkened with a sense of darkening doom.
 Sobs clove the air; the king walked up and down
 In his tall tower; the queen was bent with gloom.
 Koshambi Town lay prostrate at the feet
 Of mendicant Mahavir lost in prayer.
 The townsfolk murmured :

FIRST

Will he never eat ?

SECOND

No ! he is under oath....

THIRD

To live on air ?

FOURTH

Nobody knows how an ascetic sheathes
 His mind and blood and body against odds !

FIFTH

Perhaps, he needs no food because he breathes
 Not human breath like ours, but breath of gods !

SIXTH

Naught were impossible for such a being
 Who, even seen by us, escapes our seeing !

SEVENTH

A curse is on our Town !

EIGHT

We feel, somehow,
 Like helpless hope-deserted orphans now.

Days passed and nights went by of sleep bereft..
 Unruffled and alone, Mahavir left
 Koshambi to continue on his way,
 Unconscious of the night and of the day,
 Unconscious of the dusk and of the dawn,
 Quest-quiet, shining, solitary soul—
 The mendicant went on and on and on,
 And on and on he went towards his goal.

.....

Betwixt twin harmonies of earth and sky,
 He was convinced that death itself would die
 Through his ripe realisation....

“I will leave

Hunger alone to burn till I receive
 Dole offered by a princess. Lo ! from now
 I vow I shall not ever break a vow
 Made in the Court of Angels.

And he said:

“That princess shall be beautiful, her head
 Clean-shaven; fetters round her hands and feet:
 A slave-girl who has had no food to eat
 For three entire sobbing days and nights.
 And when, on my arrival, she invites
 These hands to stretch in silence for an alms,
 I will, in reverence, on outspread palms
 Receive it as from one of angel-clan:
 Black lentils doled out of a winnowing fan.
 She must await me, even as a mother

Who has expected me for years and years:
 One foot across the threshold and the other
 Inside her darkened cell of lurking fears;
 Irrevocable oath ! until I meet
 Such an impossible alms-giver, I shall not eat.
 The King Shatanik said: "Now will I wear
 War- armour"—and he said it with a frown:
 "Since I am hungry to enthuse the air
 With battle-throb and battle-threat and thud.
 I'll march for the tenth time on Champa Town
 With battle rapture ringing in my blood,
 My banner floated under heaven's wide arch,
 And this shall be my last and final march !"

King Dadhivahan's might could hardly vie
 With that of king Shatanik, long-acclaimed
 Unvanquishable. Not afraid to die,
 He always felt that death was but a lie !
 He leaped into the field like some untamed
 Lion whose battle-roar shattered the sky.

Brief was the battle. In unspeakable dread
 King Dadhivahan, like a coward fled,
 Deserting battlefield and battle slaughter,
 Deserting Dharani, his loyal wife,
 Deserting Vasumati, his dear daughter:
 King Dadhivahan fled to save his life !

A camel-driver watched them from a-far
 And to himself he muttered: "Very soon
 They shall be mine. How beautiful they are !
 The queen is a ripe-risen desert-moon,
 The princess, a raw-ripened desert star !

Then, in his flesh moulded of desert-dust,
 Naked and hot with glare. callous and cruel,
 Awakened what impossible monster-lust
 Self-conflagrating ! he was even as fuel
 Kindled to flames, each flame a demon's tongue
 Leaping to lick their beauty out of shape.
 The camel-driver said: "Why ! both are young !"
 His eyes turned mouths prepared to glut and rape.
 He told them "I will help you to escape....
 Come, ride upon my virgin camel's back;
 Leaving this town let us depart in haste,
 We'll ride all night until the crimson crack
 Of the next day. We have no time to waste.
 Tomorrow waits to offer you a taste
 Of desert hospitality and fare,
 The safety of the desert, honest-bare
 Which, by your wondrous beauty, shall be graced;
 Your breath shall scent the lonely desert-air
 And every grain of desert-sand grow sweet
 Trodden but once by your angelic feet."

The queen, creature of chastity and pride,
 Knew death alone was now her surety.
 She had already passed away inside
 Her body: death had stood security.
 And, of a sudden, she collapsed and died.
 The heavens knew it was not suicide,
 But sheer corollary of purity.

The princess, lambent as a precious pearl,
 Rode on the camel's back, with naught to say:
 The camel-driver's brain was in a whirl;
 He muttered: "I will sell this lovely girl
 To some rich merchant who may come my way."

The camel journeyed league on yawning league,
 Without the slightest feeling of fatigue.
 The princess, with deep anguish overcome,
 Sat on its back, an image strange and dumb,
 As in a vacuum, unmoved, unstirred,
 Listless and far-away, without a word.

The day dawned with a sense of aftermath
 Following a night of orgiastic revelry
 In the mind's hell, old hall of devilry.

The driver all along the journey sat
 Listening to his own heart go pit-a-pat.
 As though thrice hideous demons danced within it
 Intensifying torture every minute.
 He heard wild voices mock throughout the night:
 "Rascal! it serves you right, it serves you right!"
 The day dawned with a sense of aftermath
 For the crude camel-driver.

"We have come!"

He said to her: "Here is the royal path"
 Then, in his heart, the thought began to stir:
 "The time has come for me to part from her,
 To sell her beauty for a tidy sum.
 It should be very simple, since I know,
 This is the road by which rich merchants come
 and go.....

... ..

Then, soon appeared a merchant who was known
 For fairness and for justice and for truth.
 The driver, in true auctioneering tone,
 Shouted: "Behold ! her beauty and her youth
 Are waiting to become your very own !
 Purchase her, brother Merchant ! she is worth
 The wealth of twenty Kuberas on earth !"

The merchant bought her for a princely price
 And led her home. Young Vasumati knew
 The merchant's heart was innocent of vice,
 Since every word he spoke rang scripture-true.
 "Fear not ! I am your father; lay your trust
 In me who shall protect your life with care;
 You must not ever doubt me ! Nay ! you must
 Remember I shall treat you like a prayer
 Offered in grateful thanks to God above
 Who knows I love you with paternal love."

.....

"I have brought home a gem of purest water"
 He said to Moola, his devoted wife
 Childless for years. "I have brought home
a daughter
 Who will, with meekness, serve you all your life.
 You must be kind to her; you must look after
 This lovely maiden with unceasing care;
 Then life for us shall be as running laughter,
 Our house shall change into a House of Prayer.
 She bears nobility in form and feature,
 She seems of extraordinary birth.

Surely she is no ordinary creature
But some angelic spirit come to earth.

.....

Days passed, and with the days, in Moola's breast
Grew a great jealousy all unexpressed,
Which, unsuspected, lengthened, wide-awake,
Slowly into a sneaking, slimy snake,
Stark venom dripping from its pointed fangs
A deadly mood in her had come to stay
Consuming her with hate which spread a heat
Through rib and flesh....

One day she saw a sight
Which roused her snake of jealousy to meet
Its vital moment for a fatal bite.
She saw the maiden wash her husband's feet
With such fond love as she had never known.
"So now", she said, "the drama is complete
Leaving in me no room to doubt my doubt.
My poison-snake shall gnaw her, limb and bone:
The play is done; the lights must be put out!"

.....

One morning, when the merchant left the house
On business and went into the city,
Moola, with vengeance burning on her brows,
Sent for a barber, and devoid of pity,
Wrathful decision in her tone, she said:
"Dry up that flowing cataract of hair,
And with your favourite razor shave her head,
Yea! every inch of it-and leave it bare!"

The barber did his job and went away,
 And then the girl, who offered no resistance,
 Was flogged and thrashed without the least delay,
 Then, dragged away, a solitary distance
 Where, in a ruin-rife deserted room,
 She was immured to languish in its gloom.
It must be kept a secret unrevealed;
The servant knew—but then, their lips were sealed.

The merchant soon returned and found her missing:
 "Where is our daughter?"

"She is lost, I fear !

Who could have dreamed that she would
 disappear?"

Replied the wife, a serpent in her hissing
 The sound of which her ears alone could hear.
 "Lost" cried the merchant cracking like a rock
 Beneath some devastating thunder-shock.
 And then he wandered here, and wandered there
 Looking for her : "Where have you gone ?
 O where ?

Pearl of my life ! my child ! my precious one !
 Nobody answered to relieve his sorrow—
 Today turned yesterday; each morrow's sun
 Measured, sun after sun, tomorrow on tomorrow.

.....

Mahavir walked, stern stranger to desire,
 With but his shadow as a co-wayfarer...
 At every step he seemed to walk thought fire,
 Of all fire-bearers, loneliest fire-bearer.

Nature pulsed while she saw him pass
 Along the winding road : withdrawn, alone.
 He seemed to her a many-mirrored glass
 Catching each image of her, form and tone,
 Transforming the soft greenness of the grass
 To greenness as no grass had even known;
 The blueness of all heaven to such blue
 As though Divinity sat looking through
 "We hail thee", twittered birds upon their boughs
 "Thou art a Saviour !" whispered winds and trees,
 While bald grey boulders all along the way
 Declared: "He holds the power to rouse
 Such living ecstasy in stone and clay
 As grow from more to more and comes to stay!"
 Wide wayside-ricefields chanted: "If you please,
 A Master with god-splendour on his brows
 Renders our harvest richer by degrees!"

.....

Soon he arrived and stood before a house
 Dilapidated, ruin-ravaged, dead:
 "My oath awaits fulfilment here", he said.

On the dim wall of a half-kindled room
 He noticed a young shadow move about;
 The house, it wore the aspect of a tomb,
 The air around it seemed a strangled shout;
 A door unbolted, creaked and opened wide,
 Revealing someone languishing inside.
 Mahavir thought: "At last, beyond a doubt,

The Instant hath arrived for me—and now
 I shall fulfil my most impossible Vow !
 My days of fast are done". Mahavir said:
 Each detail stood before him. There he was
 The Masterpiece to meet a Holy Cause:
 A princess more than beautiful; her head
 Clean-shaven; fetters round her hands and feet,
 A slave-girl who had had no food to eat
 For three entire sobbing nights and days—
 ' Where is the end to the Lord's dark
 inscrutable ways ? '

Black lentil-grain spread on a winnowing fan;
 She seemed true member of some angel-clan
 Who had awaited him for years and years;
 One foot across the threshold, and another
 Inside the room that gloom was out to smother !
 A room ? a lonely cell of lurking fears !
 Mahavir said : "Come hither, little Mother !
 Deal me a dole of lentils on these palms
 That have been waiting to receive an alms
 Only your hands can grant me..." Streams of tears
 Flowed from her eyes while she, before him, stood,
 Stirred at the being's core; and had begun
 To look on every man as on a son.
 The fetters round her hands and feet began
 To slip and fall and crumble. Heaven ran
 Towards her with high ecstasy untold
 And, suddenly, wild chants of angels showered
 The air with notes dropping like liquid gold
 Out of their radiant throats: all godhood flowered
 From end to of sky !

THROUGH MARTYRDOM
OF CRYING FLESH THE SPIRIT WALKETH FREE !

The princess, turned a slave-girl, slowly passed
Into a shining saint in years to come:
While Mahavir himself became a vast
Eternity inside eternity
Helping, in future, faltering feet to climb
Darkling ascents of ignorance and time.

Here ends the parable
of The Impossible Vow.

A DROP OF HONEY

A DROP OF HONEY

A certain man was walking through a jungle
dark and grim,
A swarthy elephant began to follow, follow him.
And, off and on he trumpeted while rushing
like a gale....

The man began to run and run
Until the setting of the sun—
His heart beat fast and faster !
He knew a huge disaster
Was obstinately following and following his trail..
The man by now was out of breath,
He felt his heart would fail !
The thought of sure approaching death had
made him deadly pale !

At last he found a banyan tree and climbed it
in a wink,
He had barely time to think !
The elephant that followed him with wild
excitement drunk,
Both restless and defiant,
A veritable giant

Decided with his pliant
Free undefeated trunk,
To coil and twine and twist and tease,
The banyan tree, the Tree of trees,
And pull it down with royal ease,
Yea ! from its very root !
Then, without hesitation, crush the pigmy
underfoot !
The man looked down and saw a well; and
in the well he saw
A serpent of tremendous length,
A serpent of stupendous strength,
And saw saliva slip and drip out of its open jaw.
It seemed to him, from where it hung,
That it was not so very young,
He saw the flickers of its tongue
And shook with dreadful awe !
Death seemed to say : your time has come to
pay the final price!—
You hardly guessed that all your life
I followed on your track !"

Lo ! when he turned an upward gaze
He fell into a sort of daze,
Upon the branch, on which he hung, he saw a
pair of mice.

One mouse was white as white can be, the
other one was black :

They sat together unconcerned
and nimbled at the branch.

Nibbled and gnawed; quite overawed

The poor man held his breath !

His heart-beats almost in a swoon;

his face began to blanch,

He knew the time had come for him

to meet a tragic death !

When, suddenly, his eyes beheld a honey hive
on top

From which a drop of honey was almost about
to drop.

Forgetting all about his plight (nobody can believe it)

With open mouth he waited, and he waited to receive it.

Just at that crucial moment came an angel
from the sky,

Came in a golden chariot; came down from
very high;

“Step in”, the angel said : “I come to see you
do not die !”

The man replied : "Sweet Angel ! why are you
in such a haste ?
Can you not see the honey hive perched right
upon the top ?
Before I go with you I do so want to catch the taste
That very very very small, alluring honey drop
Almost about to fall into my mouth, a honey drop
I hardly wish to waste !,"

PARABLE OF THE CRYSTAL CLOTH

PARABLE OF THE CRYSTAL CLOTH

SEQUENCE ONE

The Curtain is still unlifted. The auditorium is darkened to the clang of the gong, deep-voiced and resonant, leaving behind vibrations of sound lingering and gradually fading out. In the darkness we hear :

A DEEP VOICE

I am the Ancient Interpretor, an Invisible Sutradhar who delves into the mystery of the unborn.

I am in touch with the thoughts of every babe nestling in its mother's womb.

I hear its thoughts distinctly, since I am a State of Listening combined with a State of Voice supported by total Silence, the highest speech in creation. In the beginning was the Word, the Sound- but before the Beginning began by the Word, the Sound, there was deep absolute Silence ! **(gong is struck)**

I am created out of
 the divine stuff of bodilessness.
 Now, listen ! this day I have the task
 of interpreting the shining thoughts of
 Infant Mahavir who, at daybreak completed
 seven months of existence in the womb
 of his Mother : Woman of Destiny !
 I overheard those shining thoughts which
 almost blinded my Listening !

(gong is struck)

These were thoughts : **(sound of flute
 which continues very faintly behind the
 entire speech of the Infant in the Womb)**

I must lie still and unstirring.
 I shall lie still, unstirring : like to a
 pebble at the bottom of a deep deep well;
 like to a pearl inside an oyster at the
 bottom of a deep deep ocean;
 like to an egg inside a nest which, to
 the unborn bird, must seem deep, deep,
 deep.
 I shall lie still and unstirring, like to
 a yogi throned at the bottom of deep

deep contemplation, without a
twitch, encircled by ring within ring within
ring of tranquility.

(and now starts the tinkling
sound of temple bells.....)

The Curtain rises, revealing on the stage,
right in the centre, a beautiful Mother
caught in a patch of warm glow thrown
on to her by a shaft of light suddenly
merging out of the darkness.

MOTHER (gradually turning pale)

What has befallen ? the inside hath
all of a sudden stopped stirring !
I fear it is dead, it is dead ! or—is my
judgment, being human, an erring
Judgment, a false preconception ? Sweet
Lord of the Heavens ! be near me !
I need you ! I call to you out of the
deep deep heart : Can you hear me !
If you can not, confess you are deaf ! if
you can, you are dumb !
O speak to me ! tell me, why is my baby

so still

In the dark of my womb ? is its little

life done, to fulfil

Some mood of your firmament, some dark

demand of your Will ?

If that be so, say ! do you create to destroy ?

Are you nourished from moment to moment

on human grief ?

Does it lend you high satisfaction to

fracture our joy,

Fragment us without any ruth ?

Does it bring you relief ?

(the resonance of the tanpuras

stops...Dead silence follows)

DEEP VOICE (of the Ancient Interpreter)

The infant's thoughts begin to speak again :

Listen !

(the flute starts its music

—soft and almost in-audible, but

heart-haunting in the extreme)

The delicate Bearer of me—my Beautiful

Mother—has totally misunderstood my

intention of sparing her the least small

inconvenience or discomfort; it was only to save her from the least small torture that I had decided to lie still and unstirring inside her.

(the gong resounds)

On this blind ephemeral earth stillness is not understood, since it has not as yet come into its own. The earth-born are nervous of Immobility which is angelic, Silence which is heavenly. They do not know as yet that rootedness is true speed !

(the gong resounds)

(the flute emerges with its music out of the after-vibration of the gong)

She, in whom I remain so still and unstirring, imagines I am dead ! I am not dead; since I was never born, Mother of me ! When I come out of you you will call it birth. But all birth, as all death, is but hypnotic suggestion. Nobody is born, nobody dies. . All that is created by the Divine is necessarily divine. All that is created by the Master of the Heavens

is created out of heavenly stuff.
 Because of limited mortal vision, life
 appears mutable—but it is not !
 There is but change, and, even what
 vision names change, is only the
 kaleidoscope of the Changeless indulging,
 for the sake of humans, in ever-shifting
 patterns to cancel what, to them, might
 have seemed unbearable monotony.

**(the tanpuras resound to the sound of the
 gong the stage is darkened; a tinkle of bells
 floats across the stage, at it were, in a series
 of ascending notes)**

DEEP VOICE (of the Ancient Interpreter)

What was that I heard just now ? a little
 streak of laughter in the womb ! Listen !
 His thoughts begin to speak once more !

(the flute begins its soft music)

If only humans knew the passionate variety
 divine Monotony is !

(the gong resounds)

No, Mother of me ! No ! you shall not suffer
 my stillness any longer.

You share the Motherhood with the
mothers of seers and sages in the past;
the present; the future.

No, no, no ! I am not dead. I shall move
the tip of my little finger inside the
womb to re-assure you I am warm and alive.

I did not wish to do even that, lest the
nail of my little finger should leave a
scratch on some tissues inside your belly
that has borne me for seven months;
since such a scratch might easily
turn into a faint line on my palm—
a line of guilt to remind me
of the scratch left in you !

**(The light returns on the stage flooding it
with a warm orange glow. We see the beautiful
Mother again This time she is beaming all
over with intense joy.)**

MOTHER

Lord of the Heavens ! you are there ! you have
proved to the hilt , you are there !

I have prayed to you over and over again;
you have heard my prayer !

Indeed, you have heard my prayer, you
have heard, you have heard, you have
heard !

My womb is no charnel-house but a House
of Life since my infant hath stirred !

(We now find beside the Mother, her
husband Siddharth; her eldest son,
Nandi Vardhan; and her daughter, Sudarshana
who share the joy of the Bearer of One
who was never born and shall never die)

SIDDHARTH

What miracle is this !

NANDI VARDHAN

Mother ! what miracle is this ?

SUDARSHANA

What miracle is this, Mother ?

SIDDHARTH

You appear as though the blush of some
eternal springtide had suddenly entered
your blood and bones !

NANDI VARDHAN

You appear as though a tide had swept
a pearl beyond price from an ocean
of peace and laid it as offering at your
feet !

SUDARSHANA

You appear as though you had caught
a glimpse of the Lord Himself who creates
bloom and pearl, springtide and ocean....

MOTHER (ecstatically)

Do I only appear all you describe ?

No ! no ! no ! I am....I am....I am !!!

(gong is struck)

TOGETHER

What ?

MOTHER

I am that I am.

**(chorus of voices hum a sacred
melody which seems to come
out of the heavens**

The stage now grows pitch dark)

DEEP VOICE

I am that I am,

ANOTHER DEEP VOICE

An Al Haq !

ANOTHER DEEP VOICE

Aham Brahma Asmi !

YET ANOTHER DEEP VOICE

It is the future Lord Mahavir in the womb
who prompted the Mother to say :

I am that I am ! I am that I am !

(the stage is lit up)

MOTHER

(seeming to listen, spellbound, to the
Infant inside)

(rapturously) Do you know what he
is saying ? do you know what my
son is saying ?

SIDDHARTH

Your son ?

MOTHER

Our son.

SUDARSHANA

But Mother ! how do you know it is
a son and not a daughter.

NANDI VARDHAN

How do you know it is not a sister
but a brother who is coming to meet
me ?

MOTHER

I have seen him. He is clearer
to me than daylight ever was ! I see
his form; his features; the light of the
universe is in his face Listen ! he
is saying something; let me tell you
what he is saying (**recorded speech on tape**)
(**the Mother sits while tanpuras resound**)

They love me with love before which
the ocean shrinks to a drop; and a
firmament of planets to a mere glowworm-
throb. And such love they bear for me even
before they have seen me. Would not their

sorrow be as immeasurable as their love when, after I am born and grow old enough to conduct my own so-called earthly life, I may choose to renounce it ! renounce a world of pathetic re-lationships; its multi-painted play of illusions; yet, I shall spare my parents the agony of separation from me. I hereby swear I shall not renounce the world during their lifetime.

(the Mother bursts into hysterical laughter. Siddharth, Nandi Vardhan and Sudarshana join in the laughter)

(there is now a brief mingling of the sound of cymbal, temple bells, gong, flute and tanpuras vibrating in the darkness on the stage; then, deep stillness suddenly shot through with the groans of the Mother in travail: deep stillness for a while, and, then, a sudden cry of the babe who is born.

The light comes back to the stage, revealing a cradle being rocked by the Mother surrounded by neighbours who bring all sorts of gifts to celebrate the occasion of extreme joy in the home which has, without its knowing, received the future Master, the future LORD MAHAVIR)

ANGEL VOICES CROON A LULLABY**CRADLE SONG**

For our sake
 He ever keeps
 Wide-awake
 And never sleeps.
 He has broken the bars
 Of body and mind,
 Time's boon to mankind;
 His eyes—they are stars
 That never shall dim.
 He has come without scars
 On body and limb,
 Of birth after birth
 Upon earth after earth !
 Just look at his eyes,
 You will soon realize
 That the light of the skies
 Is cradled in Him
 Who is cradled now,
 With heaven on his brow,
 And who, for our sake,
 For ever keeps
 Wide-awake
 And never sleeps.

.....

The Commentator appears before the front
 curtain and speaks to the audience.

COMMENTATOR

Time is a traveler who will not wait,
 At no point did it ever come to stay;
 Mahavir had completed twenty-eight
 Earth-years of life; His parents passed away
 After beholding in his flowering youth,
 Eternal beauty and eternal truth.
 Parents who thirsted for the Light of God
 And sought it unfatigued, day after day;
 High contemplation was the path they trod;
 On either side of it the blinding play
 Of kindled lights proclaiming that One Light :
 Mahavir's parents vanished out of sight
 Into his Vision where, enthroned they sat,
 Crowned with what emperorship of Inwardness
 Mahavir secretly kept gazing at,
 While, outwardly, beyond all mortal guess,
 He had already won the game of chess
 Life plays with death; and, with the final pawn,
 Death was defeated, darkness was withdrawn.
**(stage is darkened. Voice continues to drums
 and dundubhi)**

Mahavir stood before his elder brother
 And said : give me permission to depart,
 I have fulfilled the oath I gave to mother
 While yet within her womb, a cradled babe,
 A solitary image in her heart;
 This being now hath turned an astralabe
 To measure summits earth may not conceive,
 Summits undrenched by hues of dawn and eve
 Making time possible. Behold, I climb

An inward staircase to the zenith-point,
 A challenge to all sense of space and time....
 I feel myself all ancestors conjoint
 In one last fire-embrace; I burn, I glow !-
 Forgive me, noble brother ! Let me go.
(the curtain rises revealing Nandi Vardhan and Mahavir)

NANDI VARDHAN

Nay, do not go ! these eyes of ours are wet
 With tears as fresh as rain but lately poured
 From clouds of grief; the wounds are bleeding
 yet,
 Wide-open, all unstemmed, as though a
 sword
 Had gashed our hearts that hardly can
 forget
 The absence of dear parents we adored,
 Worshipped and loved a lifetime. Do not go,
 Nay, do not go until another year
 Goes by-and, may that year be very slow
 In going. Do your hear ?

MAHAVIR

Indeed ! I hear
 And promise to fulfil your wish. I'll stay
 Until another year has ebbed away !
**(the stage grows dark the Voice
 of the commentator is heard)**

COMMENTATOR

The seasons follow fast; the spring arrives
 With birds and bowers and flowers, with bees
 and hives;

The summer follows nakedly to claim
Earth, bosom-bared, in its embrace of flame;
The rainy season lavishly succeeds
Conscious of cracked earth and expectant
seeds;
And then, earth starts to warm up at
root-bottom
Into fruit-miracles performed by autumn;
And last, not least, the winter comes with snow
And inexhaustible solitude, as though
It said! "The year has gone. Now let me go"!

(Conches sound everywhere)

SEQUENCE TWO

(in front of the curtain man with a drum. He beats on it with great gusto and announces at the top of his voice)

MAN WITH DRUM

The Day of days has arrived—the great Day—the Divine Moment of Renunciation which marks the Moment of Union. **(drum beats)** The Moment has come for angels to receive new angelhood through the renunciation of one Man embodying godhead; Of one Man who is about to establish a new order

on earth; a new way of Life; a new Vision embracing pebble and planet alike; embracing rootedness and winghood; stillness and movement. Behold !

(**The curtain goes up revealing :**)

SCENE

Mahavir is seated on a simple seat,
His back turned towards the audience;
He seems to be addressing a crowd of
spectators who have come to hear Him, as
also to receive alms from Him. The spectators
could be cut-outs in plywood set against
the backcloth and arranged in a semi-circle;
a gauze curtain let down from the ceiling
between the cut outs and Mahavir
who, on either side of Him, has men with
huge round vessels on their laps brimmed
over with coins Mahavir's hands draw from time
to time
and scatter amidst the expectant congregated
crowds. The dead stillness which seems
embodied in Mahavir's form, is broken by
occasional fits of the voices of multitudes.
The stage is dimly lit in violet and
green glows rendering the entire scene one
placed on a psychic plane.

Deep Voice (Mahavir's Interior Thought-Interpreter)

It is time now to declare the Cosmic Order;
 To stand on the edge of Stillness and gaze
 Across the panorama of nights and days,
 Etched in chaste aether allowing of no border,
 no boundary line, on any side,
 To divide
 Time into false division of moon and sun,
 Or to humiliate the One
 Into the Many. It is time now to declare
 To unawareness it must grow Aware !

VOICES OF THE CROWDS

He is a divine cloud showering coins
 of gold amidst us !

He smells of eternity ! what heavenly
 perfume is this which drenches the
 air around ?

There is an aura of molten orange-gold
 about his head which will soon cease to wear
 the royal crown !

His head will now be bared to the naked
 heavens which crown him King among angels !

Hush ! let us listen to a Voice from the firmament.
It is the Voice of Indra commanding
seraphic angels to prepare for Mahavir's
Initiation Ceremony !

INDRA'S VOICE

Get the Palanquin ready—the Chandra
Prabha Palanquin, illumined with a thousand
moons !

SERAPHS

The Chandra Prabha palanquin is of the intangible
stuff of blinding silver drawn from the heart-core
of planets. It is waiting patiently to bear the weight
of pure Spirit.

It is waiting impatiently to bear the Golden Lord
Mahavir to the Gnyath Khanda Gardens !

(the curtain comes down, royal music starts;
drums beat announcing the departure
of Mahavir from the kingdom which
to Him ceases to have any significance
whatsoever. A procession appears before
the curtain, preceded by players on
fifes and drums.

For the last time we see Mahavir in
royal robes : white raiment, blinding

ornaments. On either side beautiful maidens wave **chaamars** about Him seated inside the Palanquin, calm and immobile as an Idol.

Angels with wings bear the Palanquin to the Gnyath Khanda Gardens.

(**The stage dims : the curtain goes up again**)

MAHAVIR

Take back these trappings of crown and robe and ornament.

Bareness now seeks bareness;
void calls out to void ! No trappings
of jewelry or raiment ever had any place
in the Moment of Union : nakedness of earth
cries out to nakedness of sky !

A GARDEN

MAHAVIR

The calendar calculates this body of me and tells the world I am now thirty years of age. But the soul has no calendar, no calculation, no age. Even to say that the soul is ageless involves a conception of age.

There is but Oneness beyond time, place
and space; and it is a Void that stirs not; a
Void which has swallowed stillness which has
swallowed itself. I am that Void.

But who may he be who comes hither bearing a
sheet of crystal glow in his hands ?

**(A big cloud passes overhead, a
sheet of lightning flashes across
the air and the cloud vanishes
leaving behind a lavender-hued
light on the stage)**

**INDRA (appears with a sheet
of crystal-a cloth which
seems woven of moon-beams)**

I am Indra....

Behold; this cloth of crystalline glow have I
brought to cover up and grow part of Your
shining nakedness, itself the raiment
angels wear when things are born.

VOICE (from somewhere)

I am as naked as a gem
And as a cloud or tree :
When things are born the angels wear
This nakedness of me.

(INDRA goes out)

MAHAVIR

And now I am alone
 With nobody to call my own :
 The whole world trembles on the verge of me
 And shivers to an Echo in the distance :
 Existence lo ! hath passed beyond Existence !
 (the stage grows dark. Dundhubhis blare)

.....

IN THE HOUSE OF SOM

SOM'S WIFE

You are the laziest creature Time ever
 conceived and gave birth to..

SOM

Woman ! there is a song which comes back to me;
 a song I heard when my mother gave birth
 to me; at least, a song I heard when I
 was old enough to receive it with my ears
 turned sensitive to notes of music and words of
 poets.

SOM'S WIFE

Were you ever sensitive ? was any pore or cell
 of your body ever ever sensitive ?

SOM (sings, striking a pose)

I am lazy, ever lazy

And the world thinks I am crazy;

I am lazy like the clouds, I am

lazy like the flowers.

I do nothing which is something, I do

something which is nothing

For hours and hours and hours,

For hours and hours and hours !

I am lazy, ever lazy

And the world believes I'm crazy !

I am lazy like the far

Unreachable evening star;

I am lazy, ever lazy

Like the lily and the daisy;

I am lazy like a stone

That is glad to lie alone,

Without a sense of duty and without a
sense of strife,

There is laziness in beauty, yea ! and
laziness is life !

Why should, at all I roam

When I have a happy home

Even though the woman of my house, most
beautiful and young,

Occasionally proves she has a cactus
for a tongue ?

(laughs heartily)

I am lazy, ever lazy
And the world thinks I am crazy !

SOM'S WIFE

This is not the time for song or jest,
my husband ! The Great Lord Mahavir
has been granting dower upon dower
upon dower to the people of the town;
only you, born under evil planets....

SOM

What ! evil planets ? I shan't have that !
my planets were kind when I made
you my wife ! (laughs again)

SOM'S WIFE

What are your planets today if not evil, since
you alone in the whole town
have been left without a gift received at his
sacred hands ?

Listen !

(Som suddenly grows serious)

Even to receive nothing from Him
would prove a precious boon; only go and

spread your palms before Him, the very
act of spreading your palms before the
Lord Mahavir shall bring you blessing.
Go ! go ! go ! I say-go !!!

SOM

I will go, Woman ! something is happening
inside me. I know the Lord will grant me a gift;
as you say, it would still be a sacred gift
if He granted me nothing ! (**he rushes out**)

.....

MAHAVIR (on a lonely path edged with briar shrubs)

What is creation ? a myth....Nothing exists but
non-existence beyond all existence; the
ever-present reaching-point reached at every
point of that which was Never and yet is
Ever; the reaching point reached at the
end of the last figment measured by
footfalls treading imaginery distances.
The rondure of vacuum, another name
for God, for love, for all that is poured
into the illusion men call life. Life, through
everything, in reality, hungers for some

ultimate Nothing. It is on the Path of the Naught I am going towards the goal of Everything. I have come to realise that Touchlessness escapes to take cowardly shelter in all touch; Invisibility hides its identity in all visibility; the fragrance of the Eternal in the petty little perfumes of the ephemeral. I am the ultimate Signature in the scroll of the destiny of men; the last irrevocable Seal on the document of time.

SOM (who has been following Mahavir)

Master !

(Mahavir does not hear)

Master ! **(Mahavir still does not hear)**

Master !

MAHAVIR (turning round discovers Som)

And who may you be; and why do you follow me so ?

SOM (saluting him with deep adoration)

I am but one shadow of You who are the Light; all men are your shadows: what can they do other than follow, follow you ?

MAHAVIR

True Light casts no shadow.

SOM

Indeed, my Lord ! men are the shadows which cease to be, once they approach you, they cease to exist once they touch even the fringe of the Light you are !

MAHAVIR

What want you of me ?

SOM

Lord Mahavir ! you have given and given and given to all men; only this unfortunate, this so-called me, remains to be given I know it is never too late to receive a gift from the Divine Lord, since His treasures are inexhaustible.

MAHAVIR

Had you arrived earlier I would have granted a gift to delight your eyes and your hands; precious gems extracted from the crowns of earthly kings; gold extricated from the bowels of the earth.

SOM

O unfortunate that I am !

MAHAVIR

No! no! no! it is never too late.. (**he tears the cloth of crystalline glow in two**)

This is all I have left to give you. Accept it with humility and faith; half of this cloth I bear on my shoulder and tear in two, to share it with you.

(**Som receives it, somewhat gloomily**)

Be not disheartened. It carries the perfume of the bareness of my shoulder which is the perfume of renunciation. Take it and go your way.

And remember, along with it I give you my word that in some early next birth you will ask no other gift of me than the gift of Myself-the Eternal Gift granted by the Light that casts no shadow..

.....

WEAVER'S ROOM

The Weaver seated at his loom is delighted to see his friend SOM who enters, half-happy, half-sad.

WEAVER

Hello ! Brother Som !

SOM

Hello, Brother Birju ! has this morning
brought you luck ?

WEAVER

It has ! it has brought you to me ! and you
are a friend, one of the rarest friends
I have had since childhood. Friendship
is luck.

SOM

So little of friendship is left now-a-days; and
so little of luck, too !

WEAVER

No man is a friend even of himself.
In fact, every man is his own worst
enemy ! (**noticing the cloth; the Weaver's
eyes bulge with excitement**)

Why man ! what's that glowing
on your shoulder ? surely it's not your
shoulder that is glowing ! what ! what !
my eyes can hardly take the glow in;
it is a glow woven of centuries of
multi-mated moonbeams !

SOM

O ! this ? It is but a piece of cloth,
half of the cloth Lord Mahavir wore
on his shoulder.

WEAVER

Where's the other half ?

SOM

Why ! this half is on my shoulder. It's quite
simple calculation !

WEAVER (growing ecstatic)

Fool ! fool ! fool !....

Run, run after Him; speed as swift as
an arrow to reach Him; even should you
arrive at the point of a last breath, running
after Him with all the speed you can muster,
run after him with the swiftness of lightning,
the swiftness of desire; and when you over-
take Him, fall at his feet and beg Him
on the knees of all your generations of ancestors
and on the knees of all the generations
yet to come: beg Him to grant you the
other half of this half; the bride
cannot live without her bridegroom—
this half cannot live without the other
half.

SOM

What are you saying—or rather, trying to say ?
Has something gone wrong with you ?

WEAVER

Everything has gone wrong with you—
you are a fool—you are a blind man !
You do not know what I am saying—
what I am trying to say ! Go ! and I give
you my word that once we have the
two halves I shall wed them in
such a way as to cancel the truth that
they had ever been parted ! and
when I have united the two, it
will cover up the nakedness of our
penury !

SOM

I don't still understand....
jesting apart, tell me, Brother Birju ! why
are you so keen about this union of the two
pieces. How is it going to cover up
the nakedness of our penury ?

WEAVER

Two pieces become one shall lead to two
shares of the sum it shall receive at the

hands of bidders in the market; and—
believe me ! the cloth once united,
the sum once divided will, even if we
be divided, make us both millionaires !

SOM (widening his eyes)

Millionaires ! what ! what did you say ?
millionaires ? millionaires ?

**(as though in a trance, he walks for a
few seconds and then impulsively rushes out)**

**(the stage blacks out, the front curtain is
lowered)**

**(We see Som running past the front
curtain several times as though
covering great distance; then, the
front curtain rises revealing a
single tree of briers, and the
shadow of Mahavir on a platform
back-stage passing as though on a
height. The briers are luminous,
they have caught the other half of
the cloth which now hangs by a brier)**

We notice in the beautiful many-coloured
glow on the stage—a band of angels, as
though behind a veil which renders them
unreal, chant and dance round a
brier tree set in the centre of the stage.

It is glowing as though with an inward glow. Baffled and breathless, Som stands watching the angels; he is unseen, since he stands outside the stage-space at one corner of the procession. Som is dumbfounded while the song is in progress.

SONG (of angels round the briar-tree)

This is the moment of ultimate rapture,
Final performance of burning Divinity!
He is an essence no angel may capture,
Inviolat splendour of pristine virginity
Wherein our angelhood turns more angelic,
He is the peak-point of height upon height;
The halo around Him of hues psychadelic
Is whirled to a fire-point immaculate white.
Lo! even a thought of Him exiles the gloom in us
Bountiful ecstasy over us showering....
Look at the briers! they have become luminous
As though they were proof of a final god-flowering.
Clapping our hands we encircle the briers
Which have captured the glow-cloth purer than
prayer.
We are drenched in His nectars and burned in
His fires
Of which his Awareness is all unaware.

(The angels dance round the brier-tree to soft drums, the stage lit with soft psychedelic hues)

Slowly as though stricken with some mystical fear, his heart trembling with nervous joy mixed with strange imaginary premonition, Som approaches the tree and hesitates to touch the cloth, but a Voice speaks :

VOICE

Be not disheartened. It carries the perfume of the bareness of my shoulder which is the perfume of renunciation. Take it and go your way. And remember, along with it I give you my word, that in some early next birth, you will ask no other gift of me than the gift of Myself—the eternal gift granted by the Light that casts no shadow.

(Som, encouraged by the Voice, approaches closer to the brier-tree and plucks the cloth from it. That very instant, the tree loses its illumination and dims into an insignificant darkness which fades into the darkness of the stage.

Som, now almost like a pale spectre, moves warily along the stage; then, suddenly, bursts into loud laughter at which point we find him once again in the Weaver Birju's house.)

IN THE HOUSE OF THE WEAVER

WEAVER (examining the cloth)

What !

SOM (almost hysterically)

Yes !

WEAVER

Yes ?

SOM

Yes! can't you see ?

WEAVER

I'm afraid I can't ! I can't see it, but I think
I can feel it! I can't see it because it strikes me
blind with its excess of glow.

SOM

Here ! here ! (he brings the cloth close to
his eyes)

WEAVER

(sniffing as though he smells a rare perfume)

I can smell it, it bears the perfume of the
Spirit-(he almost half-closes his eyes as
in a delirium)

SOM

I can see it, you can't !

WEAVER

I can smell it - you can't

(they repeat the dialogue while coming closer to
each other. The rhythm starts them off on a dance)

SONG

SOM : I can see it..

WEAVER : I can smell it.

SOM : I begin to realise
I can see it with my nose !

WEAVER : I can smell it with my eyes !

(while the song is in progress, the Weaver's
Wife stands in the frame of the door and laughs
her sides out)

WIFE

Why this bubble, why this froth
Over just a piece of cloth ?

WEAVER

Woman ! you are more than blind !

SOM

Queer, the way she is behaving.

WIFE

Both of you have lost your mind,
You are obviously raving.

(the Wife goes back into a back-room, the
dance continues)

(they grow serious now)

SOM

What a glow ! O ! what a glow !
It bears the essence of a jewel
On the brow of timeless Time :

WEAVER

But, you know, I want to know
If such light is kind or cruel !

SOM

Brother ! it is so sublime
And we are so black within,
With a growing heap of sin
That we are unable quite
To receive unsullied light !

WEAVER

Birju says that you are right !

(just as he finishes uttering this sentence three
Women come on the scene)

(The Weaver, without noticing them, sits at his
loom and starts to join the two halves.)

RICH MERCHANT'S WIFE

I can't believe my eyes !

MINISTER'S WIFE

My eyes can't believe me !

KING'S WIFE

My eyes can't believe themselves !

SOM

Why, Ladies ! what makes you talk so ?

WEAVER (from behind his loom)

Aha ! aha ! what has befallen you, Ladies ?

RICH MERCHANT'S WIFE

We were passing this way when, all of a sudden,
without our knowing, we were drawn towards your
house, Brother Weaver !

MINISTER'S WIFE

We saw a great big glow inside your
house which drew us like a magnet,

KING'S WIFE

That's not quite true. A sea of glow
flowed through us and almost
drowned us with unbearable ecstasy.

WEAVER

(leaves his loom and comes forward)

Do you feel the glow now ?

TOGETHER

No ! No ! No !

SOM

I don't blame you, Ladies ! you are
too close to it to feel it.

WEAVER

Too close to it to see it.

TOGETHER

In fact, we begin to see a growing
darkness.

Our eyes begin to see a blank.

It is darkness, but it is laughing;

I can hear it with my eyes.

(the Weaver's Wife comes in laughing hysterically)

WIFE

Sisters ! let me tell you, you have arrived at a mad house. It was a house of sanity until Brother Som brought those three yards of cloth into it ! (she takes the cloth from the loom and shows it : two halves become one)

TOGETHER (excited)

Oh ! Oh ! Oh !

Magical visibility of the invisible
A miracle of moonbeams caught
on a wooden loom ?

I will buy it....

I shall buy it....

No, no, no,—I must buy it !

WEAVER

Lord ! has this cloth been woven of threads
of intoxication ?

SOM

(in a whisper to Birju)

Why, they are raving; they seem to be drunk,
all three of them !

WIFE

(**scornfully**)

Your company can turn anybody mad !

THE THREE LADIES

Will you put that cloth to auction ?

SOM

(**just for a joke**)

Why not ! start bidding !

RICH MERCHANT'S WIFE

A thousand suvarnas !

MINISTER'S WIFE

Two thousand !

KING'S WIFE

Three thousand !

RICH MERCHANT'S WIFE

Ten thousand !

MINISTER'S WIFE

Twenty thousand !

KING'S WIFE

Thirty thousand !

WIFE

(**laughs hysterically**)

Brother Som ! don't forget. Half and
half ! half and half !

WEAVER

Thirty thousand ! thirty thousand !

Thirty thousand !

RICH MERCHANT'S WIFE

Thirty five thousand.

MINISTER'S WIFE

I make it forty !

KING'S WIFE

I make it a hundred thousand suvarnas !

SOM

A hundred thousand ! (looks at the cloth with
deep reverence and talks
to it)

Dear wonderful wheel of magic ! O precious
cloth woven of the threads of all the
planets revolving in the firmament !

O unspeakable compassion of the
Lord Mahavir ! A hundred thousand suvarnas !

WEAVER

You are talking as though your brain had become
the market-square of a hundred thousand lunatics !

KING'S WIFE

A hundred thousand suvarnas !

SOM (coolly)

Any higher bid ?

(silence)

A hundred thousand ! Once, twice—

WEAVER

(clinging to the cloth as though to the feet of the Lord)

Are you daft, Brother Som !

Do you truly want to exchange this cloth for a
hundred thousand yellow coins ?

Is your soul jaundiced ?

No ! no ! no ! you shall not sell it !

WIFE OF WEAVER (mockingly)

He shall sell it ! Is this cloth going
to feed us by its mere presence in
this house ; this silly piece of cloth that
seems to have come to us to dislocate
our home ! Sell it ! sell it !

VOICE (from somewhere)

You want to sell that which had
kissed the bare shoulder of the Lord !
you want to sell a precious, the
most precious of all gifts given by Him ?

(A miracle takes place now : the stage grows
dark and vaguely we see all the characters transfixed
and immobile - they are, as it were, transformed
for a while into statues staring at the cloth which
has become a blood-red glow)

THE VOICE (continuing)

Look ! look ! it has turned red ; it blushes with shame at the very thought that you have at all thought of bartering it ! Bartering it, you will only barter your soul !

(very uncanny music sounds)

You need not barter it for gold coins. Here ! collect them ; the Lord Mahavir is showering them to save, not His gift (**showers of gold coins**) from humiliation, but your soul—
your soul !

(A sudden chorus of sobbing) ;

all the characters kneel before the cloth ; complete darkness
then the spotlight glows on one lone Figure : Mahavir, the Lord, with His hand stretched in blessing.

(CURTAIN)

GOLDEN WORDS OF BHAGWAN MAHAVIR

GOLDEN WORDS OF BHAGWAN MAHAVIR

To turn a million soldiers pale
And make whole armies yield
In shamefullest defeat upon
The crowded battlefield,
Were hollow for a hero
Like you whose only goal
Must ever be the conquest of
The solitary soul.

Since every moment is sublime,
O Gautam ! do not waste it:
Love spreads a wedding-feast of time,
Let your Eternal taste it.

....

Donating a whole herd of cows,
You do but hope in vain,
By way of despicable bribe,
For spiritual gain;
Yet are you more than well aware:
True Grace can but begin
Within the kingdom of the heart
Builted of discipline.

Since every moment is divine,
O Gautam ! do not waste it:

Each moment is God's cup of wine,
Let your Eternal taste it.

....

There are many sorts of triumph:
Proud conquest over pride,
Desire and greed and glooms of flesh
A lifetime multiplied;
And there are countless conquests
On earth, both great and small,
But the soul's evasive conquest
Is the greatest of them all.

Since every moment honey drips,
O Gautam ! do not waste it:
Each honey-drop awaits your lips,
Let your Eternal taste it !

....

Time stains us with its seasons,
With hues which crash and splinter,
Life's temporary seasons:
Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter.
The tree of life turns yellow,
Its leaves grow frail and sere,
And one by one begin to fall
Only to disappear.

Since every moment nectar brims,
O Gautam ! do not waste it;

Through all the pores of all your limbs,
Let your Eternal taste it !

....

Along the lonely road of life,
At every step beset with
Unfeeling briars and pointed stones;
What obstacles are met with !
And yet, for all those stones and briars
That meet us everywhere,
Life is a heaven-granted boon
Both exquisite and rare !

Since every moment is replete
O Gautam ! do not waste it:
Life's every moment is so sweet,
Let your Eternal taste it !

....

Without our knowing time escapes
Through us, and speeds away,
The body withers like a tree,
The hair turns ashen grey;
Without our knowing life escapes
Leaving behind desires
In mournful solitary quest
Of hungry funeral-pyres !

Since every moment trickles through,
O Gautam ! do not waste it:
Each moment is a drop of you,
Let your Eternal taste it !

....

The lotus blooms in autumn-time,
 Unsullied, white and cool;
 Its virgin loveliness in born
 Out of a muddy pool.
 Behold ! it stands aloof, apart
 In self-security,
 Thrice self-assured of burgeoned peace
 And lambent purity.

Since every moment comes to pass,
 O Gautam! do not waste it;
 Catch it and brim your empty glass,
 Let your Eternal taste it.

.....

This body is a vessel
 On the ocean of existence,
 Sailing across its wastes of waves
 It covers lonely distance.
 The sky has met your voyage
 With both favour and disfavour.....
 Now that you are about to reach
 The shore, you must not waver.

Since every moment drips with love,
 O Gautam ! do not waste it:
 It has been granted from above,
 Let your Eternal taste it !

.....

In ignorance, a lifetime through,
 Bearing a heavy load,
 Unfortunate Wayfarer !
 You have trod a lonesome road;
 Crossways you have encountered
 And shall encounter yet;
 While you forget the only road ,
 That road does not forget !

Since every moment is supreme,
 O Gautam ! do not waste it:
 It bears the essence of a dream,
 Let your Eternal taste it:

....

