

आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः ।

*Let noble thoughts come to us from every side.*

— *Rigveda, I. 89. i*

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**BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY**

*General Editors*

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MEVAR PATAN

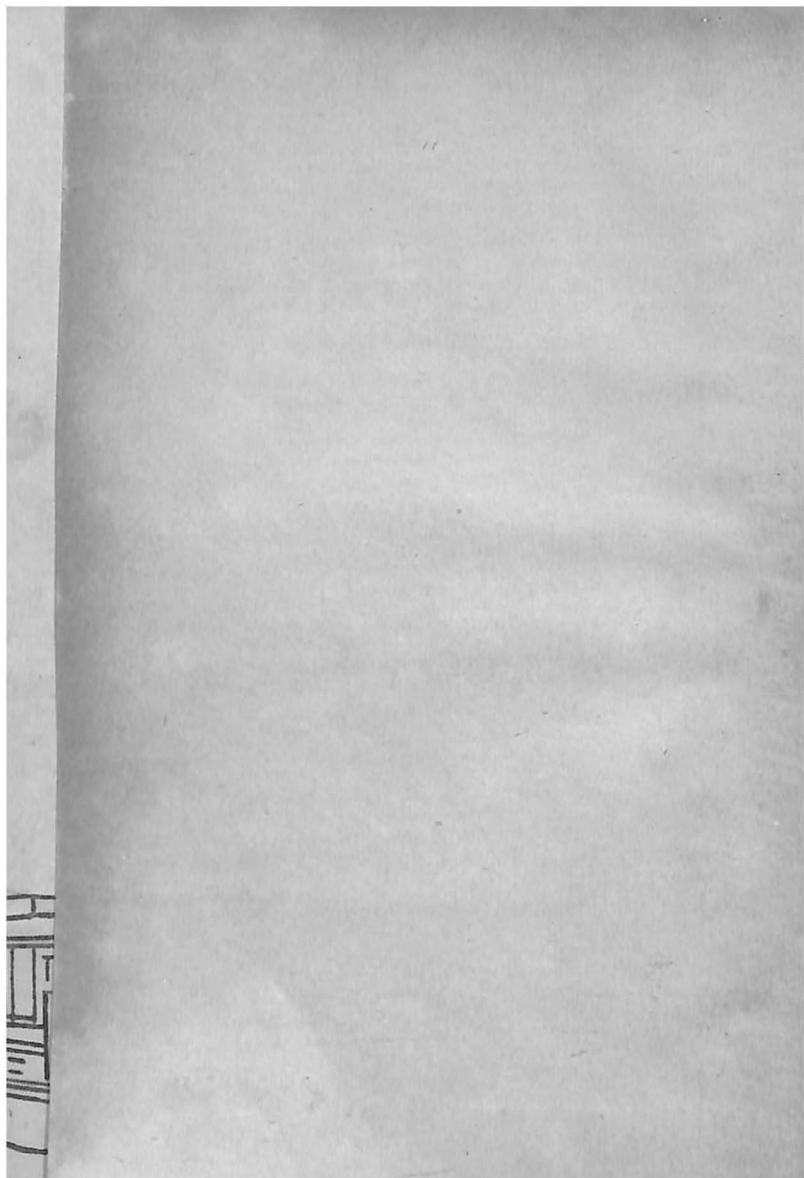
OR

FALL OF MEVAR

By

DWIJENDRALAL ROY

**CATALOGUED**



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BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

MEVAR PATAN

OR

FALL OF MEVAR

[ A PLAY IN FIVE ACTS ]

BY

DWIJENDRALAL ROY

Translated from Bengali

By

DILIP KUMAR ROY

BRYAN RHYS

JOYCE CHADWICK



1958

BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN  
CHAUPATTY, BOMBAY

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## GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

THE Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan—that Institute of Indian Culture in Bombay—needed a Book University, a series of books which, if read, would serve the purpose of providing higher education. Particular emphasis, however, was to be put on such literature as revealed the deeper impulsions of India. As a first step, it was decided to bring out in English 100 books, 50 of which were to be taken in hand almost at once. Each book was to contain from 200 to 250 pages and was to be priced at Rs. 2/-.

It is our intention to publish the books we select, not only in English, but also in the following Indian languages: Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.

This scheme, involving the publication of 900 volumes, requires ample funds and an all-India organisation. The Bhavan is exerting its utmost to supply them.

The objectives for which the Bhavan stands are the re-integration of the Indian culture in the light of modern knowledge and to suit our present-day needs and the re-suscitation of its fundamental values in their pristine vigour.

Let me make our goal more explicit:

We seek the dignity of man, which necessarily implies the creation of social conditions which would allow him freedom to evolve along the lines of his own temperament and capacities; we seek the harmony of individual efforts and social relations, not in any makeshift way, but within the frame-work of the Moral Order; we seek the creative art of life, by the alchemy of which human limitations are progressively transmuted, so that man may become the instrument of God, and is able to see Him in all and all in Him.

The world, we feel, is too much with us. Nothing would uplift or inspire us so much as the beauty and aspiration which such books can teach.

In this series, therefore, the literature of India, ancient and modern, will be published in a form easily accessible to all. Books in other literatures of the world, if they illustrate the principles we stand for, will also be included.

This common pool of literature, it is hoped, will enable the reader, eastern or western, to understand and appreciate currents of world thought, as also the movements of the mind in India, which, though they flow through different linguistic channels, have a common urge and aspiration.

Fittingly, the Book University's first venture is the *Mahabharata*, summarised by one of the greatest living Indians, C. Rajagopalachari; the second work is on a section of it, the *Gita*, by H. V. Divatia, an eminent jurist and a student of philosophy. Centuries ago, it was proclaimed of the *Mahabharata*: "What is not in it, is nowhere." After twenty-five centuries, we can use the same words about it. He who knows it not, knows not the heights and depths of the soul; he misses the trials and tragedy and the beauty and grandeur of life.

The *Mahabharata* is not a mere epic; it is a romance, telling the tale of heroic men and women and of some who were divine; it is a whole literature in itself, containing a code of life, a philosophy of social and ethical relations, and speculative thought on human problems that is hard to rival; but, above all, it has for its core the *Gita*, which is, as the world is beginning to find out, the noblest of scriptures and the grandest of sagas in which the climax is reached in the wondrous Apocalypse in the Eleventh Canto.

Through such books alone the harmonies underlying true culture, I am convinced, will one day reconcile the disorders of modern life.

I thank all those who have helped to make this new branch of the Bhavan's activity successful.

1, Queen Victoria Road  
New Delhi  
3rd October 1951

K. M. MUNSHI

## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

THE translation here presented has, by no means, been an easy task : first because the temper of the English language is very different from that of modern Bengali and secondly because it is enormously difficult to carry over in a translation the subtle nuances and suggestive images which abound in Dwijendralal's inimitable style. Also, in this drama, the flaming exhortations alternate constantly with spontaneous poetic prose starred with exquisite songs of deep pathos none of which is easy to convey in a language whose temperament has little kinship with our emotional fervour and as such may very well sound exotic. All this was borne home to me as I went on struggling to retain as much of the beauty of this great drama as I could, sustained only by its moving message which I have loved since my boyhood days.

So, conscious of my limitations, I consulted Sir Earnest Rhys during my stay in England in 1927 as I had admired him all along as one of the foremost men of letters in modern England, a sensitive critic who, I was told, had helped Rabindranath Tagore when he was translating his own poems. He very kindly read through this drama in typescript, but although he praised it unstintedly, he advised me to get it revised by a competent Englishman. It was then that I met his son, Mr. Bryan Rhys, but for whose



innate nobility, eager sympathy and enthusiastic response this heart-warming drama would perhaps never have seen the light. For he fell in love with the drama at once and devoted a great deal of his valuable time to the work of revision. Happily also, he was a man to whom insight and imagination were native. Otherwise, he would not have been able to preserve what I was anxious to preserve before everything else: the old world atmosphere of the language (an atmosphere of rich and fiery emotions) and its lavish and spontaneous poetry. For, Dwijendralal was above all a poet and mystic, though — for a long time — many failed to realise this even in Bengal. But Mr. Rhys did not miss this and so could revise in the right attitude of penetrative understanding and imaginative sympathy.

I was overjoyed, and that for a personal reason too. I will hazard mentioning it.

He was my father. So naturally I followed intimately the psychic changes in his life with deep sympathy and reverence. I began to revere his patriotism, too, the first fire of which had made him swiftly famous in the Swadeshi days when he wrote patriotic dramas one after the other. He was a poet and a man of outstanding nobility of character. But he was, as an artist, highly sensitive to his circumambient atmosphere. It was then the heyday of Bengali patriotism and he caught its contagion, a contagion we should avoid to-day. But in those days we took militant patriotism at its face value and so persuaded ourselves that it was the panacea for all the evils our flesh was heir to. We know better now. But in the first flush of our patriotic adolescence we had all devoutly believed in the gospel of nationalism (which came, ever since, to suck-mankind down

into real hell with the pledge of a phantom heaven) and had burned with hatred of everything foreign. How easy, alas, to glare at others as the repository of iniquity forgetting our blackest sins !

It was at this point that Dwijendralal grew suddenly and utterly sick of patriotism. It was at this turning-point of his life that he wrote *Fall of Mevar*. And it was only then that we, his deep admirers, discovered that patriotism was a false guide.

After this drama the Poet bade farewell to parochial patriotism and inclined more and more towards mysticism: his last work was a religious-mystic drama woven round the great figure Bhisma of the Mahabharata. As I look back, I can recapture still that long-lost thrill — the thrill of bearing witness to a radical conversion of a great soul. That is why, ever since his premature death, my one desire has been to translate this drama where, for the first time, his vision as a seer and poet of humanity transcended his burning love for his parish, his country. His other great dramas (e.g., Rana Pratap, Durga Das, Shahjahan, Chandragupta) were certainly more *popular* but most people will, I think, agree that, of all his *historical* dramas, *Mevar Patan* is his most outstanding creation with a message for all times, a message borne home with rare art and mastery of dramatic technique. It is a drama that will live when his patriotic dramas will all have been consigned to the limbo of oblivion.

The song "Darling of soul !" is translated from the poet's drama *Chandragupta* and the song "Why is the moon so beautiful" is taken from his drama *Nurjehan*. These I substitute because of their deeper beauty.

The songs of this drama I have translated only recently under the guidance and inspiration of Sri Aurobindo who revised them all. I altered a few lines here and there under his direction.

24-11-'44

DILIP KUMAR ROY

Postscript. For the second edition, Miss Joyce Chadwick revised it once again with meticulous care for which I thank her sincerely. She wrote to me from England (20-1-49): "Thank you for the fine experience of knowing this great and most moving play."

"My dear Dilip Kumar Roy," wrote Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru from Almora (31-5-46): "I thank you for sending me *Fall of Mevar* . . . . This morning I read it under the trees and I liked it very much. It is powerful and moving."

March 1958  
Hari Krishna Mandir  
Poona - 5

**DEDICATION**

To my dear and esteemed friend

**SRI K. M. MUNSHI**

who understands

and believes

with love

**POONA**  
**11-7-56**

**D. K. R.**



## INTRODUCTION

DWIJENDRALAL ROY, though his name is little known as yet in Europe\* has long been acknowledged as the greatest Indian dramatist of modern times. But, as the following tragedy will tend to show, his genius was extremely versatile and he has other claims to fame in his own country. As a poet he takes rank only after that other great writer of modern Bengal, Rabindranath Tagore. Like him, Dwijendralal Roy has permanently enriched the poetry of India, and it has been regretted that he published no more than three books of poems and lyrics — *Mandra* (Tranquillity), *Alekhya* (Painting) and *Triveni*.

His name is also linked with those of Tagore and Atulprasad Sen in the great triad of modern Indian composers. Many of his songs — lyrical, devotional, patriotic — are sung to this day in the village streets of Bengal. *Amar Desh* (my country) and *Amar Janma Bhumi* (my birth-place) are looked upon as the national songs of Bengal, if not of India itself.

It was as a writer of humorous and popular songs that Dwijendralal Roy made his entry into the field of literature while yet in his teens, and he is now recognised to be the finest satirist and humourist of modern India. Writing of his poems and satires in his "Modern Literature" published in the nineties, Tagore hailed them as "the unmistakable

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\*Some of his songs have been translated by Otto von Glasnapp, the German Orientalist, and published in his *Indische Gedichte aus vier Jartavsenden*. Klabund, in *Weltgeschichte in einer Stunde*, refers to him as the most celebrated Indian dramatist of modern times.

signs not only of a rich and unique vein of humour but of a remarkable mind which has stepped into the realm of literature to inspire and uplift his countrymen." His comic songs, the best-known being *Hasir gan*, were the first of their kind in India and are still sung before large audiences. His humorous sketches in verse, *Asarhe*, are scarcely less popular, while his farces — *Purvajanma* (rebirth of a Credulous Miser), *Viraha* (Pangs of Conjugal Separation) and *Pra-yaschitta* (Pains and Penalties of Would-be Westernisation) were often played in the public and private theatres of Bengal.

It is, however, as a dramatist that Dwijendralal Roy is most famous in India. His dramas are translated into almost every Indian language, and have been played throughout the length and breadth of Hindustan. During the last twenty years of his life, most of which was spent in the drudgery of a Government department in the province of Bengal, he composed ten dramas, historical, social, mythological; five farces; three volumes of poetry; two volumes of comic songs and satirical sketches; two studies in criticism; one opera, and a number of essays. Thus, in the versatility of his literary activities, he is justly looked upon as second only to Tagore.

He died in 1913, at the comparatively early age of forty nine: a stroke of apoplexy seized him while the pen was in his hand. Thus he was carried off at the height of his powers and literary fame. Shortly after his death, two biographies were published — a remarkable testimony in itself, when it is remembered that nine-tenths of the people of Bengal remain illiterate.

It was inevitable that the names of Dwijendralal Roy and Rabindranath Tagore should be closely connected in

the annals of modern literature. Unfortunately, the admirers of these two writers came to range themselves, under the influence of controversial minds, in hostile camps, as the partisans of literary rivals. A regrettable estrangement ensued which separated the two friends during the last five years of Dwijendra's life. One echo only of this well-nigh historic controversy need here be heard:

"I have always", wrote Tagore, in prefacing one of his biographies, "taken deep delight in the poetical gifts of Dwijendralal Roy, even when he was comparatively little known to the literary public of Bengal . . . . The only thing worthy of note, as far as my relationship with him is concerned, is that I have always felt the profoundest admiration for his lofty genius".

*Mevar Patan* is probably the greatest of all Dwijendralal Roy's dramas. The theme is historical and takes us back to the beginning of the 17th century, to the reign of Jehangir, unworthy son of the renowned Emperor Akbar. The action centres round the small independent Hindu state of Mevar in the province of Rajputana. This province was divided into a number of lesser states, ruled over by as many independent, chivalrous and war-like chiefs who were constantly warring among themselves. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Babar, the first Moghul invader, found them too weak and divided to oppose him. One by one, the independent states of Rajputana fell, until, at the time of Akbar's death, every ruler except the Rana of Mevar was compelled to acknowledge the sovereignty of the Moghul Emperor at Delhi, and to pay tribute to his court.

But Mevar was to fall also. Already the capital, Chitore, had been lost during the reign of Akbar. But the rulers of



Mevar still refused to bow down to the Moghuls; on the beautiful hills of the Aravalli, they founded a new capital at Udaipur.

It is the epic of the downfall of Mevar, conceived in all its solemnity and grandeur, which forms the subject of this drama.

Last but not one of the rulers of Mevar was the great Rana Pratap, whose name is referred to constantly in successive scenes. This almost legendary figure has bequeathed to his countrymen the name of patriotism and liberty. His proverbial courage is a living memory in the minds of his countrymen; it inspires them in their desperate struggles and presides over every phase of the tragedy.

1927

London

BRYAN RHYS

—OoO—

# ACT I

## Scene I.

*Govind Singh's house. Mid-day. Govind Singh and his son Ajay.*

GOVIND SINGH: So the Rana has been informed?

AJAY: Yes, father !

GOVIND: Who broke the news to him?

AJAY: I cannot tell.

GOVIND: And what did the Rana say when he learned that the Moghul army was marching to attack Mevar?

AJAY: The Rana's one desire was to sign a treaty and make peace with the Moghuls. Tomorrow, in the first hour, he will hold an assembly, and he commands all his chieftains to be present. He commands your presence also.

GOVIND: Why does he summon me ?

AJAY: To consult you.

*A Pause*

GOVIND: But I have never counselled anyone in such matters, Ajay ! All my life has been spent in fighting. The clash of glittering swords, the mournful blare of bugles, the neighing of horses, the rending cry of death—these are what I know. Of the making of peace with an enemy, I understand next to nothing. I do not know how it is done, Ajay !

*Ajay is silent. Govind Singh ponders with bowed head.*

Why does the Rana wish for peace ? Did he tell you ?

AJAY: The Rana said that Mevar has become very prosperous of late, and he would not allow streams of blood to flow through this green and fertile Kingdom.

GOVIND: And to avert this bloodshed, you tell me we must unloose the Moghul's sandals, do you, and carry them on our heads? (*Sighing*) Yet I knew it would come to this, Ajay! The sacred poverty and valour of my younger days have vanished from among us and luxury and soft enjoyment stepped into their place. On the day when the great Rana Pratap died, I felt within me that the hour of Mevar's downfall had struck. Did not that great ruler prophesy with his dying breath that the jewels of Mevar would be sold at auction at the feet of the Moghuls during his own son's reign? And already the Moghuls are drunk with the dark wine of power. In the fever of their blood, they will destroy us utterly. All will be lost.

AJAY: The Rana also said that the citizens of Mevar lacked strength to withstand the Moghuls and that their blood would be shed uselessly.

GOVIND: And do you think so, too, Ajay? Are we to be intimidated by the scarecrow of defeat and cower in abject surrender? Ajay! I know that the Moghul is King of Delhi. I know also that it is a great sin to take up arms against a King. But can we forget either that so far the kingdom of Mevar has stood erect in its freedom? Free it shall continue to be so long as Govind Singh draws breath. He shall not sell our kingdom. Through seven dark centuries the blood-red banner of Mevar has floated proudly upon her mountain-peaks, defying whirlwind and thunder. Shall we let that banner be torn down simply because the Moghuls'

eyes are fierce ? Never . . . . Go and tell the Rana that I, for one, am for war.

*(Exit Ajay)*

*Govind Singh goes to the wall, takes down his sword and belt, unsheathes the sword, and holds it out.*

Dear comrade, so long as you stay in my hands, beware lest the shadow of an insult fall across the Rana's path. I have been very forgetful of you, trusty friend! Is that why you have lost so much of your brightness? Take heart, good comrade! I bid you to war for Mevar's sake. Before long, you shall drink the hot blood of the Moghuls. Pardon me, dear comrade! *(He presses the sword to his breast, then slowly tries to brandish it.)* No . . . . my hand trembles. I have grown too old.

*He sits down with his sword across his knees and rests his head between his hands. His eyes fill.*

Lord, my Lord! What have you done? *(He raises his sword and clasps it.)*

*Enter Kalyani, his daughter.*

KALYANI: Father, what does this mean?

GOVIND: Listen, Kalyani —

KALYANI: No, no, father! You must put away that sword. What has made you take it in your hands to-day? Your eyes frighten me, father! Do put the sword down.

GOVIND: Look at it, Kalyani! See how terrible it is, how terrible, yet how beautiful! Do you know what it craves?

KALYANI: What ?

GOVIND: Blood.

KALYANI: Whose blood ?

GOVIND: The blood of the Moghuls.

KALYANI: Why is this hatred of the Moghuls so deep-rooted in your heart, father ?

GOVIND: Go and ask Mevar, the land of your birth, Why ? For seven hundred years the Moghuls have tried again and again to engulf the one Kingdom left free. Again and again they have been forced to retire like waves shattered on a rock. Of what crime has Mevar been guilty ? When men are drunk with the wine of ambition, justice and freedom are no law to them; then the sword alone can check their frenzied course . . . But alas ! Kalyani, I have grown old, very old.

*Kalyani sheds tears.*

Why do you weep, Kalyani ? Are you afraid ? See then, I have sheathed my sword. Why should you be afraid ? Come, little mother — out in the garden.

KALYANI: I am coming, father !

*(Exit Govind Singh)*

O father, if you could but know ! If you could but understand !

*Her eyes fill again.*

**Scene II**

*The road to Udaipur. Afternoon. Enter Satyavati and her band of peasant men and women singing in chorus.*

Mevar mountain, Mevar mountain !  
in whose valleys fought our King  
Pratap, a stranger — like thy peak —  
to the shadow of fear and suffering.

Upon thy plains Padmini's beauty  
flared into a fatal flame,  
And frenzied warriors round her warred,  
though none survived the prize to claim.

Thou wavest still defiantly  
thy blood-red banner in the breeze,  
Quelling alien myrmidons  
through seven shining centuries !

Mevar mountain, Mevar mountain !  
from whose heights rich rivers fall  
Down fertile sapphire-glistening vales  
with echoes — rich, perennial !

In thy fair groves the peacocks hymn  
thy seasons' myriad-mooded grace,  
And from thy glens soft winds bring rumours  
of thy heart of tenderness.

Thou wavest still defiantly  
thy blood-red banner in the breeze,  
Quelling alien myrmidons  
through seven shining centuries.

Mevar mountain, Mevar mountain !  
 thy purple peaks impale the cloud !  
 How round thy brow the Heaven's own moonbeams  
 weave a tremulous mystic shroud !

O ancient home of sylvan glory,  
 O nest of sleep and harmony,  
 Who breathest into Mevar's maids  
 high courage, love and purity !

Thou wavest still defiantly  
 thy blood-red banner in the breeze,  
 Quelling alien myrmidons  
 through seven shining centuries.

*As the song ends Ajay Singh comes in.*

SATYAVATI: Tell me, are you one of the Rana's soldiers ?

AJAY: I am, good mother !

SATYAVATI: Then you can answer my question: Is there any truth in what we have heard ?

AJAY: What have you heard, kind mother ?

SATYAVATI: That the Moghul armies have invaded Mevar.

AJAY: Not yet, but they will — unless the Rana consents to make peace with them. The Moghul Commander has sent an envoy to the Rana to learn, once and for all, whether he is for peace or for war.

SATYAVATI: Are you all ready to fight ?

AJAY: We are ready to obey the Rana's commands.

SATYAVATI: Then you do not know what the Rana has decided.

AJAY: No, but he appears to incline towards peace. He has sent for my father to the palace to consult with him.

SATYAVATI: Who is your father ?

AJAY: Govind Singh, Commander-in-Chief of the Mevar army.

SATYAVATI: So he is your father ? And what does he say ?

AJAY: He is for war.

SATYAVATI: Brave news ! Great news ! I thank you for it.

*(Exit Ajay)*

Can it be possible that the Rana should think of making peace with the Moghuls? The peerless Rana Pratap's son? How can he dream of such a thing? There must surely be some mistake. Friends, wait for me under that tree. I shall come back soon.

*She runs out.*

### Scene III

*The Assembly Hall in Udaipur. Morning. Rana Amar Singh seated on a throne with Chieftains standing on either side. Govind Singh stands apart from the rest.*

JAYA SINGH: Rana, now that the Moghul hordes are at the gates of the city, it is the sacred duty of every Rajput in Mevar to offer them battle. We are all of one mind. We are ready to fight.

RANA: Jaya Singh, is it not utter folly for us to attempt to oppose the enormous forces of Jehangir, the acknowledged Emperor of all Hindustan?

KESHAV SINGH: The courage of a Kshatriya never calculates, Rana !



KRISHNADAS: Was it folly, do you think, that impelled your father, the late Rana Pratap Singh, to defy the Moghuls throughout his reign ?

RANA: Rana Pratap ? Is this a fitting moment to recall such a name as that ? He was more than a man.

SHANKAR: He was a Rajput, Sire.

RANA: No, Shankar, you have underestimated him. He was a heaven-sent power, a thunderbolt that shook the earth. He only took the form of a Rajput to glorify our race. Whence he came, and whither he has gone, who can say ? Few can hope to emulate him.

KRISHNADAS: True, Sire, but when we hope that the Rana Pratap's son will follow in his father's steps, do we ask too much ? Rana Pratap Singh gave his life for Mevar's liberty. Shall his son accept slavery at the Moghul's hands, without striking a single blow in self-defence ?

RANA: Krishnadas, these are only fine-sounding words. Within the last few years, Mevar's citizens have grown wealthy, happy and prosperous. The whole kingdom breathes deeply of peace and plenty. Are we to throw all this away for the sake of a mere vain bellicosity ? Another way lies open: By paying light tribute to the enemy, we can save all from ruin.

SHANKAR: Tribute to the enemy ? Who is this Moghul ? Whence comes he ? By what right does he claim tribute from the descendants of Lord Shree Ramachandra ?

RANA: Shankar, is it not wiser to preserve our land in its peace and plenty by making one small gesture of goodwill, rather than risk our all ? What do you think, Govind Singh ?

GOVIND (*startled*): I - ? I do not know. All this is beyond me. I do not understand joy and plenty and peace, as you

call them. I only know what sorrow means. From my childhood up, I have been the friend of hardship. I was brought up in the school of risks and dangers. Rana, for twentyfive years I wandered with your father Pratap Singh through forest and desert land. I have scaled countless mountains without food and without sleep. I learned, at his feet, to live a life of denial. I have learned the deep sweetness of sorrow. I have learned to suffer for the sake of others. How sweet it is ! How sweet to suffer poverty and want for a great cause ! So also, the golden kiss of the sun falls more tenderly on the roof of the lowly cabin than on the proud pinnacles of palaces. Rana, what days have I known ! What glorious days ! . . . . .

JAYA: Why are you silent, Govind Singh ? Go on.

GOVIND: What is there left to say, Jaya Singh ? . . . . . And yet . . . and yet . . . I have seen the dwellings of my godlike King pulled down, and pleasure-palaces springing up in their place. In the shadow of that mountain, which once re-echoed to his glorious name, I have seen the pleasure-mongers build their bowers. Of all his victories, what is left ? With these feeble eyes, I have seen his fiery grandeur melt away to vanish into the skies. What is left to us now, Jaya Singh ? Only the last gleam of that faded glory. I see nothing but a dying splendour lying on a bed of death, gazing at us with dulled and piteous eyes, waiting for the final hour.

KESHAV: So long as *you* live, Govind Singh, that splendour will not die.

GOVIND: So long as I live ? What can *I* do, Keshav Singh ? My shaking hands can scarcely hold a sword. My bones decay within my body till I cannot use them. Even so, O Rana, I feel a burning desire within me to be out among the forests and on the mountains, there to suffer

any sweet sorrow that may be necessary for the sake of the holy Motherland . . . to weep and share the sorrows of my brothers. O God, cruel God, to think you have robbed me of that strength I had once, to bear sorrows!

*A hush ensues . . . .*

RANA: But, Govind Singh . . . . every head in Aryavarta has bowed now before the Moghuls' feet. Is it not sheer madness that little Mevar should try to stand before their innumerable world-conquering hosts?

GOVIND: Rana, I have nothing more to say.

RANA (after a pause): I hold that little good can come of our resistance now. We will make peace with the Moghul general. Let his envoy be summoned.

*(Exit soldier)*

GOVIND: Rana Pratap, Rana Pratap! May the sky veil your face from this woeful pronouncement and a cloud stop your ears! Thunder, override these abject words in your deafening blare! Mevar, may earth split and devour you, before you bow in shame beneath the Moghul yoke!

*Enter the envoy*

RANA: Go and tell your general that we are ready to sign a treaty of peace.

*Satyavati rushes in*

SATYAVATI: Never! Never! Noble chiefs, arm yourselves for battle. If the Rana will not lead you, I will.

GOVIND: Who are you, mother, standing there like transfixed lightning in this deepening dark? Whose deep tender voice do I hear?

RANA: Who are you?

SATYAVATI: Only a peasant woman. I go from village to village, throughout the Kingdom of Mevar, singing the praises of our Motherland. That is all you need to know about me.

*Stir among the Assembly, murmurs, then cries of "Wonderful, wonderful!"*

SATYAVATI: Noble chiefs, let the Rana be. Leave him to dream his dreams of pleasure in the palace-bowers of Udainagar. I will lead you to the battlefield.

GOVIND: How can this be? Is this the fire of second youth which I feel mounting in my blood? What ecstasy is this? What mad delight? Lords and Chieftains, it is for us to rescue the son of Rana Pratap Singh from this deep disgrace. Shatter the painted toys which are his playthings!

*He picks up a footstool and wildly hurls it against a mirror which shivers into fragments.*

RANA: Very well, Govind Singh, the die is cast: I shall fight. Messenger of the Moghuls, it is war! Go and tell them to bridle my stallion.

SATYAVATI: Victory to the Rana of Mevar!

ALL: Victory to the Rana of Mevar!

#### Scene IV

*Mohabat Khan's house at Agra. Dawn. Commander Mohabat Khan and Abdulla, the Moghul General, are discovered.*

MOHABAT: I hear that Hidayat has been appointed General?

ABDULLA: Yes. *Janab!*

MOHABAT: Hidayat ! Are you sure the news is true ?

ABDULLA: Certain. The Emperor has set him at the head of an army of fifty thousand.

MOHABAT: Hidayat . . . . . a general ! Still, after all why not? Merit, in these times, is little accounted of; men despise it. And mushrooms are to be found springing out of every dung-heap.

ABDULLA: True, *Janab* ! Hidayat Ali Khan became Khan Khanan Bahadur simply because he happened to be the Emperor's nephew.

MOHABAT: Nobody quarrels with him on that account. But to be put at the head of a great army ! . . . . . Inayat Khan, his brother-in-law, is accompanying him, I believe ?

ABDULLA: He may.

MOHABAT: Inayat Khan knows what fighting means. The Emperor was probably well aware of that, and made Hidayat Commander in name only. The real Commander is Inayat, I'll be bound.

ABDULLA: Even so, one doesn't become Commander, even in name, unless one can bear the sound of a gun.

MOHABAT: Let that pass. The coming war with Mevar — well, it's not difficult to foretell what kind of a war that will be.

ABDULLA: Did the Emperor ask you to take part in it ?

MOHABAT: He did.

ABDULLA: Then why did you decline ?

MOHABAT: Mevar is the land of my birth. If the Emperor commanded me to go to Bengal, the Deccan, Kabul, or to any other place for that matter, I would be ready to start this minute. But I cannot bear the idea of joining him in an attack on Mevar.

ABDULLA: Perhaps you are right: Mevar is your birth-place. Give me leave to go now, Khan Saheb! It is growing late. I salute you.

MOHABAT: And I, you.

*(Exit Abdulla)*

This is great news, indeed! Our Hidayat Ali, the Commander of an army! You might as well lay hold of a tottering hunchback and force him to mount a horse saddled in gold! Well . . . . Well . . . .

### Scene V

*Camp of the Moghuls. Noon. The Moghul Commander Khan Khanan Hidayat Ali Khan Bahadur and his attendant Hussain.*

HIDAYAT: Hussain, it is easier to conquer these Kafirs than to eat jam.

HUSSAIN: *Janab*, it is not so easy as you think. Through seven long centuries of Moghul rule, this Province has remained unconquered. No one has made these Rajputs bow the neck as yet — no, not even the Emperor Akbar himself.

HIDAYAT: Akbar! You forget he had no competent commanders. Ah! If Khan Khanan Hidayat Ali Khan had been living, history would have had a different tale to tell.

HUSSAIN: Why do you say that his commanders were incompetent? Man Singh —

HIDAYAT: Man Singh, a commander? If that is so . . . then . . . .

*Enter cook*

COOK: Dinner is ready, master !

HIDAYAT: Can you fight ?

COOK: Chicken cutlets, master.

HIDAYAT: I am not talking about chicken cutlets. I am talking about war, war, war.

COOK: Of course, master, roasted mutton, very good.

HIDAYAT: He is stone deaf — cannot hear a word. None the less, he is prophetic. We shall make roasted mutton of them too. Go, I am coming.

*(Exit cook)*

HIDAYAT: We shall roast mutton.

HUSSAIN: Mutton ? What mutton ?

HIDAYAT: Who but that flock of sheep that call themselves Rajputs ?

HUSSAIN: You will pardon me, *Janab*, but I cannot agree with you there.

HIDAYAT: Hussain, you have much to learn. And now that you are serving with me, your chance has come. Use it well. It will stand you in good stead, some day.

HUSSAIN: Vasty elephants have melted away under the firing of guns and the flashing of swords. Let us see what gnats will do in the coming war.

HIDAYAT (*angry*): Hussain, you have used a word that is disrespectful. Remember that I am Commander. I can have your head chopped off this very minute, if I so wish.

HUSSAIN: I know it, Sir, Commander !

HIDAYAT: I am glad that you call me so. I am the Commander. You must always bear that in mind.

HUSSAIN: I will. But the horsemen of Mevar may not, I warn you, Sir, Commander !

HIDAYAT: I have only to shew my fist once — only once, mark my words — and you shall see how they'll crumple up !

HUSSAIN: The fist will have to be a pretty big one, Sir.

HIDAYAT: Not so big as all that. You may go now . . . One word more, Hussain: Never by any chance forget that I am the Commander.

HUSSAIN: No Sir, Commander, it is unforgettable.

(Exit)

HIDAYAT: Conquer these Kafirs ! Why, a couple of gunshots and we shall scatter them, helter-skelter, like rams. It is almost beneath my dignity to go and fight with them at all ! Let me go and dine instead.

### Scene VI

*The banks of the lake Udaisagar. Morning. Manasi, the Princess of Mevar, walks to and fro, singing.*

Come unto me, even as a beggar I implore  
 Accept pure love my heart would spill — that nevermore  
 May hearts be weaned from love, for this alone I live :  
 O drain me dry, all all I have I yearn to give.  
 My soul has now bid farewell to the land of Night,  
 And's fain no more of tears, a questioner of light,  
 I sigh nor sorrow, pining for a vanished home :  
 How can he weep who, knowing love, has forsworn gloom?  
 I feel — I have at last loved One whom none could name :  
 A new breeze blows, a sweet dawn blossoms on dark's stem.



*Enter a beggar-woman with a blind boy*

BEGGAR: Alms, mother, give me alms.

MANASI: You are welcome. Is this your child ?

BEGGAR: No, he is my sister's child. He was born blind. He has no mother.

MANASI: Poor little thing ! Tell me, will you give me this child ? I will be a mother to him.

BEGGAR: No, he could never live without me.

MANASI: Well then, let him stay with you; but will you bring him to see me once every day ? Here are alms for you.

BEGGAR: God's blessings upon you, little mother.

*(Goes out)*

*Enter Ajay*

MANASI: How sweet is the sound of this beggar-woman's blessing in my ears ! How sweet to feel —

AJAY: Manasi !

MANASI: Ajay, come, I am very happy. Come and share my overflowing happiness.

AJAY: What makes you so happy, Manasi ?

MANASI: I am brimming over with joy. My heart is fuller than a river in spate. Only a minute ago, a beggar-woman blessed me, and then went her way.

AJAY: Who would not bless you with a warm heart, Manasi ? Scarcely a day passes but I hear the praises of Mevar's Princess being sung in street, valley and field.

MANASI: Is that really so ? Can I not hear them too, Ajay ?

AJAY: You have only to step out of your door, Manasi, and you will hear.

MANASI: But I never do. I spend my time here, in the hospital I have founded, looking after the sick it was built for.

AJAY: Your life is, indeed, blessed . . . Manasi, I have come to say goodbye.

MANASI: Goodbye? Where are you going?

AJAY: To the battlefield.

MANASI: Oh . . . when are you going?

AJAY: Early to-morrow morning.

MANASI: When will you return?

AJAY: There is no knowing: And . . . and . . . who knows if I shall return at all?

MANASI (*startled*): Why do you say that?

AJAY: I may get killed in war.

MANASI (*with bowed head*): Oh . . . .

AJAY: Manasi, if I do not come back . . .

MANASI: What will happen then?

AJAY: You will be sad, will you not?

MANASI: Yes.

AJAY: Yes? And is that all? Manasi, do you know that — I love you — and . . . deeply?

MANASI: I know you love me.

AJAY: But do you love me?

MANASI: Yes, I do.

AJAY: You say it so coldly, Manasi . . . You must be surely loving some other . . .

MANASI: I love every human being.

AJAY: You are cruel.

MANASI: Why, Ajay, must I love no one but you? Do you wish my heart to be only your own? That would be very selfish.

AJAY: Are you really such a child, Manasi?

MANASI: You are laughing at me, Ajay! But how have I done wrong? Is it a sin to love everyone? If so, punish me . . . I bow my head.

AJAY: I! Who am I to punish you?

MANASI: Yes, you must punish me. Ajay, you are going away to the war. The greater the number of men you kill, the greater your glory and renown. Is that why you say that the more I love the greater my sin?

AJAY: I stand rebuked. Fool that I was to presume . . . to imprison so large a heart within the narrow space of my own . . . Forgive me, Manasi . . . Yes, do scatter the radiance of your love all about you . . . I leave you free . . . absolutely free — to gather all heaven and earth under the wings of your soul . . . . Goodbye.

*(Exit)*

MANASI: Like dark shadows, tyranny and injustice stretch across the world. And how often war fails of its end, when it is fought to destroy them! For, how can they be destroyed by war, which is in itself a heartless thing? Go then Ajay, go and fight. Try to keep your hands as free from stains as may be in a battle. May my solicitude be your armour . . . .

*A sudden thought occurs to her*

What will happen to those who are going to face wounds

and death? Are not their mothers and daughters and wives praying to God for their safety as fervently as I? How many prayers will be said in vain, how many hopes will be dashed down? Is there no remedy for all this suffering?

*She looks up to heaven with tearful eyes. Suddenly a strange light comes into her face, she clasps her hands.*

Yes, I too will go, to help those who suffer. The dead I cannot save, but the wounded at least I can tend.

*Enter Rani Rukmini*

RANI: Manasi, have you heard the news?

MANASI: What news, mother?

RANI: That your father has gone to fight?

MANASI: Yes, I have heard that.

RANI: Fight the Moghuls, you know!

MANASI: Yes, I know.

RANI: You don't seem to mind much! The news seems to come as softly and easily to you as eating a pat of butter! Do you know that many men will die in the war?

MANASI: Perhaps they will.

RANI: Perhaps? Is there any doubt about it? Especially in a war with these dreadful Moghuls? No, there is no hope for us, this time. Those who have gone to the battle will die, every one of them, and as for those who have been left behind, Heaven alone knows what they will do.

MANASI: Well, how can I help it? What do you want me to do, mother?

RANI: And to think that your marriage was settled! But alas, now with a war going on, how shall we possibly be able to celebrate it?

MANASI: Will it matter much if we don't ?

RANI: Matter ! If you don't get married, why, what will happen ?

MANASI: What can possibly happen?

RANI: It will never do for a girl — a Princess — to remain unmarried, you know that. We had decided on a marriage with the Raja of Jodhpur's son. But it cannot possibly be arranged now as everybody will be killed. All is lost, all, all ! They could so easily have had the war *after* the marriage, but alas, the Rana would not listen.

MANASI: Mother, don't worry. My mind is on something more important than marriage.

RANI (*aghast*): More important than *marriage*? Oh!

MANASI: I am going out to the battlefields.

RANI: What are you saying ?

MANASI: Have you not just told me that many will die in this war? I can do nothing for those who die, but surely I can help the wounded, in love and humility ?

RANI: Oh ! but she is courting ruin ! No doubt though this explains Ajay's visit. He's been filling your head with these nonsensical ideas !

MANASI: No, mother, Ajay is not to blame. Ajay has gone to fight and to kill. I shall go to nurse and heal.

RANI: Impossible! How can that be?

MANASI: But it can, mother.

RANI: You shall not go.

MANASI: Peace be with you. I am going. You know me too well to say any more. Go in, mother. I shall be gone in an hour or two. I must go now and get ready.

RANI: (*anxiously*) But with whom will you go?

MANASI: With Ajay Singh's army.

RANI: Just as I feared! The Rana has gone away at a most awkward moment. Now, there is no one here, alas, to bring the girl to her senses.

MANASI: If my father were here, he would be the first to give his consent. I know him. His heart is always full of tenderness and compassion.

RANI: Yes, and you behave in this fashion because he is so lenient to you. I feel certain that the end of it all will be a hideous calamity.

MANASI: Mother, why must you fret so? Remember I shall be doing all that I can to lighten the sorrows of others. Go mother . . . and do not fret about me.

RANI: Folly and wickedness! Folly and wickedness! Alas! To think . . .

(*Exit Rani*)

MANASI (*clasping her hands again*): Oh, who has filled the chamber of my heart with such sudden joy! A new thrill courses through my blood! How childish — all this making of marriage vows! Oh, to live a life of dedication!

## Scene VII

*Battlefield of Mevar. Evening. Hidayat Ali and his companion Hussain are seated inside an open tent. Two soldiers stand at the entrance with drawn swords. Sounds of battle without.*

HIDAYAT: Hussain, have you succeeded in discovering the real strength of the Mevar army?

HUSSAIN: In round number it will be about fifty thousand.

HIDAYAT: Indeed ! And so far, these Rajputs have not yet shown any great desire to take to flight, have they ?

HUSSAIN: Not yet, *Janab* ?

HIDAYAT: But they have been fighting since morning, you know. You must admit that it is high time they took to their heels.

HUSSAIN: True ; but apparently they have resolved to stay and fight instead.

HIDAYAT: It almost seems as though they knew something about warfare, what?

HUSSAIN: I am almost inclined to think so too, *Janab*?

HIDAYAT: There . . . there, did you hear ? That is the war-cry of the Rajputs ! *Our* soldiers don't seem to be shouting at all. I hope they are still fighting ?

HUSSAIN: They must be. But may I humbly suggest that you go out and see for yourself? Would it not be as well to have just one look at the army and gain some notion of the operations ? You are a Commander, you know ! You cannot afford to forget that.

HIDAYAT (*with dignity*): Yes, I am Commander. But there is not really the slightest need for me to leave this tent. My brother-in-law Inayat Khan is quite capable of fighting the whole pack of them and putting them to rout, single-handed. Why then should I fight them, Hussain ?

HUSSAIN: That is perfectly true, *Janab*. There . . . . . again ! The war-cry of the Rajputs ! Again ! things don't seem very promising for us, do they ?

HIDAYAT: No, indeed, they do not. Will you go and see what is happening outside ?

HUSSAIN: Whatever you command.

HIDAYAT: No, I think you had better stay here. You see, ever since my childhood, I have never been left alone. Company has become a habit. Not a very good habit, is it?

HUSSAIN: Almost a bad one, I should say.

HIDAYAT: There again!

HUSSAIN: This time it sounds a little nearer.

HIDAYAT (*laying hold of Hussain*): What are you saying?

*Enter a soldier*

HIDAYAT: What news, soldier?

SOLDIER: Sir, our general Shamsheer Khan has fallen.

HIDAYAT: What? And the other generals? Are they safe?

SOLDIER: They are in the thick of fight.

HIDAYAT: Is Inayat Khan still alive?

SOLDIER: He is.

HUSSAIN: You may go now.

*(Exit soldier)*

HIDAYAT: There you are, Hussain. The news is not very encouraging, is it?

HUSSAIN: I fear it is almost depressing, Sir, Commander! Do you remember how you told me the other day that you had only to show your fist to crumple up Mevar and I answered: if so, it will have to be a pretty big fist? You see now that my poor speech was little less than prophetic. Listen . . . it sounds much nearer now.

HIDAYAT: There you are! You never can tell what will happen in war, can you, Hussain?



HUSSAIN: No, I suppose you can't.

*Enter another soldier*

HIDAYAT: What news of the battle, soldier ?

SOLDIER: My lord, there is wild disorder in our army. Our soldiers have broken rank and are in full flight.

HIDAYAT: What dreadful news, what dreadful news !

HUSSAIN: And this noise we hear, is it the roar of panic going through our ranks ?

SOLDIER: It is, Sir.

*(Exit soldier)*

HUSSAIN: Commander, be so good as to persuade yourself to leave this tent for a little ; go and see what is happening to your soldiers. One glimpse of you will greatly hearten your generals, especially as you are their great Commander.

HIDAYAT *(making a gesture of despair)*: How can that help now, Hussain ?

*Enter a third soldier*

SOLDIER: Inayat Khan has been killed in action.

HIDAYAT: What ? . . . what do you say ? Inayat Khan killed ! Impossible ! There again . . . the war-cry of the Rajputs ! It is very near this time !

*A fourth soldier comes running in*

SOLDIER: All is over with us, master !

HIDAYAT: I knew that already. Anything worse ?

HUSSAIN: What can be worse than the worst ?

SOLDIER: Our soldiers are all running away and the Rajputs are charging us on horse-back with the hot speed of whirlwinds !

HIDAYAT: Help, Hussain, help! . . . . . save me!

*Cries in the distance*

“Fly, fly, run for your lives”.

HIDAYAT: But, which way am I to run?

HUSSAIN: This way.

*Hidayat is about to fly when a shot is fired and he falls to the ground. Enter Ajay Singh with the Moghul banner in his hand followed by his Rajput men.*

AJAY: Victory to the Rana of Mevar!

ALL: Victory to the Rana of Mevar!

HIDAYAT (*lifting up his hands in supplication*): Don't kill me . . . . I am not dead yet . . . Don't kill me! Take me prisoner if you like, I don't mind that.

AJAY: Who are you?

HIDAYAT: I am the Commander of the Moghul forces.

AJAY: The Moghul Commander? And, what was he doing in this tent while the battle was raging outside?

HIDAYAT: I . . . I . . . was . . . well . . . you see! There was an excellent reason . . . only I . . . I can't remember it at the moment. Don't kill me. Let me live.

AJAY: Live, chicken-hearted Commander — who came like a trembling coward to fight the brave and unconquerable Rajputs! Live! Let us spread the news of our victory throughout the length and breadth of Rajputana.

HIDAYAT: By all means, by all means . . . I have no objection . . . . so long as you spare my life.

*(Exeunt Ajay Singh and soldiers)*

Praise be to Allah, I am saved . . . . but what a thirst I have! What a thirst!

### Scene VIII

*Night on the battle-field. The dead and dying lie where they have fallen. Manasi is walking among them : soldiers accompany her, bearing torches, stretchers etc.*

MANASI: Soldiers, go, some of you, to the other side of the field : I will remain here.

*(Exeunt soldiers)*

What unimaginable horror ! The dead . . . The tormented groans of the wounded ! How infinitely sad ! O God, why must all this be, in a world of which *you* are the guardian ? When will all these senseless suicidal forces pass away from the world ? How hideous . . . I did not know war was so hideous. This untended agony of torn limbs, and these yells of agony ! Oh, I cannot bear any more . . .

1ST WOUNDED: What torture !

MANASI: Where are you, poor unfortunate man ?

WOUNDED SOLDIER: Here, here . . . Who are you ?

MANASI: Hush, don't speak. *(She begins to bandage his wounds and signs to a soldier to bring her medicine in a cup)* Courage ! *(The soldier drains the cup.)*

2ND WOUNDED: Oh . . . . .

MANASI: Have patience. They shall come and tend you. Don't cry ! I will return presently.

3RD WOUNDED: O death . . . death would come as a blessing now.

*Manasi goes to him*

Oh this unbearable torture !

MANASI: Oh, he is breathing still. Soldier, attend to this wounded brother. where is the stretcher ?

HIDAYAT: What terrible thirst, what terrible thirst !

MANASI (*bring a cup of water to Hidayat*): Here, take and drink.

HIDAYAT: I am saved — saved ! Praise be to Allah !

*Enter Ajay Singh with his soldiers*

AJAY: Who are you in this darkness ? Why, can it be the Princess of Mevar ?

MANASI: Is that Ajay ?

AJAY: Yes, Manasi —

MANASI: Ajay, tell the soldiers who are with you that I am here to help the wounded. I have so few men to help me.

AJAY: Can any of my staff help you too ?

MANASI: Yes, Let them carry these wounded to my hospital tents.

AJAY: Soldiers, bring some more stretchers.

*(Soldiers go out)*

MANASI: How strange, Ajay ! Joy uplifts me in the very midst of this sorrow !

AJAY: What a glorious light, Manasi !

MANASI: Where is the light, Ajay ?

AJAY: In your face. Here, in this battlefield, where the terrors of darkness compete with the agonies of man's suicide, where you can almost feel the unseen agents of the Devil grinning around you . . . . What a radiant light this is on your face ! Can it be human, such a sunrise of soul in our world of tombs and shadows ? Manasi !

*(He takes her hand)*

MANASI (*moved*): Ajay !

*Her eyes glisten in the light of torches around*

**Scene IX**

*The Royal road to Udaipur. Enter a band of peasant men and women singing. Behind them come Amar Singh, Govind Singh, Ajay Singh and others. The band is led by Satyavati.*

**SONG**

Mothers and maids, awake, awake !  
 Welcome your warriors home who for our country  
     burned their lives to stake.  
 Mothers and maids, awake, awake, !  
 Dark hordes who hurled their phalanxed might  
 Our ancient race to ruin and blight,  
 Only incarnadined our valiant  
     sabres with their angry blood :

Your sons and lovers smote their pride  
 And with a richer wrath replied —  
 When with their deep sunfire of courage  
     they chased the alien thunder-cloud.

Mothers and maids, awake, awake !  
 Welcome your warriors home who for our country  
     burned their lives to stake.  
 Mothers and maids, awake, awake !

The marvel victory of Mevar  
 Proclaim — a glory nought shall mar,  
 Blow blow your conchs. rain rain your flowers,  
     light light your coloured carnival.

And then, to those who, far away,  
 Lie slain in war — your homage pay  
 With a few tears — lone souls of flame,  
     who for your honour gave their all !

## ACT II

### Scene I

*An apartment in Sagar Singh's house in Agra. Morning.  
Raja Sagar Singh and his grandson Arun.*

SAGAR: Who could have believed it? The way Amar Singh pounded these Moghuls to atoms during the last war is truly extraordinary.

ARUN: Rana Amar Singh is a hero! Heaven's blessings be on his head!

SAGAR: In his young days, Amar was an impossibly vain and idle fellow. Nobody could have dreamt that he would turn out so well!

ARUN: Grandfather, you forget that Maharshi Valmiki was a vagabond in his youth.

SAGAR: Who was this Valmiki? Wasn't he our Tulsi-das's son?

ARUN: Have you never heard of the great sage Valmiki? Fie, fie, grandfather! What do you mean? He was a great, great, poet.

SAGAR: Oh he was, was he? That's as good as saying that he is past and gone. I don't remember I ever set eyes on him in my life.

ARUN: That is not at all strange, grandfather; it so happens that he was born in the golden age.

SAGAR: What age?

ARUN: In the golden age.

SAGAR: Oh, I see . . . that was a little before my time.

wasn't it? But I have heard of Valmiki. He was a priceless humourist, wasn't he?

ARUN: What do you mean, grandfather? Don't you know that he was the author of the Ramayana?

SAGAR: Dear me! And the Ramayana, is that a nice book?

ARUN: For shame, grandfather, for shame! Do you really mean to say that you have never read the Ramayana? The Lord Ramchandra is our ancestor. Don't you really know anything about Him? For shame!

SAGAR: Where could I find the time to read, my lad? All my life has gone in endless fighting, fighting . . . .

ARUN: Have you ever fought a battle, grandfather?

SAGAR: Oh, and what battles! But you were still in the land of the unborn then; you can hardly . . . .

ARUN: But with whom did you fight?

SAGAR: With . . . er . . . with . . . well! To tell you the truth, I can't remember now. It was so many years ago . . . but I remember clearly that I *did* fight. It was in those far off days when your mother—

ARUN: Where is my mother, grandfather?

SAGAR: Nobody knows. One morning she woke up calling on the name of her country, and by the time the evening came, she was nowhere to be found.

ARUN: And my father?

SAGAR: He was always a little queer in the head. The end of it was that he went off to the Gujerat war with Maharaj Gaja Singh; I dare say he was killed fighting there.

ARUN: And my mother? Where is she? In Mevar?

SAGAR: She may be. I don't know.

ARUN: Grandfather, why have you left Mevar and come here? Why, your brother Pratap Singh gave his all for his country . . . . .

SAGAR: Alas, that is why he died so young . . . . . poor fellow! I had warned him against it, you know — I did what I could — but he wouldn't listen to me; that shows how little I was to blame.

ARUN: I hear that the peasant poets sing his praises to this very day in gorgeous ballads — day after glorious day.

SAGAR: But he is dead, and dead, and dead; so how does that help matters, pray? The poor wretch can't hear the praises or enjoy the glory, can he? That reminds me of a little incident in our childhood. Listen.

One day a mongoose was fighting a snake before our very eyes. I laid a wager that the mongoose would win. Pratap did not believe it. The mongoose, fixing his gaze on the snake's head, leaped, now to this side, now to that, while the snake darted its wild and angry hood at the mongoose again and again. At last the mongoose bit the head of the snake with its sharp white teeth and the snake lay dying slowly, striking its wounded hood against the hard earth. It is the business of the mongoose to kill the snake. my dear boy! How can the snake hope to survive in a battle against destiny? That is why I sided with the mongoose. Pratap ignorantly sided with the snake.

ARUN: But, grandfather, what about the battle of Devar, Pratap Singh's last brilliant victory, when he dealt such a blow to the Moghuls?

SAGAR: My boy, what is the use in trying to fight Moslems? They have contrived in some mysterious way to



get the key to the secret of thriving in the midst of massacres and exterminations. Besides, even if their numbers dwindle, they can always begin converting Hindus to their faith and swell their numbers again. Talking of the Hindus . . . they are foolish. They never think of converting Moslems in their turn. In fact, they would never even reclaim a Hindu if he once becomes a Moslem, no, not even by accident. They have no practical sense, these Hindus!

ARUN: How do you mean ?

SAGAR: See here : your uncle Mohabat Khan turned Moslem in the twinkling of an eye, didn't he ? Now, can you see Abdulla turning Hindu? Not in a hundred years.

ARUN: Then, why didn't *you* become a Moslem, grandfather ?

SAGAR: Grandfather's courage just fell short of it. My son had unbounded courage. He never hesitated in anything. But, for all that, you must not forget that I had paved the way for him. The credit is mine because, had I not joined the Moghuls and fought for their cause, my son could never have become a Moslem so easily, and changed his name to Mohabat Khan.

ARUN: Oh, what courage and foresight, grandfather ! You should have become a Moslem. A Hindu who has never read or heard of the Ramayana would be far wiser to —

SAGAR: Read the Ramayana ? Why that's all stuff and nonsense.

*Enter Abdulla Saheb*

Here comes Abdulla Saheb. My respects to you, sir !

ABDULLA: I salute you, Rana !

SAGAR (*starts*): Rana ? Who is Rana ?

ABDULLA: You.

SAGAR: How have I become the Rana so suddenly, and of what place, may I ask ?

ABDULLA: You are the Rana of Mevar.

SAGAR: How is this ? I thought Amar Singh was the Rana of Mevar !

ABDULLA: To-day the Emperor has appointed *you* the Rana of Mevar !

SAGAR: What, in the name of all that is wonderful, do you mean ?

ABDULLA: He orders you to go to Chitore to-morrow.

SAGAR: To Chitore ? And why ?

ABDULLA: That is to be your capital.

SAGAR: And Udaipur is, I suppose, Amar Singh's capital ?

ABDULLA: You see it's like this, he is Rana no more, the Emperor having deposed him —

SAGAR: But is he going to give up his throne just for the asking ?

ABDULLA: He will have to.

SAGAR (*agitated*): Does this mean that I shall have to wage a fresh war against him ? No, Saheb, in that case I won't be Rana.

ARUN (*laughs*): But why not, grandfather ? Weren't you telling me just now that you knew all about fighting, that your whole life was spent in warfare ? Why then miss this gorgeous chance of showing how warlike you are ?

SAGAR: Arun ! Keep your mouth shut, for God's sake ! No, Sahcb, I hardly feel like fighting. I am willing to give

my head in the Moghul's service, but I will not go and fight. If fight I must, why should I not fight for my own country. pray ? Nobody had ever told me that I'd have to fight.

ABDULLA: But you won't have to fight, I assure you. We shall do all the fighting: you will simply have to live very quietly in the fort of Chitore, only never forgetting that from henceforth you are the Rana.

SAGAR: But suppose Amar Singh attacks Chitore ?

ABDULLA: He won't. He has never done so as yet. Why should he suddenly take it into his head to attack Chitore ?

SAGAR: Pardon me, Sir, but isn't your logic rather unconvincing ? Might you not just as well say that a man will not die in the future simply because he has never died in the past ? It follows from that, doesn't it, that you did not succeed in getting married the other day ?

ABDULLA: Bless my soul, what fantastic logic ! What do you mean by saying I did not succeed in getting married the other day ?

SAGAR: Why you see, you had never married before you got married the other day. The logic is yours, not mine, Syed Saheb, if you will pardon me for saying so. Why are you smiling, Arun ? If a snake hasn't bitten you in the past, does that prove it won't bite you in the future ?

ABDULLA: Come, come, sir, jesting apart, why are you scared ?

SAGAR: How can one feel anything but scared in the circumstances ! I am offended and disgusted with the whole business. I don't want to be a Rana. I won't have it, I say.

ABDULLA: But then why not see the Emperor yourself, and tell him this ?

SAGAR: Come, then, we shall. But really this is a most downright cowardly trick, to get me into their grip and then make me Rana against my own will ! Why, if anything untoward were to happen . . . Lord, who knows what is written in my fate ? Rank injustice, utter heartlessness I call it. Come Arun, let us go.

## Scene II

*A Royal apartment in the Palace of Udaipur. Dawn.  
Manasi singing alone a hymn to Krishna.*

The world outflowers into beauty  
 having glimpsed thy lovelit Face,  
 Our toneless hearts are quivering conchs  
 wooed by thy breath of tenderness.  
     Life's frozen void now overbrims,  
     A burden of bliss and heaving hymns,  
 The skies are rapt, the sun and moon  
 outpour a mystic radiance,  
 Sere grass-blades ripple into rapture,  
 dwindling rivers swirl and dance.

With one spark of thy glance, Beloved,  
 the forest flames in a passion of bloom ;  
 One smile of thine makes earth a scene  
 of luminous joy unvexed by gloom,  
     And when thou speakest — melodies  
     Weave Heaven's haunting harmonies  
 Whose briefest cadence makes a soul  
 a house of echoes lingering ;  
 Even the dumb at thy command  
 break out in songs, O Flutist King !

O Presence, round whom spring-winds hover !  
 thy hue's a torrent of golden sun,  
 Thy tresses a heave of dark-blue Night  
 and feet with tender lotus spun !  
 Thy arms even as the creepers green  
 To none deny their clasp serene :  
 How every atom of-thy Form  
 beckons to all with equal grace !  
 Who will not swell thy choral choir  
 and hymn thy holy loveliness ?

*Enter Ajay*

MANASI: Who is that ? Ajay ?

AJAY: Manasi !

MANASI: Why have you not come for so many days ?  
 have you been ill ?

AJAY: No. . . .

MANASI: I tried to get news of you from your father.  
 Did he tell you ?

AJAY: No, Manasi, he did not. But why are you sitting  
 here all alone ?

MANASI: I was singing a song and...thinking.

AJAY: What were you thinking ?

MANASI: I was thinking.....that man, after all, was  
 but a poor vain creature. This war has opened my eyes.....  
 I know now that man is a weakling, for all his hollow  
 boastings. One touch of a sword-blade and he is laid low.  
 One stroke of fever, and he becomes as a child. O Ajay,  
 when these seeds of death are sown in our blood, how can  
 we hate and do one another harm ? What do you say ?  
 Why do you gaze at me so intently ?

AJAY: Once again I see round your face that aura of light which I first saw shining there on a day very memorable in my life.

MANASI: When was that, Ajay ?

AJAY: That day when we met on the battle-field by night. In the half-gloom of the dying light, you were transfigured before me and became, for me, a symbol of holy peace and compassion. In that moment, my all-too-eager love for you melted suddenly away in one deep sigh of immeasurable despair.

MANASI: Why despair, Ajay ?

AJAY: Must you be told Manasi ? Then I will tell you all. When I saw that strange light on your face. I felt it would be vain for me to try and hold you. I saw that you were not a creature of this earth but a symbol, a sign . . . a gleam let slip from Heaven to be our guest for a brief hour. Had the sky been a play-house, where every star was a player with the moon-beams for orchestra, then you, O my love, would have figured as the heroine in that divine drama. In return for my adoration I crave . . . only one drop of your sympathy, Manasi ! Will you not grant me this ?

*Ajay takes Manasi's hand just when the Rani enters.  
Ajay drops her hand.*

RANI (sternly): Ajay Singh !

MANASI: Why — what has he done, mother ?

RANI: Ajay Singh, when did I give you leave to meet my daughter in secret ?

AJAY: Queen mother, you must grant me forgiveness.

MANASI: Why do you ask her forgiveness ?

RANI: Manasi, you must not forget that you are a Princess. Go, girl ! — not a word.

*Manasi goes out, in tears.*

Ajay, you are Govind Singh's son and we look upon you as one of our own family. But you must always remember that you and Manasi are no more children now; please bear this in mind if you come to see her in future. I feel that it will be better for you to keep away from her after this.

AJAY: Whatever you command.

*Ajay salutes her and goes out*

RANI: I spoke just at the right moment. Of course it would all have been very pleasant for us really if Manasi could have married Ajay. After all, perhaps, couldn't we . . . No....no, it would never do. It mustn't be thought of, and so there is an end to it. A Princess cannot marry —

*Enter Rana Amar Singh*

RANA: Rani !

RANI: Curiously enough, I was longing to see you this very moment.

RANA (*unheeding*): Have you by any chance spoken harshly to Manasi ?

RANI: Spoken harshly to Manasi? When? Not that I know of.

RANA: She is crying.

RANI: Crying ?

RANA: Yes, do go and find out why.

RANI: What a wayward girl she is ! I never said a word to make her cry . . . You neglect your daughter disgracefully. You don't seem to know what is going on in the house. You simply won't take the trouble to find out

what is happening to the Princess. Well, if you want to know the truth, she and Ajay Singh, just this very moment, were —

RANA: Hush Rani, please remember that you have to be very careful when you tell me anything about Manasi. Do you know who she is ?

RANI (*dumbfounded*): Who is she ?

RANA: I could not tell you. At times I think I scarcely know her . . . she seems to me so unearthly a creature. I can't understand where she can have been before she chose to visit this planet of ours.

RANI: The father is as impossible as the daughter. Listen —

RANA: No, it is you who must listen, for I want you to promise me that you will never scold Manasi again. Remember that she is a ray of celestial light come down to us in a human form to show us what light is. If you offend this radiance, it will return to its abode leaving our house a legacy of darkness.

*The Rani throws up her hands in a gesture of despair and goes out. The Rana sits down on a dais and gazes silently at the sky.*

RANA: Life is only a dream. That sky..... The blueness, the clarity and the depth . . . and the white clouds floating so lazily, gently and slowly along it . . . All nature as it were, gently rising and falling like a peaceful ocean of life. And yet . . . at times this lazy glory can be roused to the extreme of violence. Clouds thunder along the sky, tempest gathers and breaks, rushing over the entire universe. Afterwards a great silence is born.



*Enter Govind Singh*

Well Govind Singh, you have come at an unexpected hour !

GOVIND: Rana, fresh Moghul forces are marching to besiege Mevar.

RANA: I knew, Govind Singh, and this time will not be the last either. The Moghuls will *not* rest until they have laid waste the whole of Rajputana.

GOVIND: Rana, may I be allowed to ask why we on our side are making no preparations for war?

RANA: War with the inevitable ?

GOVIND: You do not mean to say that you will allow the Moghuls to march into Mevar and claim it undisputed ?

RANA: And why not ? Their persistence surely merits the compliment.

GOVIND: Are you speaking in earnest, Rana ?

RANA: In deadly earnest. I took part in the last war and the carnage I saw was enough for me.

GOVIND: But Rana, this is something inconceivable ! Will you see your country's fall, and lift not a finger to save it, make no effort at all to guard its honour !

RANA: What do we gain by these efforts? Do what we may, I know that our labours henceforth will be useless; rather we shall call incalculable disaster upon our heads. Half our Rajput army fell in the last war; where, then, are we to find men for the next ?

*As he is speaking, Satyavati enters*

SATYAVATI: Out from the earth, Maharana ! they will come teeming up at our call.

RANA: You, here, Satyavati? Why have you come now?

SATYAVATI: Rana, I have come to rouse you from your lethargy: the enemy is barking at our very doors!

RANA: Peasant sister! I have no heart left for war. This time I shall sign a treaty of peace.

SATYAVATI: Rana, you are talking in your sleep. How *can* you sign an inglorious treaty, after winning so glorious a victory in the last war?

RANA (*with a sigh*): You talk of victory, Satyavati, our victory in the last war? Yes, it is true that we won, but do you know at what cost? At the cost of the precious blood of half our heroes.

SATYAVATI: Rana, that is no cause for grief. The blood of heroes makes the soil of a land fertile. No country can be impoverished while heroes pay such toll to its liberty. It is only the country whose heroes play safe that is deserving of pity.

RANA: But unless I am mistaken, this war can scarcely be the last. Fight now, and we shall be engaged in war following war, endlessly. Is it not madness then to stand with our poor handful of men before the vast and equipped army of an all-conquering foe?

SATYAVATI: The place which God has assigned to such madness lies beyond the scope of mortal reasoning. The whole world bows in adoration before such madness. Splendour descends from Heaven and crowns such madness with a jewelled crown. You have called it madness, but madness is only a word. Maharana! For, who in any age achieved anything truly great who was immune to that very madness you condemn?

RANA: But death is the inescapable fruit of the seeds of such an unequal fight —

SATYAVATI: Is it so difficult for Rana Pratap's son to choose between slavery and death? Shall we, in the cowardly fear of death, give away our jewel to the enemy? Shall we, in the fear of death, so basely betray the truth of our Mevar, the holy Mother of innumerable heroes, and land of agelong memories? Shall we, in the fear of death, give her over to the Moghul and live to see her time-honoured virginity brutally outraged in his clutch? If the Moghul covets her first, let him walk a blood-red path and stumble over the bodies of the dead to find her. O Rana! you talk of inevitable death, but are we not *all* fated to die, sooner or later? Or does the Rana fondly imagine that he will buy eternal life by selling his honour? Rana, this is no time for dreaming. Awake and play your part — the part of a great leader.

RANA (*moved*): You also play a great part, sister! Your words are charged with lightning . . . they sound strange chords and fill one with awe as of thunder. Who are you? You are no simple peasant woman.

SATYAVATI: If you must know, O Rana, I will hide the truth no longer ...I... I am the daughter of Sagar Singh. I am Satyavati.

RANA: You ... the daughter of uncle Sagar Singh? What does this mean?

SATYAVATI: I blush for shame to confess it, yet a daughter must try to expiate the sins of her father. Sagar Singh is at this moment in the fort of Chitore, plotting against his own nephew, the Rana Pratap's son. The Moghul has made him their puppet Rana of Mevar. But I have been wandering through the length and breadth of our country, rousing the citizens of Mevar against him. I have told them

that Sagar Singh is the lowest of all the sons of Mevar, that he has become the bondslave of the Moghuls. And there is not one living soul in all Mevar who has bowed the knee blindly before him or lifted a hand to help him !

RANA: Splendid, my sister !

SATYAVATI: Rana, for the sake of adorable Mevar, I have renounced palaces, pleasures, father, son — all that was dear to me, and in the disguise of a peasant woman, wandered day after day in the shadow of these mountains, singing the glory of our Motherland. And can you now surrender *her* to the enemy as lightly as a load of rubbish cast away in a ditch ?

*Satyavati's eyes fill with tears and her voice is choked with emotions.*

RANA: Sister, calm yourself. You are a woman, a Princess, and my incomparable cousin. Your words have not been spoken in vain. The Rana is ready to give his life for that country which has claimed your own. Govind Singh, prepare for battle. Go, and muster the army.

### Scene III

*Syed Abdulla's tent in Mevar. Night. Abdulla, Hussain and Hidayat.*

ABDULLA: There are too many mountains in this country.

HIDAYAT: True, *Janab*.

ABDULLA: From which flank did the Rajputs attack in the battle where you retreated ?

HIDAYAT: I never retreated.

ABDULLA: What ! Didn't they take you prisoner ? And

still you tell me that you never retreated ! What do you call retreating, then ?

HIDAYAT: Took me prisoner ? Never believe it. I gave myself up for the most cunning of reasons.

ABDULLA: What were these cunning reasons, pray ?

HUSSAIN: Allow *me* to explain the thing *Janab*, as I know it. When the Rajput army appeared on the field, every man in our army drew his sword from his sheath. But, for a very clear and definite reason, each one of us had laid his sword down beside the sheath on his own camp-bed. This done, each one of us twirled his moustache with manly gravity. And then, as food was ready, very naturally we didn't think of going to fight without a good square meal. Having fed, we carefully parted our hair and once again, twirled our moustaches to the finest and most soldierly points. By that time we noticed the Rajput army in front of our tents. "Up and at them !" was the cry, whereupon we all rushed out grimly to fight. But, now, you remember that sheath and sword were lying side by side on each bed at the beginning of the story ? In our hurry and confusion, mistaking our sheaths for our swords, we snatched them up and rushed forth into battle . . . What could we do against tricky fate, sir ?

ABDULLA: You could have done one thing, when I come to think of it all.

HIDAYAT: What ?

ABDULLA: Why, before beginning the fight, you could have enjoyed a comfortable nap with your swords on the one side and your sheaths on the other.

HIDAYAT: Very true, *Janab*, but don't you see that just then the enemy came rushing in ; he gave us no time.

ABDULLA: Very true, But tell me what happened next. I suppose you begged them to handcuff you if they felt so inclined, but to spare your neck from the noose and the blade ?

HIDAYAT: No, not exactly. But I did, I know, do something rather like that. I don't remember now *Janab*, what I did say to them.

ABDULLA: Never mind, so long as you didn't say anything so world-shaking that it might be a real loss to literature. But the long and short of it was that you surrendered, wasn't it ?

HIDAYAT: It was much as you have guessed, *Janab*. Only just before I surrendered, an old soldier, mistaking me for somebody else, fired a shot at me.

ABDULLA: And after that they tell me the Rana's daughter came and tended you with great devotion ?

HUSSAIN: Yes, *Janab*, and the Rana consequently grew quite concerned for his daughter's susceptible heart, and without further ado set free our Commander. Isn't that so, Hidayat Ali ?

HIDAYAT: That is so. Or else I should have taught the Rana a lesson . . . .

ABDULLA: You are a great hero, Hidayat !

HIDAYAT: I am too bashful by nature, *Janab*, to beat my own drum. But I will say this for myself that I have spent a fortune learning the art and science of war.

ABDULLA (*absently*): Oh, how dark these mountains look by night ! This country is nothing but one gloomy mass of frowning mountains.

HIDAYAT: There are two or three rivers also. *Janab*.

ABDULLA: We shall see them all clearly when day begins to dawn.

*The thud of guns is heard in the distance*

ABDULLA: Listen ! What's that ?

HIDAYAT: O Hussain . . .

HUSSAIN: *Janab*, it sounds as though the Rana is advancing, without waiting for our generals to attack !

ABDULLA: Order the soldiers to prepare for battle.

#### Scene IV

*The fort of Chitore. Night. Arun is fast asleep in his bed. Another bed lies vacant. Raja Sagar Singh is pacing up and down.*

SAGAR: This fort is like a prison to me. These gray grim slabs of stone . . . those hoary trees which seem to have outlived centuries . . . Each one of them seems like an unearthly spirit. When the wind blows at night they sway menacingly, just like spirits . . . And when the storm lashes them, why, then they are certainly spirits. As darkness gathers in, they grow black and thick, each like a spectre of pitch . . . Not one star can be seen through their web of leaves. But whatever I have lost or gained through coming here, at least I have found time and the will to read the Ramayana. And I have had the chance to hear extraordinary tales of bygone men from these peasant-bards and peasant-poets. Great heroes have lived in the past ; of that there can be no doubt. But why should this depression be growing upon me like this to-night ? Is it merely because this fort is so lonely, and a storm is raging outside.? Sentry, ho there, sentry !

*Enter a sentry*

Let your watch be especially keen to-night. See that not the shadow of a shadow gets into the fort. Great ancestor ! What's that noise ?

SENTRY: I can hear nothing, Rana !

SAGAR: Why, there . . . there . . . can't you hear ?

SENTRY: O that ? That is only the flutter of the wide black wings of the storm raging outside.

SAGAR: These storms of yours seem wilder to me than those of any other country ! Is it very stormy to-night ?

SENTRY: It is, Rana !

SAGAR: My life is fast ebbing. Friend, the nights in your country are very strange and black. Do you see how fearfully dark the sky is ?

SENTRY: Yes, Rana !

SAGAR: The storm would seem less terrible if the darkness were not so great. Sentry, watch well, all of you to-night. Keep your lanterns burning bravely. With their little lemon-flames they drive away the shadows. Oh, I cannot sleep in such overpowering darkness. Watch well, all of you, all the night and with naked swords in your hands. And should any intruder steal in, thrust your blade at once into his chest. But for mercy's sake, my good fellow, don't by any mistake thrust your blade into me. Go . . . Go and keep guard.

*(Exit sentry.)*

Arun is fast asleep. How soundly he sleeps ! If only I could . . . but no ! I cannot hope for sleep to-night. Our ancestors used to dwell in this fort. The very fact that they lived in this whispering gloom is enough to prove that they were brave men . . . Ho there, sentry !



*The sentry re-enters*

Are you wide-awake, my man? Whatever you do, you must not fall asleep. And you must call out in the darkness, now and then. That will tell me you are awake . . . Go . . . go and keep careful watch.

*The Sentry goes out . . . A pause*

*Arun ! Arun !*

ARUN (*wakes*): Grandfather ?

SAGAR: You are alive then? Go to sleep . . . try not to sleep so heavily in this dark night of storm. I am a — a little nervous.

ARUN: What is there to be nervous about, grandfather? Try and sleep.

*He turns over and falls asleep again.*

SAGAR: Try and sleep, he tells me, and then falls into a deep sleep. What is it to him? . . . I cannot find . . . There again! Sentry, I say, sentry! . . . . No answer. He has dropped off to sleep . . . . There . . . there he is yawning . . . Ho, sentry! Arun! Arun!

ARUN: What is it, grandfather? Oh, won't you let me sleep? (*He drops asleep again.*)

SAGAR: Can you hear that sound?

ARUN: It is only the storm, grandfather. (*He drops asleep again.*)

SAGAR: That cannot be the storm. How can it be? Surely a storm never speaks. There, it is speaking. It is saying something . . . . something dreadful . . . . There . . . . Oh . . . . Oh . . . .

ARUN: What is the matter with you, to-night, grandfather?

SAGAR: Arun, there is a spirit outside.

ARUN: What fantastic ideas you have !

SAGAR: (*pointing a finger into space, his mouth wide-open in fear*) There . . .

ARUN: I can see nothing. Grandfather, you are dreaming with your eyes open.

SAGAR (*staring*): I never wanted to come here. They forced me to come. I am no Rana. Amar Singh is the real Rana . . . . Don't kill me ! Don't kill me !

ARUN: Grandfather . . . . grandfather !

SAGAR: Who are these ? The Ranas of the past . . . . Bheem Singh, Pratap Singh, Jaymal . . . . no . . . . no . . . . I'll leave this fort tomorrow and go away. No . . . . No . . . . Don't look at me like that ! Don't . . . who are you ? Oh, don't kill me !

*He gives a cry and falls to the ground in a swoon. The sentry runs in.*

ARUN: Bring water, sentry ! Grandfather has fainted.

### Scene V

*A Royal inner apartment in Udaipur. Noon. Manasi and Kalyani.*

MANASI: I have founded a refuge for lepers. They come flocking to it, poor unhappy creatures !

KALYANI: Your life is blessed.

MANASI: Help me in this work, Kalyani. Come and put new strength into my heart.

KALYANI: Does this work make you happy ?

MANASI: To make others happy is the shortest cut to one's own happiness. When we seek after selfish joys, they must melt away.

KALYANI: That is what my brother says, too. He is your loyal disciple. He is always talking of you.

MANASI: Is he ?

KALYANI: He worships you.

MANASI: Why does he never come to see me now ? Ask him to come, Kalyani. I have a great . . . . a great desire, I should say, to see him.

*Enter a servant*

SERVANT: Princess, a woman has brought some pictures.

MANASI: To sell ?

SERVANT: Yes.

MANASI: Show her in.

*(Exit servant)*

What does your brother do all day long ?

KALYANI: He is very seldom at home. He spends his day nursing the sick and comforting those in distress.

*Enter the picture-vendor*

MANASI: Do you sell pictures ?

VENDOR: Yes, mother.

MANASI: I would like to see some.

*The vendor opens her bundle and takes out her pictures.*

MANASI: Where do you live ?

VENDOR: In Agra.

MANASI: And you have come all this way from your home to sell your pictures ?

VENDOR: We have to wander from place to place.

MANASI: Whose picture is this ?

VENDOR: The Emperor Akbar Shah's.

KALYANI: Let me see. Oh, what a sharp glint his eyes have !

MANASI: Yet, there is tenderness and affection too in them. Whose is this ?

VENDOR: The Emperor Jehangir's.

KALYANI: What an imperious expression !

MANASI: And a very determined one. And whose is this ?

VENDOR: This is the Moghul general Hidayat Ali Khan. See how handsome he is !

MANASI (*bursts into laughter*): Oh.....

KALYANI: What makes you laugh so ?

MANASI: Look, what a face ! And what a pose ! Oh, just look at his curly hair so carefully parted down the centre ! He is really too pretty for words ! And how vapid, poor soul ! Who is this ?

VENDOR: Mohabat Khan.

MANASI: Commander Mohabat Khan ? (*She examines the picture carefully*). Oh, it's the face of a real hero ! The forehead broad and noble ..... the eyes piercing. One does not often see such magnificent determination and grandeur, such sternness and kindness, so finely blended ! Well, Kalyani, you are looking at it very intently !

KALYANI (*turning away, blushing*): N — no . . .

MANASI: Whose pictures are those ?

VENDOR: Of nobles and emperors.

MANASI: Let them be. Let me have this one of Akbar, and this of Jehangir, and this of Mohabat Khan . . . . These few will do for to-day. How much do you ask for them ?

VENDOR: Whatever the good mother is pleased to give.

MANASI (*untying the knot of her garment-hem and drawing out three gold coins*): Here, take these.

VENDOR (*looking at the coins*): Is this the likeness of the Rana Amar Singh ?

MANASI: Yes.

VENDOR: Won't you give me a portrait of yourself, good mother ?

MANASI: I have none.

VENDOR: Has nobody painted your picture ?

MANASI: Never.

VENDOR: Then will you not allow me to do so now ?

MANASI: My portrait ! Why do you want it ?

VENDOR: Because I have never seen such a tender face, so full of delicate compassion. I should like to preserve your likeness in a portrait. I cannot draw well . . . yet, something tells me that if I drew your face, I should not fail with it.

MANASI: No . . . . You must pardon me if I do not permit this.

VENDOR: Why, Princess, what is your objection ?

MANASI: I have no objection. I think you had better go now.

VENDOR: Well then, I will come again, Princess !

MANASI: Do. (*To Kalyani*) Shall I pick out the picture you want to see? (*She picks up one of the pictures*). Keep it. Why are you so shy? After all, it is your husband's portrait. (*The vendor goes out*).

KALYANI (*with bowed head*): But he is a traitor to his religion.

MANASI: Why do you talk like that? Religion? Kalyani! Just as all human beings are the children of one God, so are not all religions the children of one Religion—of Love? Then why should there be these quarrels between brother and brother? I cannot understand. More blood has been shed in the name of religion than in the name of anything else in the world.

KALYANI: Is not my love a sin then?

MANASI: How can *love* be a sin? When love is spurned, it holds up a cup of tenderness to those who spurn it. The whole world is flooded with its immortal light. There is not a heart in the world which can hide from love. As for Mohabat Khan, Kalyani, he is certainly not an unbeliever. He may not be a Hindu, but he is a Moslem. How can the Creator of all be concerned to know whether He is worshipped under the name of Brahma or Allah? Does a man become a sinner because he calls God by one of His many names?

KALYANI (*moved*): Henceforth, you shall be my Guru as well as teacher. Speak, and I will listen at your feet.

MANASI: In the kingdom of Love there are no castes, and no warring religions. There is not the shadow of anything earthly in that kingdom. Love's magic mansion is built in the rose-red light of the morning sky. Love knows no chains nor limitations. It is a flame which casts no shadow.

Like the star it remains unchanged beyond a changing world of angry thunders and fickle storms. Why do you look at me like that, Kalyani ?

*Kalyani was gazing in adoration at Manasi. Manasi's question suddenly rouses her as from a trance. Her eyes fill.*

KALYANI: Princess, your soul is music. May I come to see you again to-morrow ? I must leave you now.

MANASI: Yes, come tomorrow . . . and try to persuade your brother to come with you.

*Kalyani goes out. Manasi sings.*

How thy swift, magic touch, O Love,  
Dissolves our selfhood's rebel crust !  
And how then every heart becomes  
A home for a stranger or outcaste !

We never would humbly alms implore  
Except it be thy hand that gives,  
And he who squanders all for thee  
Through thy ordaining richest lives.

Inspired by thee, the sun and moon,  
Thy boatmen, in dark spaces ply.  
Thy fecund laughter daily breaks  
To blooms in deserts, sleeplessly.

Thy mystic music wakens spring  
With birds that trill and winds that sigh,  
The skies and oceans meet in the Vast  
To thrill in thy eternity.

Thy heavens descend on alien earth  
And the earth soars up to heavens on high :  
All translate thy deep commands.  
Life is thy soul's epiphany.

*Enter the Rani*

RANI: Manasi !

MANASI: Mother !

RANI: Your father wishes to speak to you.

MANASI: Why ?

RANI: You know we shall have to be thinking seriously about your marriage. Your father is anxious to speak to you about it. As for me, I have ceased to matter to him.

MANASI: My marriage ?

RANI: Your marriage with Yashvant Singh, the Maharaja of Jodhpur, has long been settled. An envoy is about to be despatched to the Maharaja to fix a day for the celebrations.

*Manasi bursts into tears*

RANI: Oh, come come ! What makes you cry ?

MANASI: I was wrong to be upset. But Mother, I cannot be married.

RANI: What is this you are saying ?

MANASI: I shall not imprison my life within the narrow circle of marriage. The circle of my love is wider.

RANI: But how on earth could a Princess ever remain unmarried ?

MANASI: And why not ? There are many child widows who live in a sweet widowhood . . . surely I may remain single if I so wish ! I will go and tell my father I have decided to remain unmarried all my life.

*(She goes in)*

RANI: What a wayward girl ! I wonder if she is going a little mad ? It would not surprise me. The Rana neglects her and she always has her own way. And just what I was



afraid of has happened ! But here comes the Rana. I must speak to him firmly, this once.

*Enter the Rana*

RANA: Rani, where is Manasi ?

RANI: She has just gone to look for you. Rana, the girl is going mad.

RANA (*startled*): Going mad ?

RANI: Without a doubt. She refuses to be married ! She says she has decided to take the vow of celibacy ! !

RANA (*relieved*): I see . . . It grows clearer and clearer every day.

RANI: I have so often told you not to leave her to her own ways ; but you would never listen, and now she has gone quite mad.

RANA: Had you been capable of such madness, Rani, I would have set you up on a throne of gold and brought to your feet a daily offering of flowers.

RANI: Preposterous ! (*Aside*) Really, there's not much to choose between the pair of them.

RANA: Rani, I can understand very well what has happened to the Princess. A heavenly light has come down and entered into her body and soul . . . .

RANI: If this is the truth . . . .

RANA: Do not say another word, Rani. Henceforth you just be a silent witness and wait and see.

*He goes out*

RANI: Well, that's the end of everything. The girl has inherited her madness from her father. And the future stares very blankly at me.

## Scene VI

*Interior of Govind Singh's house. Noon. A picture hangs on the wall. Before it, stands Kalyani with a bunch of flowers in her hand.*

KALYANI: My love, Lord of my life ! You are the golden dream of my waking hours; you have made my world shine in rainbow hues. You are the morning sun ; you have entered the lampless cavern of my heart with footfalls of gold. As the one king of my heart, you have come and claimed the throne within. You have taught my life's despair to lift up its head. O my god, my salvation, the owner of all I own —

*She offers the flowers to the picture. Govind Singh enters the apartment and stands watching her.*

GOVIND (after a silence, in a deep voice): Kalyani !

KALYANI: Father !

GOVIND: Whose picture is this ?

KALYANI: My husband's.

GOVIND: Your husband's ? Do you mean Mohabat Khan's ?

KALYANI: Yes, father.

GOVIND: How comes this picture here ?

KALYANI: I have hung it here to-day so that I might make my offerings to it.

GOVIND: Offerings to *that* picture ?

KALYANI: Yes, father ! Is it a crime ? Do not be angry, please, father !

GOVIND: What is Mohabat Khan to you ?

KALYANI: He is my husband.

GOVIND: Have I not told you again and again you have no husband ?

KALYANI: I used to think so too, father ! But now I understand that I *have* a husband.

GOVIND: What ? Mohabat Khan your husband ? The enemy of our religion ?

KALYANI: Father, I know no religion. I was married to Mohabat Khan. God was our witness when we became one. Who has power to break the bonds that have so firmly bound us together ?

GOVIND: Mohabat Khan *himself* broke those bonds when he became a Moslem. ♡

KALYANI: No, father, he wished to accept me as his wife after his conversion.

GOVIND: Accept you ? What right has Mohabat Khan, now that he is a Moslem, either to accept or not to accept Govind Singh's daughter ? The day Mohabat Khan renounced Hinduism and turned Moslem, that day he renounced you.

KALYANI: He never renounced *me*.

GOVIND: What ? Is the cup of insult not full for you yet ? Then listen . . . Did you write to Mohabat Khan of late ?

KALYANI: I did.

*Enter Ajay Singh*

GOVIND: Alas ! (*He strikes his forehead with his palm*) He has returned that letter unopened with these words upon the envelope : "Kalyani, I cannot accept you". Take the letter, and see for yourself ! (*He flings it down at her. Kalyani picks up the letter and examines it eagerly.*)

GOVIND: Well, Ajay! have you found out if the report is true or not?

AJAY: It's true, father, The Moghul army has set out on its march.

GOVIND: Who is in command of the army this time?

AJAY: Shahzada Parvez.

GOVIND: What is the strength of the army?

AJAY: About a hundred thousand.

GOVIND: All is lost then. The heart of Mevar was already beating feebly. Now it will stop — finally. Well, Kalyani, you seem to be downcast.

KALYANI: What can I say, father?

GOVIND: Is Mohabat Khan still your husband?

KALYANI: A hundred times yes. Every wife worships the husband who loves her. The true wife is she who can worship the very feet that spurn her . . . she whose love knows no change even when he is fickle. Mohabat Khan is my master and my lord. Whether he gives me a place at his feet or not, it is the same. For I feel that it is not for the wife to sit in judgment over her husband — her one duty is to look upon him as her lodestar.

GOVIND (*sternly*): Are you not my daughter?

KALYANI: Yes father, I am your daughter and I do cherish your honour. But even as you have dedicated your life to your country, I have dedicated mine to my husband. Who can stop me? (*Kalyani's voice quavers*)

GOVIND: Dedication, daughter! is this what you call dedication? I — I would call it —

AJAY: Father, I beseech you, think before you speak. Wild words often betray us irretrievably. Pray do not forget

yourself and speak so contemptuously of that which is so beautiful.

KALYANI (*proudly*): You are indeed my brother, Ajay !

GOVIND: Have I not told you a thousand times that Kalyani has no husband, that she is a widow ?

KALYANI: And I, father, am ready to tell you as many times more that in life and in death Mohabat Khan remains my husband.

GOVIND: This Mohabat Khan, this vile turncoat, this abominable renegade your husband ? This —

KALYANI: Father, don't forget that while you abhor him I worship him.

GOVIND: Worship him ? Govind Singh's daughter worships this traitor to his faith, this Mohabat Khan ?

KALYANI (*calmly*): Father, I understand neither parents, nor caste or creed. They mean nothing to me. When a woman has once taken her plunge — be it into a pool of poison or into an ocean of milk — there and there alone her life must lie, both now and hereafter. Mohabat Khan may be a Hindu, a Moslem, or an atheist for all I care. I only know that we are two travellers on a single path. If I have to go to the ends of the earth for his sake, I will do so.

GOVIND: Then go. I disown you.

AJAY: Father, what are you saying, what are you doing ? Kalyani is your daughter.

GOVIND: She is my daughter no longer. Go, Kalyani, go to your god, your husband.

KALYANI: A father's command is law. Wish me well, father !

*She makes obeisance to him. He turns away from her.*

AJAY: Father, think — think for a moment. You cannot be so unjust. Kalyani, after all, is a woman. Even if she is guilty, you have *got* to forgive her.

GOVIND: She wants to go — where, I do not know. Let her. I shall not stand in her way.

AJAY: Wherever she may go, the white and holy light of love will attend her. Father, do not cast away this jewel. You do not know what you are doing.

GOVIND: I know my mind, Ajay. Kalyani! he who is at heart an enemy of my country has no place in *my* house. If your husband be your religion . . . . my country is mine. (*He turns to go.*)

KALYANI: My father's command shall be obeyed. (*She makes her obeisance again.*)

AJAY: Stay a moment, Kalyani. Father . . . . I must then ask you to say farewell to me as well.

GOVIND (*turning*): Why, Ajay?

AJAY: I cannot allow Kalyani to go unprotected and alone. I must go with her.

GOVIND: I have not asked *you* to go.

AJAY: Nor do I wait for you to do so. Kalyani is a woman. You are driving her out of this house for ever into a harsh and cruel world. Had her husband been here, he would surely have given her his protection. Her husband is not here, but her brother is. He will be her sanctuary in this dark hour. Come, Kalyani, today, brother and sister, we shall put out to sea and see what new harbour awaits us. Father, we salute you.

*They go out. Govind Singh stands with bowed head as though in a stupor*

## Scene VII

*A wild heath near Chitore. Evening. Sagar Singh and Arun are standing at the foot of a tree. The sunset afterglow lights up the horizon from behind a distant mountain.*

SAGAR: I have no desire to remain in this kingdom. The Fort of Chitore is nothing but a prison — old and damp and dark. Round it there is nothing to see but mountains and trees. There is never a soul within sight. And look at the trees ! How grey and depressing they look ! Let us return to Agra, Arun !

ARUN: But I love this place, grandfather. Every mountain here is redolent of ancestral memories. Grandfather, don't you like to hark to tales of bygone glories ?

SAGAR: Well I never ! He is talking of bygone glories again ! Young pumpkin ! Let the dead bury their dead. In the name of bygone men, don't cram your little head with these impossible tales of past glories ! It may burst.

ARUN: It will not, grandfather ! The stories of old times are far more sustaining than stories of to-day. Today seems much too near and pointless. But round the past there is a soft halo which makes it wonderful ! It is like the sleepy blue which is filling the sky now ; it is like . . . . yes, it is like a dream.

SAGAR (*aside*): Just what I feared ! The older he grows, the clearer it becomes that he is going to take after his mother ! Little man, indulge in day-dreams at your peril, I say ! That's what your crazy mother did, until at last she left the house, and went away — nobody knows where.

ARUN: Used my mother to talk like this ?

SAGAR: Yes, my little crank ! and that was her undoing. She went completely off her head through talking all the time about Mevar.

ARUN: I must go and find her.

SAGAR: In this alien country ? No, my boy ! Why, you couldn't find the sun itself, if it were hiding in this dreary forest.

ARUN: Grandfather, I must go ! I have made up my mind not to return to Agra any more. You may say what you like, but I adore this place. So long as my mother is here, it is my home. All the time that I was in Agra, I felt homeless even though I lived in a house.

SAGAR: There now ! Just what I feared ! My little ninny ! I suppose you have never seen the Emperor's new palace of white stone at Agra ?

ARUN: No, and I don't want to. This dreary forest enchants me : palaces pall.

SAGAR (*cajoling*): There are seventy-eight gorgeous mosques in Agra, all newly built and Oh, you should see them glimmer ..... how they glimmer !

ARUN: To me one crumbling temple in my own country is dearer than a hundred mosques carved out of solid gold. A meal of pot-herbs eaten on my mother's lap would be sweeter to me than a royal feast at the feet of the Moghuls. Grandfather ! you have left your country, your brother, your house and all its memories, simply to go and beg for alms at the doors of strangers ! Even though they filled your outstretched hands with heaps of gold, do remember their gold is never free from the dust of their proud feet. I have watched them laughing at you and have seen sheer contempt



peeping out through their laughter. Grandfather, surely the smile of a brother is richer than a treasure-house from the hands of foreigners.

*Satyavati suddenly enters*

SATYAVATI: Heaven bless you, my son ! Your words are indeed the words of a true Rajput hero.

SAGAR: Who are you ? Is it Satyavati ? Or is this a dream ? You here, little mother ? Is it possible ?

SATYAVATI: Oh how hard it was for me, my son, to tear myself away from the tender bonds of your little hands which clutched at me on that memorable day when I put on a beggar's garb and renounced the world and you ! All through my wanderings over this mountainous country, while I sang the praises of Mevar, I found it hardest of all to wean my heart from the memory of your laughter. When I heard that you were here, I could control myself no longer. I came running to see you, my son ! For days past, I could only hear the echoes of your young voice sounding beyond the fort. And I often wondered if it was not the singing of a cherub — incredulous that such sweetness could be found in this harsh world ! Now I know that the voice is yours, my son, my jewel, my all-in-all !

*She stretches out her hands, and Arun runs to embrace her.*

ARUN: Mother, mother dear !

SAGAR: Satyavati . . . . . little mother ! How is it that you have no eyes for me ? What sin have I committed ?

SATYAVATI: What sin ? You do not know ? You deserted your motherland, most precious of all jewels, and ran to the Moghul to beg crumbs at his feet. You have become a bonds slave to him . . . . who has dared to come

and tear our country ruthlessly away from us all and crush the manhood of our brothers ! Again and again the Moghul, drunk with pride, has come to invade our beloved Mevar, the one free kingdom left in Hindusthan. He has drenched the bosom of the Mother with the blood of her own children. And you, you have striven, in a slave-like emulation, to rob your brother's son, the son of Pratap Singh, of his throne. Yet you ask what sin you have committed ! But father, it does not matter now. You have chosen your path and we have chosen ours. Come, my son, you are the only fellow-traveller left to me in this dark wilderness. You have put strength into my heart. Come, my son !

*She turns to depart with her son.*

SAGAR : Wait, wait, wait a little — don't leave me. Your words have opened my eyes at last and I see the sacred Motherland in her mystic purity. I will return to her now and uphold her in poverty and in affliction. Come, little mother, come ! my trembling arms yearn for your forgiving embrace.

SATYAVATI (*thrilled*): Have I indeed found both son and father in the same moment? Is it possible? Can this be?

SAGAR : I was blind. How little could I see ! O pardon me, my great blindness !

SATYAVATI (*falling at her father's feet*): O Father !  
Father !

## ACT III

### Scene I

*The Assembly hall in Udaipur. Morning. The Rana's courtiers.*

JAYA SINGH: The story of this great battle must be worthily recorded. Let it be engraved in letters of gold.

GOKUL SINGH: Our general has done well.

BHUPATI: It seems that the enemy was unaware of the mountain path, and was taken by surprise from the rear.

GOKUL: Yet he found the road of escape.

JAYA SINGH: To-day a Dawn of Triumph irradiates the sky of Mevar. See in what fresh and glorious colours it bathes our noble mountains !

BHUPATI: May this gentle breeze proclaim the news of our victory throughout the length and breadth of Hindustan.

*Enter Rana Amar Singh*

ALL: Victory to the Rana Amar Singh ! Victory !

*The Rana takes his seat on the throne. Kishore Das, the Court poet, sings the song of victory.*

O King of kings, who rulest earth !

Thy glory and sceptred might we hail.

Giants and Titans — even the Gods

Before thy flaming challenge quail.

All thrill to hymn thy valour's wonder

And clouds beat time with drums of thunder

And the festal lights, the lamps of sun  
And moon and stars do praise thee, Lord,  
And even the mountains tremble when thou  
wield'st in wrath thy lightning-sword.

RANA: Kishore Das, add one more line to your song:  
“Though for thy crimes shall perish all this  
rich vainglory the wise deplored”.

JAYA: Why on earth do you strike such a mournful  
note in this hour of jubilation, Rana ?

RANA (*smiling sadly*): Time will provide that answer.  
*Enter Satyavati*

SATYAVATI: All victory to the Rana of Mevar !

RANA (*rising*): Come my sister, come. I welcome you  
in the name of all.

SATYAVATI (*moved*): Maharana, I have been standing  
a long time outside this august assembly hall. Tears filled  
my eyes as I listened, as though under a spell, to the song of  
victory. I pictured to myself that mighty procession headed  
by the Maharana's godlike ancestor, Shree Ramchandra,  
when he returned to his native city after his conquest of  
Lanka. I thrilled to this wonderful vision when the song  
ended, and it was as though some goddess had come trailing  
down to bear away that song to heaven. I awoke as though  
from a trance.

RANA: But every song has an end, dear sister ! All  
song rises on the wave of a brief rapture, then breaks on  
the crest of vanity and finally disappears into the trough of  
a sigh.

SATYAVATI: Your words sound strange, Rana, in the  
context of Mevar's jubilation. What *is* it that makes your

heart so heavy, your face so sad? Shake off this tearful tone, we beseech you, on this auspicious day of victory.

RANA (*in melancholy*): An auspicious day? But for whom, Satyavati? Not for *us*. For *we* have not won the battle.

SATYAVATI (*surprised*): Who won it then? The Moghuls?

RANA: No, the Rajputs have, indeed, won it. But not *we* who have returned. Those who are lying on the battlefield, cold and silent, under the bare and vacant dome of the sky, those who never return, who make no vaunts — they are the victors.

SATYAVATI: That is true, Rana. May their glory never fade. But I have other news to bring you.

RANA: What is your news, Satyavati?

SATYAVATI: My father, Rana Sagar Singh, has left the fort of Chitore and makes it over to you. Hasten Rana, and claim it unchallenged.

RANA: The fort of Chitore? What does this mean? It cannot be true.

SATYAVATI: But it is.

RANA: The news is too sudden. Why has he done this? Was it at the Emperor's command?

SATYAVATI: He has not waited for any command of the Emperor. The Emperor entrusted the fort to him; has he not the right to make it over as a gift to whomsoever he likes? He has repented of his former life and the fort is now yours, once again.

RANA: Chiefs! Sound the clarion note of victory. The dream of my father's life has found a strange fulfilment to-day. Muster the army; go and seize the fort. Advance, and fight till it is won!

SATYAVATI: Victory to the Rana of Mevar !

ALL: Victory to the Rana of Mevar !

### Scene II

*A broken-down hut by the wayside, near a village. Nightfall. Kalyani and Ajay Singh.*

KALYANI: Brother, I can go no further.

AJAY: Courage ! Look ! We are not far from a village and here is a half-ruined hut. It hasn't a door and there is no light inside — but —

KALYANI: Call out, let us see if there is anyone living there.

AJAY (*shouting*): Is anybody there ? Is there anyone in ? No answer. The hut must be deserted.

KALYANI: Let us spend the night here then. I simply cannot go another step.

AJAY: All right. You wait here while I go to the village and bring lights.

KALYANI: Oh, do, Ajay ! My feet are so heavy with walking, and I am very hungry.

AJAY: I will try to get some food from somewhere. You just wait here.

KALYANI: Do not be away long. I am afraid to be left alone.

AJAY: Afraid . . . . What is there to be afraid of ? I will come back as soon as I can. There is no one here to harm you. You need not be frightened at all.

*(Ajay sets off towards the village.)*

KALYANI: I have never walked on any road before. I suppose that is why my feet are so bruised and bleeding.

But I like this pain: It fills me with pride. I am running towards my husband, as a free wave runs towards the land; but . . . . . I do not know whether he will accept me even as his slave. Who's there ?

*Enter Sagar Singh in the garb of a faqir*

SAGAR: I am a Rajput. You need not be afraid, mother. I can see that you are a high-born Rajput lady. How is it that you are alone in this deserted place ?

KALYANI: My brother has left me here and gone to the village in search of food.

SAGAR: I see. With your leave, I will stay with you until he returns. This place is the den of a band of lawless Moslems. Only a few moments ago I saw some girls being molested by them. I will protect you, mother, while your brother is away.

KALYANI: Yes, yes, please be with me. I am beginning to feel very uneasy.

*Voices in the distance* : "Who is in that hut ?" "Yes, that's the place . . . . ."

KALYANI: Somebody is coming. O brother, brother !

*Enter thieves*

1ST THIEF: Here you are, here your are !

2ND THIEF: Get hold of them then !

*A thief catches hold of Kalyani*

KALYANI: Oh, save me, save me!

SAGAR (*rushing to the rescue with a drawn sword*):  
Stop !

1ST THIEF: Who is that ?

2ND THIEF: What do we care ? Kill him ! Kill him !  
*Sagar Singh fights with them and falls wounded to the ground.*

KALYANI: Brother, brother! Oh, do come brother.  
Where are you ?

*Ajay Singh rushes in, sword in hand*

· AJAY: Courage, Kalyani ! I am here.

*Ajay fights with the thieves. Two of them fall and the others take to their heels.*

I have driven them off. (To Sagar) Who are you ?

KALYANI: He was wounded in trying to save me.

SAGAR: Who are you, friends?

AJAY: I am Ajay Singh, the son of Govind Singh, and this lady here is my sister.

SAGAR: What do you mean ? Is she Mohabat Khan's wife ?

AJAY: Yes, noble sir, And who are you, may I know ?

SAGAR: I am Mohabat Khan's father.

### Scene III

*An apartment in Govind Singh's house at Jodhpur. Morning. Gaja Singh ruler of Jodhpur, Haridas, a courtier. Gaja Singh's son Amar Singh and Arun Singh in an envoy's garb.*

GAJA: Envoy ! tell the Maharana that I regret I cannot approve of this alliance. I do not care to be mixed up with anyone who has rebelled against the Emperor. What does Haridas say ?



HARIDAS: Most assuredly you should not.

ARUN: What do mean by rebellion, Maharaj? Mevar has never yet been conquered. Surely you cannot call us a rebellious people because we stand up like men and fight for the freedom of Mevar?

GAJA: What else can it be but revolt? The whole of Rajputana has recognised the Moghul's rule. Only this one little haughty province of Mevar still carries its head high. It's mere insolence and stupidity.

ARUN: I understand. The Maharaja is jealous, and cannot bear to think that every mountain in Rajputana has lost its glory save only Mevar, whose crest still glows with all her ancient splendour. He cannot bear to see the head of every other Rajput king bared of that crown which flashes still on our Rana's head. But, Maharaja, can you blame our Rana for this? *He* never despoiled you of your royal splendour. You yourself have forfeited it.

GAJA (*nettled*): Envoy! You are very bold! No one has dared to talk so insolently in front of the Maharaja Gaja Singh. If the Rana is indeed so intoxicated with self-conceit as to think he will be able to combat the Emperor with his five thousand men . . . well, it is no affair of mine. Such madness suits him.

ARUN: It is well said, Maharaja. Such madness suits him. Alas, that it should lie so far beyond your reach!

GAJA (*riled*): You are an envoy and as such cannot be put to death. Otherwise . . .

ARUN: The noble restraint of the Maharaja's words is very impressive . . .

GAJA: Envoy! There is a limit even to my patience.

Return to your Rana and tell him that I will not accept the alliance he has proposed. Go.

ARUN: I go. But not till I have said one thing more. Maharaja, I hear that you have fought again and again for the Moghuls in their wars in the Deccan, and that you have won Gujrat for them. It is possible that you might join them in their next invasion of Mevar. Lest you have not thought of it, may I invite you to do so ?

*He turns to go.*

GAJA: Certainly, I accept your invitation. Stop, envoy. You shall go with us.

ARUN: What ! are you going to make me your prisoner ?

GAJA: I am. Amar, seize him.

AMAR: What are you saying, father ? He is an envoy and it is against the laws of our chivalry to offer him any violence.

GAJA (*angrily*): I am not here to take lessons in chivalry from you. Obey my commands.

AMAR: I cannot obey such an unjust command.

GAJA (*furious*): You cannot ! Insolent boy ! Listen. You are my eldest son. But if you disobey me, you shall not inherit my kingdom. It will pass into the hands of my youngest son.

AMAR: Your kingdom ? Is it your kingdom ? I have never yearned to sit on a throne in order to eat out of the Moghul's charitable hand !

GAJA: Good. Henceforth you are an exile. Go.

AMAR: This moment.

GAJA: Envoy, begone. I shall not make you a prisoner.

## Scene IV

*Mohabat Khan's apartment. Night. Mohabat Khan alone.*

MOHABAT: It is true that I have abandoned her, but I can never banish her from my memory. Even to this day, her tender love, her young and radiant face shine in my heart's core. It is only now that I know how priceless a jewel I have forfeited. Why did I return her letter so cruelly? Her love was pure, warm-hearted, unselfish, and I have requited it with coldness, denial and all unmanly rebuffs. Because her father repelled me, I spurned her virgin affection. Now I begin to see how hateful such an ingratitude is. If only I could find a way to implore her pardon, I would seek it this moment like a beggar with folded hands.

*Enter doorkeeper*

DOORKEEPER: Maharaja Gaja Singh desires an interview with my noble master.

MOHABAT: Gaja Singh! The Raja of Jodhpur?

DOORKEEPER: The same.

MOHABAT: Admit him.

*Exit the doorkeeper*

MOHABAT: Maharaja Gaja Singh in my kingdom? That intolerable sycophant who sings the Moghul's praises — ah, here he comes.

*Enter Gaja Singh*

GAJA: My respectful salutations to you.

MOHABAT: Welcome, Maharaja Gaja Singh. What brings you to this humble dwelling?

GAJA: The Emperor has sent for you.

MOHABAT: The Emperor is very gracious. I suppose he wishes me to embark on another campaign against Mevar ?

GAJA: I presume so, Khan Sahib.

MOHABAT: I have already informed him that I am little disposed for this. Yet he insists on summoning me again and again.

GAJA: The successive defeats of the Moghul's forces have left the Emperor sore at heart. He has now decided to request you to help in the next attack. He is firmly persuaded that you alone can retrieve the honour of the Moghuls. You are his favourite, his most loved general.

MOHABAT: Who said so ?

GAJA: It is an open secret.

MOHABAT: I see. (*He walks up and down the room.*)

GAJA: Come, Saheb. You must make your decision. I know that Mevar is the land of your birth. It is well-known also that you are Rana Amar Singh's cousin. But it is also common knowledge that you have exiled all sentiment for Mevar from your heart. You have renounced its religion of your own accord. You broke the last tie with your country when you accepted the Moslem faith. Why then should you hesitate ?

MOHABAT: If only Mevar had not been the land which gave me birth . . . .

GAJA: You think, do you, that your Motherland will take you back to her bosom ? Return and see. Go as a friend if you like ; but your welcome will not be any different. All Mevar will point the finger of scorn at you and cry : Look at Pratap Singh's nephew, a traitor to his own religion . . . . an infidel Moslem ! Old men will turn their faces away in disgust. The young will glare at you, their eyes dark

with anger. The women of Mevar will peep out at you from behind their little secret windows, and call curses down on your head. Entertain no false hopes, Khan Saheb, for the Rajputs will never reclaim you or give you a place in the circle of their proud brotherhood.

MOHABAT: Perhaps they will not. (*He reflects*)

GAJA: You have cast your lot with the Moghuls. It is done now and cannot be undone. Their downfall is your downfall. Reflect on what I say, Khan Saheb.

*Exit Gaja Singh. Enter Sagar Singh in the garb of a faqir*

SAGAR: Mohabat !

MOHABAT: What is this, father ? You here ? And in this garb ?

SAGAR: I have renounced the world, Mohabat !

MOHABAT: You, father !

SAGAR: Yes, Mohabat, and you may well be surprised. For it *is* surprising that I who renounced my country, my kinsmen and my caste, who went and begged for charitable crumbs at the foreigner's door, should — but the end of my life has come, and with it my home-coming. Yes, you may well be surprised. Do you know what has brought me back, Mohabat Khan ?

MOHABAT: No, father !

SAGAR: Only this, that after so many years of wandering, I have heard the sweet voice of our Motherland calling to me once more. How deep her voice is ! Mohabat, you cannot imagine what strong and vibrant tones sound in that voice. It leaves me no choice but to try to expiate my past sins and so I have come to persuade you, if I can, to expiate yours.

MOHABAT: *My sins ?*

SAGAR: Yes, *your* sins. When I became the slave of the Moghuls, I only renounced my beloved countrymen. You renounced your religion as well. You have sinned very deeply.

MOHABAT: Father, I cannot see how I have sinned. If I am convinced at heart that Islam is the true faith . . . . .

SAGAR: Convinced at heart ! Mohabat Khan ! May I ask you *how* you came by this conviction ? My son, you have read the Quran, as every Moslem should. Islam is beyond all doubt a great religion. Hinduism is not jealous of it. Hinduism has no quarrel with Islam, nor indeed with any other faith. But I ask you if you have ever thought seriously about the religion of your forefathers, before you accepted the faith of the foreigner ? Answer me, how could *you* have weighed these two religions in your mind, you who have been unlettered and ignorant all your life ? You renounced the faith which proclaims the dominion of the spirit . . . . the faith which teaches that divine love dwells in all things, the faith which does not sanction the killing of so much as the tiniest insect ! This was the faith you renounced without a moment's thought. And yet you dare to brag that you have neither erred nor sinned !

MOHABAT: Father, I am speechless with amazement. To think that you of all living beings should come —

SAGAR: To expound religion to you ? It is not surprising that you are surprised. I marvel myself when I think of the change that has taken place in such a heretic. To think that one who cared for nothing save wealth and luxury all these long years, should now renounce the world — it is astonishing. I admit. But Mohabat, is there a heart in the world which has not one chord at least attuned to the

heavenly harmony ? For long it may remain dumb, but at last the touch of an unseen hand makes it vibrate. The heart then rises above its preoccupation with self and wings in rapture the light and air of heaven. This is what Kalyani has taught me, Mohabat !

MOHABAT: Kalyani ?

SAGAR: Yes, she . . . her voice still echoes in my ears like the memory of a divine melody. Do you know, Mohabat, that Kalyani's father has driven her out of his house ?

MOHABAT: Kalyani an outcaste ! What could she have done ?

SAGAR: She persisted in worshipping you. Her father caught her offering flowers to your picture.

MOHABAT: (*eagerly*): Where did you see her ?

SAGAR: In a ruined hut by the wayside.

MOHABAT: So this is the great and noble religion that you so loudly praise, father ! a religion that teaches such hatred and contempt of all Moslems ! a religion which rewards a wife's beautiful loyalty and devotion by thrusting her from under the roof that shelters her head ! (*Suddenly*) Father, you have asked me to expiate my sins, have you not ? I shall. But mark this ! it will be not for my conversion to Islam, but because I was once a Hindu.

SAGAR: Mohabat !

MOHABAT: Father ! From this day on I wipe out the last touch of kindly feeling for Hinduism which was left in my heart. Henceforth, I am in every pore, in every nerve a Moslem. I will be a Moslem down to the very core.

SAGAR: Mohabat, I beg of you —

MOHABAT: Father, you know me. I am a man of few words. When I have made a vow, I stand by it.

SAGAR: Mohabat! Listen —

MOHABAT: No, Father, I cannot — not to another word.

*He strides out.*

SAGAR: Have you really fallen so low, Mohabat? Then die! Perish in your blindness, lost infidel and traitor!

*Sagar goes out.*

*Mohabat Khan returns and paces up and down in agitation.*

MOHABAT: Such intolerance, such rancour! Even a wife's — (*gnashing his teeth*) Little wonder if the Moslems pay back this enmity and hatred with compound interest. This then is what they mean by Hinduism. A fine mushroom of a religion, indeed! Whatever charge might be laid at the door of Islam, at least it may boast of ready hospitality to all who knock at its door. But these arrogant Hindus — why, they will not welcome one soul back into their fold — not if he should do penance for a hundred years. Their pride, their arrogance! If I could crush the very life out of the whole lot of them —

*Re-enter Gaja Singh*

Maharaja, give my respects to the Emperor and tell him I am prepared to fight in the next campaign. This surprises you. Maharaja? Do you know why I have suddenly made up my mind?

GAJA: No doubt for the very good reason that you are the Emperor's favourite general.

MOHABAT: You are wrong. I am going in order to



annihilate the Hindus; I am going to cast the whole Rajput tribe into the flaming pit; I am going to wipe their very name out of the future history of Hinduism. Tell the Emperor this.

### Scene V

*The assembly Hall of Jehangir, Emperor of Hindustan.  
Morning. Jehangir surrounded by his courtiers.*

JEHANGIR: Even death will not wipe away this insult. Parvez is no general. How did he lose?

HIDAYAT: I can swear to it that he had not the least desire to lose.

JEHANGIR: Hidayat, you are less than worthless.

HIDAYAT: The Emperor could never be mistaken.

JEHANGIR: Hold your tongue. You—you lost this war and were taken prisoner and you ended by going on your knees to the Rana and buying your freedom. Abdulla at least fell in battle. You could not even do that.

#### *Enter Sagar Singh*

SAGAR: Emperor, you sent for me?

JEHANGIR: Yes. I desired to speak to you. Listen. I placed you in charge of the fort of Chitore, proclaiming you Rana. Now I hear that you have returned after handing over the fort to Rana Amar Singh as a gift. Is this true?

SAGAR: It is, Emperor.

JEHANGIR (*indignant*): And pray, who gave you permission?

SAGAR: I did not wait for any, Emperor.

JEHANGIR (*trembling with rage*): You did not wait for any ! You dared . . . . .

SAGAR: I realised that Chitore was by right Rana Amar Singh's.

JEHANGIR: O you realised that, did you ? (*His voice chokes with wrath.*)

SAGAR: Yes. I learned that the Emperor Akbar did not come into possession of Chitore by fair conquest. It was by treachery that Jayamal was killed.

JEHANGIR: Since when have you begun to distinguish between fair and foul ?

SAGAR: Ever since the new light broke in on my sight.

JEHANGIR: Traitor ! You have seen a new light, have you ?

SAGAR: Yes, Emperor . . . I *have* seen a new light. A dark curtain has lifted and shown me the glory of Mevar from the age of the Ramayana. The story of the victory of Bappa Rao, the tale of Samar Singh's self-immolation, of the renunciation of Chanda and the valour of Kumbha — I saw the dramas of their greatness re-enacted before these very eyes. And suddenly, one last marvellous gleam lit up the mists of the past and in it flashed the glittering sword of my brother Pratap Singh. That visionary sword pierced through me, and I bled for very shame.

JEHANGIR (*sarcastically*): And then — Oh pray go on —

SAGAR (*not heeding the irony*): I bled in burning shame as I brooded on how I had helped the enemies of this noble race, deceiving myself that I was behaving justly. And then . . . one day . . . I saw . . . O Emperor, I cannot

describe the awful beauty of that vision. (*His eyes fill and his voice chokes.*)

JEHANGIR (*ironically*): Go on — we are all attention.

SAGAR: It was no vision of some bygone age now, Emperor, it was my own daughter in flesh and blood! My own daughter . . . the daughter of this craven renegade who begged for crumbs at the Moghul's door! She it was who opened these blind eyes. She taught me to love that country whose glorious past I had tried only to defame and betray. My lips were parched and my throat was dry when I embraced my daughter. My heart overflowed. Pride blended with shame and love with worship. And so — and so — I handed over the fort of Chitore to my brother's son.

JEHANGIR (*sternly*): Have you come prepared for death?

SAGAR: I have. I used to tremble at the name of death, but now it has no terrors for me. I have come to atone for my past.

JEHANGIR: Your wish shall be granted. Sentry!

SAGAR: Why need you call the sentry? I have courage enough to be my own executioner. (*He stabs himself and falls to the ground, and then holds out his blood-stained hands.*) May my sins be absolved in this blood.

(*He dies*)

## ACT IV

### Scene I

*The bank of Udaisagar on a moonlight night. Rana Amar singh reclines on a dais of white marble. His eyes are half-closed. The gentle lapping of the waters of the lake is audible. A cuckoo calls out intermittently . . . . Young girls of the royal family dance and sing a devotional song. The theme: the Gopis of the hallowed city of Brindaban offering to Lord Krishna their adoration and yearning.*

Darling of soul ! in soul abide,  
O thou, our love's one dream and aim !  
On the crest of its imperious tide  
We leave our moorings thee to claim.

Shower on us thy radiant smile,  
We'll answer with our tender tears:  
Our love for thee, now cleansed of guile,  
Has bid farewell to flesh-born fears.

We weave with life a wreath for thee  
As offering at thy feet divine,  
A symbol of hope's white harmony,  
Luminous with thy laughter-shine.

Compassionate ! wilt thou not play  
Thy marvel Flute we all implore ?  
In the songless world, how night and day.  
Its music we await, adore !

Thy kingdom in our hearts we seek,  
All earthly glory to decline  
O thou, our dreamland's Prince unique,  
Unto whom thy maids their all consign.

Whether thou love or no — love thee  
We will and crave no meed's return:  
We only love — and love to be  
Thy altar — thy dominion.

RANA: They are so wrapped up in their play that they would scarcely know it if the ground were to open under their feet. All creation so enchants us through the endless hours of our play . . . and still all all is illusion. But hush . . . here is Manasi.

*Enter Manasi*

MANASI: Father, why are you here still? The air is cold now. Come in with me.

RANA: I will come presently, dearest one! My restless heart finds peace on these banks of the Udaisagar.

MANASI: Father!

RANA: Manasi, do you never feel that this world is nothing but a curious tapestry, woven of many-coloured deceptions?

MANASI: Deceptions, father?

RANA: Yes. The world insists on keeping us at play with our longings and desires lest, being free to contemplate the eternal within us, we should become immortal.

MANASI: Father, I cannot persuade myself that the world is like that. I cannot think it is evil.

RANA: Look at this moonlight. Listen to the lapping of the waters below. Try for one moment to feel all the sweet softness of the breeze. How can you deny that the effect of it all is to make us forget the eternal Beauty and become absorbed in purely personal sorrow and transient,

sentimental delights ? Manasi, I shall renounce this world. It is all — all illusion.

MANASI: If it is, father, surely it is a very friendly and charming illusion. For is not this world a beautiful thing in itself ? And surely it loves and is kind to us ! Just when we are beginning to be parched and scorched in the unbearable heat of summer, the rain comes with its soft mystic music to soothe us with a million water-drops. Just when we begin to freeze in winter, spring is born again, and its sweet and fragrant winds blow away the alien veils of mist. When we grow tired of the burning light of day, night bends over us like a tender mother, and rests our aching heads on her peaceful bosom.

RANA: Where then does all this sweetness fulfil itself ?

MANASI: In the world of man's sorrow and aspiration. Do you see that lake, father ?

RANA: I do.

MANASI: Do you see how the moonlight falls on it ?

RANA: I do.

MANASI: Can you hold it and keep it ?

RANA: What do you mean ?

MANASI: I mean the moonlight and the music of the water. When darkness envelopes the water, where does all that light and water go ?

RANA: Who can say, little mother ?

MANASI: Who, indeed ! But this much is certain, that it cannot be lost. It lives on, surely, in the memory of the solitary watcher, in the dream of the poet, in the love of the mother, in the adoration of holy minds, in the sympathy of man with man. The beautiful in man is always remoulding

the beauty and harmony of the universe. Were this not so, where would the universal beauty ever find its fulfilment ?

RANA: Is there even the shadow of beauty in man, little mother ? All eyes watch me covetously — even when I eat, as though I were depriving them of their share. There is so much greed — so much envy — so much enmity in man's little world !

MANASI: That is, alas, man's failing. But if it were not for this failing, what place would there be for man's compassion in the world ? Man would scarcely ever know the deep joy that lies in helping his brother. Is it necessary then to take leave of the world, merely because it is base ? The world *is* base, I know, but the delight of those who understand is to try to lift it up, be it ever so little.

RANA: You have spoken the truth, I grant it. My brain is a little fevered today. I cannot understand why . . . .

*In the distance a voice calls: "Manasi, Manasi !"*

MANASI: I am coming, mother ! Father, let us go in. It is growing dark.

RANA: Earth's angel ! She is a star dropped from heaven, a moonbeam of delight . . . What a tender breeze is blowing ! There's not one speck of cloud in the sky. The world is silent. Only the river is musical with the sound of its waters. It is almost as though a band of shining silver-haired creatures were bathing there and the murmur of the waves were their far-off laughter. The leaves on the trees stir in the moonlight as if coquetting with the eager air and their rustling is very like the applause of a secret rapture. I almost begin to believe that inanimate things do experience an inward bliss . . . I wonder . . .

*Enter the Rani*

RANI: Rana . . .

RANA: Hush Rani, I am dreaming.

RANI: Wide-awake? Rana, I never felt so worried in my life!

RANA: The enchantment is broken. What is the matter, Rani?

RANI: What indeed! Nowadays girls don't seem to take any notice of what their elders tell them. Only the other day Govind Singh's daughter and son left the house and went away, just because their father happened to scold them a little. And yesterday . . . . .

RANA: The dream has taken wings. Enter once again the dull thud of facts and loud tales of a tedious world!

RANI: How difficult girls *are* nowadays! It was not like that in my time. Things were quite different —

RANA: I suppose that was in the age of Truth, Rani? All my life I have noticed that mothers invariably imagine themselves to belong to the age of pristine godliness and their daughters to the age of unmitigated degeneration.

RANI: I have not come here hungry for your sallies, Rana. If you are really thinking of Manasi's marriage, look sharp about it, or it will be too late.

RANA: Rani, I don't think Manasi will ever get married. She is not at all anxious to marry.

RANI: That is only your fancy. You dreamed it.

RANA: Thanks be to Heaven for my dreams! *You* never indulge in any day-dreaming, do you?

RANI: Never mind about *my* dreams. Let us hear what *you* think ought to be done now.



RANA: I really could not tell you. Why not wait and see ?

RANI: How wait and see ? It's strange that our envoy to the Maharaja has not yet returned from Jodhpur !

RANA: Arun has returned, Rani !

RANI (*eagerly*): Has he ? And what date has been fixed for the marriage ?

RANA: The Maharaja refuses to accept Manasi as his daughter-in-law.

RANI: What ?

RANA: The Maharaja is deeply offended with me.

RANI: Why ?

RANA: Because it seems, I not only failed to be conquered by the Moghuls but actually defeated them.

RANI: I told you from the first, Manasi's marriage would never come off. How could it in the midst of all these wars and talk about war ?

RANA: I am inclined to agree with you. Manasi's heart was never really set upon marriage. It has all been a mistake.

RANI: What do you mean ?

RANA: I mean our attempts to bring about Manasi's alliance with the son of Jodhpur, our endless conflicts with the Moghuls, your marriage with me, my kingdom, my life — all, all has been one long chain of mistakes —

RANI (*cutting in*): And I dare say that if you had never married me, you would have included *that* in your catalogue of mistakes too ! Why do you smile ?

RANA: I hear the Maharaja has gone to Agra.

RANI: Is that so ? Why ?

RANA: Probably to invite the Moghuls to another war.

RANI: Another war? And is that what makes you smile? Is war a laughing matter?

RANA: The *one* jest that never palls. Laugh, Rani!

RANI: Yes, laugh with you and so join in your madness!

RANA: Happy prospect, indeed! For, at the end of it all, not one man will be alive. Every man in Mevar will be wiped out.

RANI: I don't want to hear about the death of Mevar's men; I want to hear about the marriage of Mevar's daughter.

RANA: But how can the marriage come about, as things are?

RANI: Invade the Maharaja's province.

RANA: There, for the first time, spoke in you the blood of your forefathers. But Rani, devotion, say our scriptures, is even more powerful than daring. The Maharaja is devoted to the Moghuls: I have only my dare-devilry to rely on. So?

RANI: Will you then accept this insult in silence?

RANA: We shall have to accept the insult, but not in silence. We shall accept it with cries loud and long. Go, go and see if the evening meal is ready. Go, my Queen, and fret no more. All will perish. What can man do when God Himself cannot save a race from degeneration? Go, my ministering angel!

RANI: But how have you done wrong?

RANA: How? Merely by belonging to one and the same caste as the Maharaja. Rani, when a boat sinks through

the fault of one voyager, all the other voyagers must sink with him too, must they not ? But go in, I am coming.

*(Exit Rani)*

RANA: How deceptive this moonlight . . . only a mask worn by the storm.

*(Exit)*

*Re-enter Manasi.*

MANASI: Ajay has gone away . . . without saying goodbye. Without even a message ! . . . Ajay, Ajay ! How could you go away like that . . . ?

*She sings sadly :*

Why is the moon so beauteous ?—

She imitates his face of dream.

Why is the lotus a deep of gold ?—

She borrows from his brow of gleam.

Why is the cuckoo's call so sweet?

Her songs are his own messages.

How is the zephyr so fragrant, cool ? —

It's laden with his tenderness.

From worlds of clay to ethereal worlds

Is loud his light of loveliness.

Why is the earth so lovable ?—

She bears in her heart his feet's impress.

Life's cruel flaws and ironies,

Dark flings and frowns of destiny,—

I welcome all for his twin eyes

Radiant with eternity.

## Scene II

*Mohabat Khan's camp. Morning. Mohabat Khan, Parvez and Maharaja Gaja Singh are discussing plans of campaign.*

MOHABAT: Shahzada, let us delay no longer. Go and besiege the fort of Chitore. Take ten thousand men with you.

PARVEZ: Very well, Commander.

MOHABAT: And you, Maharaja, order the villages to be burnt down, from one end of the country to the other. If you meet anyone, cut him down. But not one woman is to be touched — bear that in mind.

GAJA: It shall be done, Mohabat Khan ! No Rajput shall survive in Mevar.

MOHABAT: I can believe you, Maharaja ! The enmity borne by the Rajputs towards the Moslems is never so bitter as the hostility they bear towards their own kith and kin. You have only to read ancient Indian history to verify it; the Hindus are never so pleased as when they are torturing their own brothers. And I know there is nobody so well qualified as you to exterminate these Rajputs; that is why I have entrusted this part of the work to you. Go and carry out my orders.

GAJA: Very well, Commander !

*(Exit)*

MOHABAT: Beware, Hindus and Rajputs ! Beware, Mevar ! This time it is not a battle between nations; it is a struggle for life and death between two religions. We shall see who wins.

**Scene III**

*An apartment in the palace of Udaipur. Night. Rana Amar Singh and Satyavati.*

RANA: So, this time Mohabat Khan comes to fight?

SATYAVATI: Yes, Rana, the renegade is on the march with a hundred thousand men.

*(The Rana draws a long breath.)*

RANA: Did I not predict that this war would be the last? All is now to be lost—all, all! Almost all Rajputana has long ago succumbed to the Moghul. Why should Mevar's mountain-peak survive in splendid isolation? Can such a thing be allowed by the divine laws of God? Satyavati, why do you bow your head so sadly? Because Mevar is doomed? But this is joyful news, sister!

SATYAVATI: You call it joyful news, Rana?

RANA: Is it not? How long do you want Mevar to lie suffering torment on her death-bed? This time there will be an end to her tortures.

SATYAVATI: Am I to understand that the Rana will not fight again?

RANA: Not fight? Of course I will fight... I am going to wage the most desperate war that ever was waged. The wars we fought in the past were child's play; now there will be a really vast upheaval. This will be a war between brothers and all Hindustan shall witness it in horror.

SATYAVATI: I hear that Gaja Singh, the Maharaja of Jodhpur, has joined Mohabat Khan.

RANA: Indeed! Then he has accepted our invitation. I thought the Maharaja could scarcely be so discourteous as to refuse.

SATYAVATI: That blot upon the name of Rajputana !

RANA: Oh, don't call him that. He is a most devout worshipper. It is we who have disgraced the name of our people for not having, once in all these years, turned to the true God, Gaja Singh's Idol — the Moghul Emperor.

SATYAVATI: To think a Rajput should take up arms against Rajputs — alas, for Mevar !

*She wipes away a tear*

RANA: Satyavati, when God made Hindustan He wrote on her forehead the prophecy that her own children would work her downfall. How could a prophecy fail ? Think of Taxila. Think of Man Singh, Jay Chand, Sakta Singh. And in our own day, history repeats itself through our Mohabat Khans and Gaja Singhs. Go and announce that we are going to fight again. I am coming.

*(Exit Satyavati)*

When vitality is departed, even a pimple grows apace into a carbuncle. When self stands against self, what remains worth the salvage ?

*Enter Govind Singh*

Here comes Govind Singh !

GOVIND: Rana Mohabat Khan is setting fire to the huts of all our innocent and helpless villagers !

RANA: That was only to be expected.

GOVIND: We shall avenge this.

RANA: Most assuredly we shall. How else could the destruction of Mevar be complete ?

GOVIND: You will fight, will you not, Rana ?

RANA (*smiles*): Need you ask ? How many soldiers

have we ? Five thousand ? They will do, they will do. Just the right number for us to send into the jaws of death. Mohabat Khan has brought a hundred thousand men with him, has he not? Excellent, excellent!

GOVIND: Rana !

*He bows his head*

RANA: What, Govind Singh, your head droops, too? Rejoice, dear friend! This is a festival day. Let gay music sound from house to house. Let the blood-red banner of Mevar float on palace-top and mountain-peak. Let us look our fill upon its glory, for when this day is gone, we shall not see it again.

GOVIND: Rana, we shall fight bravely and die like heroes. And yet...it is our fate to die in the bitter knowledge that...that...this tragedy cannot averted. (*Breaks down.*)

RANA: Why grieve? All men must lose their mothers one day. The Mother of us all, must also die...but we die with her—and there is an end to it.

GOVIND (*wiping his eyes*): Be it so, Rana!

RANA: Amen! Let us embrace each other for the last time before we die. (*They embrace*) You may go now, Govind Singh and prepare yourself and your brothers for death.

*(Exit Govind Singh)*

*Enter the Rani*

Is that the Rani? Rejoice Rani, rejoice!

RANI (*eagerly*): Is Manasi's marriage to be celebrated after all ?

RANA: It is Mevar's marriage that is going to be celebrated this time, Rani !

RANI: Have you gone mad, Rana? Mevar's marriage! Whatever do you mean?

RANA: I mean that Mevar will soon be married to death.

RANI: You are raving! Are you ill?

RANA: Now brother is to destroy brother. Rejoice. Rani, rejoice! Death invites us all to his black festival.

*(Exit Rana)*

RANI: The very worst has happened. I always knew it would. Everybody has gone mad. What hope is there left for anybody now?

*Enter Manasi*

MANASI: Mother, what has happened to father? He is stalking from room to room —like a sleep-walker.

RANI: Your father has gone stark staring mad. We had better go and look after him.

*(Exit)*

MANASI: Is Mohabat Khan truly a Rajput? Is Gaja Singh truly a Hindu? How can such enmity be between brothers? Oh, fallen race! Can anything save it?

#### Scene IV

*A village-path in Mevar. Arun and Satyavati walking together.*

SATYAVATI: Arun!

ARUN: Mother!

SATYAVATI: Are you very footsore?

ARUN: No, mother, not at all.

SATYAVATI: We will take shelter in this village to-night.



ARUN: Why, mother?

SATYAVATI: We must call the villagers together.

ARUN: Why?

SATYAVATI: For war. The stalwart men of Mevar have been killed, every one of them. Now we have to create a new race of dauntless fighters and...prepare them for worship at the altars of the Motherland. Come, we must go. It is nearly dusk. *(Exeunt)*

*Enter villagers.*

1ST VILLAGER: O What ruin, what misery in this beautiful land !

2ND VILLAGER: Mohabat Khan himself has come. You know what that means.

3RD VILLAGER: Is Mohabat Khan a good soldier?

1ST VILLAGER: There's a question to ask !

4TH VILLAGER: What's that you say ? Stuff and nonsense ! He has never been trained for war. Why, he was only born the other day !

2ND VILLAGER: There's no man that isn't born on some day or the other. That's no proof he doesn't know a thing or two.

4TH VILLAGER: You are a fine logician, you are !

1ST VILLAGER: Look...they have set fire to that village down there now !

4TH VILLAGER: Where !

1ST VILLAGER: Why, up here ! ... Can't you see the smoke rising ?

4TH VILLAGER: That's only a cloud.

2ND VILLAGER: Have you ever seen a cloud coming out of the stony earth? Or a cloud spinning on the tops of houses? Look at that black thing twisting and fanning up into the air like a demon-mushroom.

4TH VILLAGER: That? It's only a puff of dust.

2ND VILLAGER: Have you ever seen dust look so thunder-black as that?

4TH VILLAGER: You're too fond of an argument, my friend!

1ST VILLAGER: There you are! Can't you hear the people shouting?

OTHERS: Yes, we can!

4TH VILLAGER: They are only singing. Or it might be all the donkeys of the village braying in a chorus.

2ND VILLAGER: To his ears there's no difference between the shouting of a man and the braying of an ass!

1ST VILLAGER: Look, look — there are the villagers running up the hill towards us, and oh, they're crying pitifully!

3RD VILLAGER: And there's the army behind them, firing a rain of shots.

*Cries in the distance, growing louder and louder:* "Lord have mercy.....Don't shoot us! Don't shoot us!"

1ST VILLAGER: Poor souls! .

*Enter Ajay and Kalyani*

AJAY: Villagers! Why on earth do you stand here doing nothing! Run and help your brothers in the village.

VILLAGERS: O Sir, what do you want us to do?

AJAY: Surely you are not going to stand looking on at all this butchery, doing nothing ?

4TH VILLAGER: And do you want us to die where we stand? Fly! Fly! They are coming this way.

KALYANI: Do you imagine that you can save your lives by just running away? You cannot. Not a soul can escape. Your turn too will come. Your houses too will be burnt down.

1ST VILLAGER: We shall see about that when it happens. Never think of death while you're living. Come along ! Don't let's stand and gape. They are coming...There —

*Exeunt all save Ajay and Kalyani*

AJAY: Listen! The sound of wailing seems to be coming nearer and nearer. And the gloomy thud of the guns ! Kalyani ! Stand back a moment. (*She steps aside*) I don't know whether I can save them. But at least I can die in the attempt and commemorate the truth Manasi taught me. Here they come !

*He draws his sword*                     •

*Villagers run in, pursued by Soldiers with drawn swords.*

VILLAGERS: Save us, save us !

*They fall at Ajay's feet.*

AJAY (*to the soldiers*): Go back.

1ST SOLDIER: Stop that. (*There is a clash of swords. Two soldiers are wounded by Ajay, and fall*)

OTHER SOLDIERS: Die then, infidel !

*They close with Ajay. One by one the Moghul soldiers drop to the ground. Suddenly another band of soldiers rushes in to the fight.*

AJAY: There is no hope now. Run, Kalyani! Save yourself!

KALYANI: Brother, I can't leave you to die here alone by the sword of an enemy.

*She steps forward. At this moment an officer fires a shot. Ajay falls, Kalyani rushes to him.*

Brother, brother!

2ND SOLDIER: Who is this? Take her.

3RD SOLDIER: No...No...Our Commander has ordered us never to hurt a woman.

AJAY: I am dying, Kalyani! May the Lord protect you. Goodbye sister! Manasi —! (*He dies.*)

KALYANI: O brother, brother! Where have you gone?

*She falls on the corpse, disconsolate*

4TH SOLDIER: He has gone where we all have to go sooner or later.

KALYANI: I shall not mourn your loss, brave soldier! You have fulfilled your heroic destiny. You have given your life in a noble attempt to save the helpless. And who are these men? Men?.....Are they not rather the creatures of Satan himself? O you blood-thirsty beasts of prey, who burn down the houses of the innocent, butcher defenceless villagers — even hell will shrink from having to make room for you.

1ST SOLDIER: It is no good cursing and swearing at us like that, good lady! Our general has told us to set fire to the houses and kill every living man. We are only carrying out orders.

KALYANI: Who is your general?

1ST SOLDIER: Don't you know? Why, he is the famous Mohabat Khan.

3RD SOLDIER: Come on, come on, let's be off.

KALYANI: Mohabat Khan! *He* has given such monstrous orders? I cannot believe it.

4TH SOLDIER: Let us go, let us go.

KALYANI: Wait a moment. I will go with you.

2ND SOLDIER: Go with us? Where to?

KALYANI: To your commander.

2ND SOLDIER: Do you want to do us a bad turn with him?

4TH SOLDIER: That's what she's after.

2ND SOLDIER: But why not take her with us since she wants to come of her own accord?

1ST SOLDIER: Yes, we may just as well comply.

KALYANI: Let us go.

### Scene V

*The Royal Assembly Hall in Udaipur. Morning. The Rana, Govind Singh and Chieftains.*

RAGHUBIR: Rana, we have fought as long as fighting was possible.

RANA: No, Raghubir! We must fight on to the end. I will listen to no other counsel. The army is fully equipped, is it not?

KESHAV (*smiling sadly*): Army, Rana! I doubt if the whole of Mevar could now supply us with five thousand men... The Moghul army is a hundred thousand strong at the least computation. It's madness to fight now.

RANA: It is *not* madness. Keshav Rao, you forget that one man in my army is a match for twenty in theirs.

KRISHNADAS: Pray consider again, Rana! The only course for us now is to make peace with the Moghuls.

RANA: That can never be. When in the past I held out for peace, you opposed me. The Moghuls were willing then. The golden moment has passed. It is now utterly impossible for me to beg for peace at their feet.

KESHAV: But —

RANA: Enough, I beseech you. No choice is left to us *now*. The time has come for us to fight to the bitter end. What does Govind Singh say?

GOVIND: Rana, we shall sacrifice our life but never our honour.

RANA: We shall sacrifice our life but never our honour. Well said, Govind Singh! We shall fight. We must.

RAGHUBIR: Maharana!

RANA: I am in no mood for any more words. I am bent upon war. Muster the army. Let the blood-red banner of Mevar float gloriously to the last in the sky. Sound the trumpet. Go and make ready.

*Exeunt all except the Rana.*

Mevar, beautiful Mevar, Mother of us all! How lovely the aureole I see around your brow to-day! Never in all my days have I seen it shining like that before. Mother, how ruthlessly they are dragging you to the place of execution — in tattered garments, dust-covered and your beautiful hair all dishevelled! What an awful splendour lights your face. I have not known you till now, Mother! Throughout the past you have shone with the sun of a glorious destiny. Today that sun has set. Is that why your brow becomes

suddenly so resplendent? How dazzlingly beautiful that evening radiance! How eloquent the stillness!

### Scene VI

*The camp of the Moghul Commander Mohabat Khan. Morning. Mohabat Khan and Maharaja Gaja Singh are pacing up and down.*

GAJA: Was the Rana there in person to lead his ridiculous handful?

MOHABAT: Yes Maharaja, but he went back alone. Of his five thousand men, four thousand fell in action.

GAJA: It was insolent courage to face a hundred thousand men with only five!

MOHABAT: Insolent courage indeed! I tell you Maharaja, I feel strangely elated today.

GAJA: It is not surprising.

MOHABAT: But do you know why I am so elated? You cannot imagine the excitement I feel or the reason for it, I am certain.

GAJA: I am sure I cannot.

MOHABAT: I am proud to think that though I am a Moslem by faith, I am a Rajput by birth. I glory in the thought that I am cousin to Amar Singh, who stood with his five thousand men to face a hundred thousand well-trained Moghul soldiers. Surely he knew that he was standing on a pin-point of death. Such fearlessness and patriotism as this you can only find in the heart of a Rajput. And I too am a Rajput.

GAJA (*grunts*): Hm!

MOHABAT: And, you yourself may well feel proud that

you were born a Rajput. And yet again your head must bow in shame today at the thought that you, who might have risen to a peak, have fallen so low — into the abyss.

GAJA (*uncomfortable*): The Rana of Mevar — was he not killed — or taken prisoner ?

MOHABAT: You seem very much distressed, Maharaja! No, he escaped untouched. I had given orders that *he* was not to be killed or taken prisoner. Such men are not to be lost to the world. Before an enemy like this, I stay my hand.

GAJA (*sullenly*): Have I your leave to go, Commander?

MOHABAT: You may go.

*Exit Gaja Singh*

*He paces up and down*

*Enter Kalyani, escorted by two soldiers*

Who is this ?

1ST SOLDIER: We do not know, Commander! We found her on our way and she comes to you of her own accord.

MOHABAT: Who are you, may I ask?

KALYANI: Commander, the knowledge will profit you little.

MOHABAT: What may you want with me, lady?

KALYANI: I come to demand justice.

MOHABAT: Justice?

KALYANI: These soldiers have killed my brother without any provocation.

MOHABAT: Why did they do that? Soldiers !

2ND SOLDIER: Master, we were rounding the villagers up, and this lady's brother died fighting for them.



MOHABAT: Is this true, lady?

KALYANI (*nods*): They were butchering quite innocent people and my brother rushed to their rescue. Your soldiers killed him.

MOHABAT: Which means that he was killed in battle.

KALYANI: That, no doubt, is how *you* would put it. Very well then. My brother was murdered in *war*. Does that please you better?

MOHABAT: These men are not to blame, noble lady! For they acted under my express orders. Soldiers, leave the room. *Exeunt Soldiers*

KALYANI: Was it indeed you—you—who ordered them to kill harmless villagers?

MOHABAT: Yes.

KALYANI: And to burn down every village?

MOHABAT: Yes, lady!

KALYANI: Surely *you* cannot be so cruel.

MOHABAT: Why should you hold so high an opinion of me, may I know?

KALYANI: *My* husband could never be so heartless.

MOHABAT: *Your* husband?

KALYANI: Yes, *my* husband. Look at me, my lord! Now—can you not recognize me? I am your Hindu wife, Kalyani whom...whom you renounced for no fault of hers. I *had* to come and find you. But I had none to turn to, on my way to you. It was then that he, my noble brother, offered to steer my little boat in such unchartered waters. The friend he was! the peerless comrade, the only one who sympathised and upheld me against.....and you by your irresponsible orders have got him killed!

MOHABAT (*stares*): Kalyani! then they have killed Ajay ?

KALYANI: Yes, High Commander of the Moghul army! And he—but what's the use?...I have only one prayer left: Now let your soldiers kill me, too.

MOHABAT (*distressed*): Kalyani, I most humbly beg of you...forgive me.

KALYANI: But first tell me: Have I understood rightly that these villagers have been done to death by *your* orders?

MOHABAT: Yes, Kalyani!.....It is perfectly true. I From you——your very self ?

commanded my army to exterminate the entire race of Rajputs.

KALYANI: God, God, was this then Thy will for me when at Thy bidding I turned my face away from all I held so dear ? Why did I not rather perish in the hour I set out ? I have lost brother and husband at one sweep ! What woman was ever so accursed ?

*She covers her face and sobs*

MOHABAT: Let me explain, Kalyani, I want you to know —

KALYANI: There is nothing I any longer want to know, my lord, nor want to live any more. I adored you — from afar. Confronting you I see the sworn enemy of my people and myself. Commander of the Moghuls ! in my eyes you are lower than the lowest of your soldiers. They have at least the excuse of having been taught by their faith that it is lawful to kill the man whom they call an unbeliever. You, a child of our country, through whose veins the royal blood of the Rajputs flows, are destroying us traitorously. The

Moghuls only intended to conquer Mevar : they never wanted to destroy peaceful villages and murder innocent people. But you, having licked up the crumbs of an alien faith like some promiscuous dog, exult in outdoing its cruelties. Mevar has become one enormous burial-ground under your hand; her skies echo the wailing of an entire people. O God, what is the required punishment of this horror? I cannot conceive it.

MOHABAT: Kalyani, it was for your sake. For your sake only, I began this war !

KALYANI: For my sake? You lie.

MOHABAT: I do not lie, Kalyani. On the day I heard how your father had driven you out because of the bitter hatred he bore the Moslems, I swore to be revenged on Mevar.

KALYANI: It must indeed have been a lofty principle which guided you to devastate a whole country to avenge the wrong-doing of one man !

MOHABAT: Can this truly surprise you Kalyani — you who have learned the lessons of the Ramayana so well ? Was not the entire kingdom of Lanka destroyed for the sin of one single Ravana ? And your father — did he not curse all Moslems in the name of all Hindus ? I came to revenge that curse. I came to spread desolation in Mevar because of the Hindus' bitter hatred for the entire Moslem race.

KALYANI: It was for those who were born Moslems to exact vengeance if vengeance was due. When *you* yourself embraced Islam, you did so knowing full well that the Hindus hated the Moslems. The root of the evil is in your heart, my lord, because you set it there. Why then do you deceive yourself with the thought that you came to retaliate

for injustice ? I tell you, my lord, that what little you have within you of the true Moslem could never have goaded you on to such revenge ! It was the other part, your lower self of blind and petty conceit, which made you take pride in your new name, that drove you on to all this cruelty.

MOHABAT (*startled, half-aloud to himself*): Can this indeed be true ?

KALYANI: You set out to destroy the kingdom of Mevar because of your hatred for one man. Can this really be the teaching of your religion ? Is this your code of honour as a soldier and a man ? O God, my God, what are you doing to me ? In my dreams I had built a castle of joy in the sky; it has fallen to pieces in a fraction of a moment—like a child's plaything.

MOHABAT: Kalyani! Listen —

KALYANI: No! Everything's over. All my illusions are gone. There was a time when I would defiantly say: "You are my husband and I am your wife — who can come between us?" How little the heart knows itself! For it's the same heart that now turns away from you irrevocably, in loathing, and shudders to see rolling between us an ocean of blood...the blood of my brother and my countrymen.

MOHABAT: Kalyani, I beseech you —

KALYANI: No. We are parting for ever. (*She looks up as tears roll down her cheeks*). O God, O God ! You have taken away everything I cherished: Leave me the last prop; do not, I beseech you, tear away my faith in your divine goodness when I see the denizens of Hell masquerading as human beings.

*Exit distractedly*

## ACT V

### Scene I

*The royal apartments in Udaipur Night. Manasi singing alone.*

*How in my heart of hush I cherished him.*

*I longed to say,*

*But never said, alas, 'twas like a dream*

*That would display*

*Its rhythm and cadence in its hidden world*

*Of gleam for ever,*

*Where now it sighed like winds and now it purred,*

*A wistful river.*

*He wooed me with his eyes like a miracle scent*

*Changed into light,*

*But woe is me, my stormy love lay pent*

*In the deep of Night!*

*Enter the Rana*

MANASI: So you have come back from war, father?

RANA: I have, Manasi!

MANASI: What has happened to you, father? You look so distracted?

RANA: Hush. I have just returned from seeing a miraculous thing:

MANASI: What happened, father? Was it the war —

RANA: No, there was no war this time. Only a storm of fire, which passed over the battlefield and swept away all our men.

MANASI: The Lord have mercy upon us !

RANA: There was no time to realise the horror and grandeur. There was something quite unearthly about it all.....a fierce cloudburst of blood-red meteors, the deluge of some huge curse. An earthquake seemed to shake my whole body, a whirlwind danced a few scarlet rounds in my brain and died away. There was no time to realise anything. But suddenly.....when all was over, I awoke from a kind of stupor and found that I was all alone, the only remaining pin-point of life in a place covered with bleak, lonely death ! O what a sensation !

MANASI: Father, your hand is feverish, you are overwrought. Sit down, and let me tend you, won't you ?

RANA: I walked over and over the huge field of the dead all alone. No one thought of killing me.

MANASI: Have you admitted defeat?

RANA: Does it mater whether I do or not? War is not like an encounter of wits where anyone may claim victory merely by repudiating defeat. It is too hard and stark a reality. But why did they not kill me ? In the unearthly silence of that scene I called, as loudly as my lungs could, to Mohabat Khan and to Gaja Singh to come and kill me.....There was no response !

MANASI: Father, I beg you, be calm.

RANA: I ask myself why Mohabat Khan has not entered the fort of Chitore ? He can easily claim it now.

MANASI: Father, why do you grieve so because you have lost? In every battle someone must win, which means that someone must lose.

RANA: Little mother, you have spoken very wisely.

Yes, indeed, someone *must* lose. So why grieve ? But why didn't they kill me ?

*Enter the Rani*

RANA: Rani, I am now on the horns of a dilemma.

RANI: What did you say?

RANA: They never killed me.....why didn't they? Could you tell me ? (*Rani looks at Manasi*) Listen, Rani ! I stood alone in the deep silence of the battlefield. O what a scene ! Rani, you cannot even imagine it. Overhead gleamed the highborn stationary multitude of the stars and at my feet stared the countless unmoving eyes of the dead.....And between the stars and the dead was mass upon mass of impenetrable darkness...I felt suddenly as if I did not belong to this world...I was one of the innumerable dead...I flourished my sword in the darkness but only the black and misty wind met it, cutting the blade with scorn. I called out to Mohabat Khan. But my voice echoed and wandered and came back to me. And then, as I stared, I knew that my golden kingdom had been shaken to dust by this relentless earthquake. Then the wind, blowing over this field of death, seemed to grow heavy with the weight of their disembodied souls. I made a great effort, and contrived to sigh. That sigh was so heavy that instead of soaring upward it dropped back to earth, dragged down by its own weight. It almost seemed to me that I could have found that sigh lying prone somewhere on the battlefield, if only the darkness had not been so black and so thick.

RANI: What was fated to happen. has happened. Where is the use in lamenting now ? I knew long ago that this would happen.

RANA: Rani, you were right, perfectly right, when you

warned me. I stood and watched Mevar gasping for breath in Death's black embrace and I have brought home her dead body on a bier. Would you like to see it? Come, come!

*He drags her and goes out followed by Manasi.*

## Scene II

*An open courtyard in Govind Singh's house.*

*Some village gossips assembled.*

1ST WOMAN-ATTENDANT: Oh dear, Oh dear! it must be terrible sorrow for old Govind Singh. He has lost his only son.

2ND WOMAN-ATTENDANT: Oh, let that be. What I cannot understand is why our mistress has turned Govind Singh's house into a guest-house for dead bodies.

1ST WOMAN-ATTENDANT: She's always doing daft things like that as if it was all she could think of. Has she got a lot of people inside with her?

2ND WOMAN-ATTENDANT: Oooh! the courtyard is full. Govind Singh is out. Arun Singh has gone to fetch him. Mistress is standing beside the corpses. Crowds are staring at a distance.

1ST WOMAN-ATTENDANT: Is it dark there?

2ND WOMAN-ATTENDANT: Pitch. At the far end of one room there is a lamp burning — but very dimly. What is that? Who is that?

1ST WOMAN-ATTENDANT: Where?

2ND WOMAN-ATTENDANT: There, there —

1ST WOMAN-ATTENDANT: Our Princess! What a sight



she looks! Her eyes are almost rolling out of their sockets and her garment trails in the dust!

3RD WOMAN-ATTENDANT: Hush...the Princess is coming this way. Let us go. (*They go out in haste.*)

*Enter Manasi from the other side.*

MANASI: Ajay has gone and left me for ever. He went without one parting word. It doesn't seem true. Oh, my brain is reeling...My eyes burn...A deadly miasma seems to rise out of the earth like smoke and pass into my blood...Something burns like a flame inside my body...The sky seems to have slipped away from overhead...The earth seems to have gone from under my feet. Where am I?...Oh! (*Silence follows*) I was always so hard.....In those days, when Ajay came begging for one tiny drop of tenderness with his eyes full of entreaty, when he was thirsting for one glance of pity, I was hard as a nail. That is why Ajay has gone and left me so mockingly. Ajay, I would like to fall and die at your feet. If I could only tear my heart open to-day and show you, my love? It's too late. (*Suddenly*) But supposing Ajay is dead? Where is Govind Singh? I must find him. He may have news of Ajay.

*Exit*

*Enter some villagers with Satyavati from one side, bearing the dead body of Ajay Singh on a mattress. Govind Singh enters from the other side with hair dishevelled and eyes blood-red.*

GOVIND: This is my son's dead body. Where did you find it Satyavati?

SATYAVATI: On the edge of a road.

GOVIND: How did he die?

SATYAVATI: Those who saw him die told me that he fell while nobly attempting to save innocent villagers from the murderous hands of the Moghul soldiers.

GOVIND: Satyavati, Satyavati ! O Ajay ! My son ! I was blinded by my harsh anger. O why did I not call you back when you were leaving the house ? Why did I let you go ? My life's jewel ! You did not even give me time to crave your forgiveness. My pride, my pride ! Could you not even remember that I, your father, was very old ? Ajay ! Ajay !

SATYAVATI: Govind Singh, why do you grieve ? Ajay has died the death of a hero.

GOVIND (*gulping*): True, Satyavati. He died for the helpless...he died for the helpless. Go then and cremate his body with songs of rejoicing.

*He covers up his face. The stretcher-bearers are about to carry Ajay's body away.*

Stop ! let me see his face once more...My all-in-all ! Prop of my old age ! Crutch and comfort of a blind weak cripple ! Let me but once—once only . . . No . . . no—why should I grieve ? That is what you say to me and you are right. Ajay has given his life for the helpless. Mevar ! Demon Goddess ! Are you not satisfied yet ? You are now preparing to leave us. Go then...but not until your hunger for death is glutted. My golden world ! N...No...who says that Ajay is dead ? *There*, he is looking at me !

*Govind Singh rushes towards Ajay's corpse. Satyavati stops him.*

SATYAVATI: Govind Singh ! You must calm yourself. Your son is dead.

GOVIND: Yes, yes, dead . . . dead. It is the stark truth.

My eyes deceived me. Ajay, Ajay ! My all-in-all ! (*He covers up his face with his hands.*)

SATYAVATI: You are a brave general, Govind Singh ! It does not become you to give in to unmanly grief.

GOVIND: What are you saying, Satyavati ? I can scarcely hear what you say. Speak up. A storm is raging in my heart. I cannot hear you. Speak louder. Oh, oh, oh ! (*He presses his chest in agony.*)

*Enter Kalyani*

KALYANI: Father, father !

GOVIND: Who called ? Kalyani ! Accursed ! Look, you have been the cause of death of my Ajay...you evil witch ! Give him back, give him back to me.

KALYANI: Father, father.....O What is this..... ? Oh brother, my brave godlike brother—Oh ! (*Kalyani clasps the corpse.*)

GOVIND: Go away. Don't touch my Ajay. Go away, I say—witch ! (*He clutches her hand.*)

KALYANI: Father ! I am, indeed, a witch. Kill me, father ! I have been a curse in your house and an ill-omened star in Mevar. Kill me. I have been the cause of the devastation of Mevar. Remove this abomination from the world and all will be restored to you as it was before.....

GOVIND: What is happening inside this heart ? The fires of hell are burning there and demons dancing around them in frenzy. I cannot bear it any longer...Indeed, I can not bear it.

SATYAVATI: Govind Singh, do not give way to this unmanly grief. Let us cremate the body of your heroic son

with hearts of thanks-giving and pride, for your son died in a holy cause.

GOVIND: You are right, you are quite right. He died in a holy cause. I must not mourn. Forgive me. I should be proud...only...(in a husky voice) Satyavati, I have grown old, very old.

KALYANI: Father !

GOVIND (*trembling*): Come, Kalyani, come to this aged chest. Come, my helpless, forsaken, motherless, unhappy daughter ! I could not see the glory of your wifely love, and the Lord has punished me for it. Go, go and cremate his dead body.

*The stretcher-bearers are again about to carry the bier away when Manasi rushes in.*

MANASI: Stop for one moment, I beg of you ! Let me look at him—for the last time.

SATYAVATI: Princess ?

MANASI: Ajay ! Beloved husband !

SATYAVATI: Ajay, her husband ?

MANASI: Listen, and be witness, all of you. In secret I was married to Ajay. I myself never even knew we were married. In silence, in secret, that marriage of soul with soul took place . . . O beloved, where are you ? Look, I have come ! I am no longer the lofty teacher of truth I pretended to be. I am no longer the gracious Princess who leaned in pity over the poor. I am myself a miserable beggar-woman in rags—the beggar of your love. I am poorer today than the poorest pauper in the streets. Ajay, I never told you how deeply I loved you. I hardly knew myself. Forgive me, O Ajay, will you not forgive me ?

SATYAVATI: Alas, the princess is half crazed with sorrow ! Peace, peace, Manasi, Ajay died nobly, fighting to save the lives of others,

MANASI: It is true. That is how every brave man ought to die. My adorable disciple ! Today the parts have been reversed and *you* have become my teacher. The rays of your glory have come down from Heaven to light the poor earth. You have died as men should die. Govind Singh ! You are, indeed, blessed in your old age; justly may you be proud of having had such a son. And blessed am I, who may look upon him as my betrothed. Govind Singh, this is indeed a time for joy and exultation and not for faint-hearted sorrow.

GOVIND (in a hoarse voice): True, Princess, alas, too true. Ajay gave his life for the helpless. Why should we grieve ? (*His voice chokes*) Ajay has...for the sake of the..... country.

*He breaks down and covers his face with his hands.*

MANASI: It is all empty foolishness.....Just one rebellious sigh of grief drowns all sense of consolation . . . Ajay, Ajay ! . . . . .

KALYANI: What is it all about ? I cannot understand. Is this heaven or earth ? Are these gods or men standing here ? Is this life or death ? Who am I ? Oh.....

*She swoons*

SATYAVATI: Kalyani ! (*She takes her head on her lap.*)

GOVIND: The girl has fainted. Let her die. Let us all perish together — son, daughter, Mevar and I.....we shall all go...my son has already gone.....my daughter has gone... and Mevar.....my beloved Mevar...she too is drowning. There.....she has gone.....I will also go.

SATYAVATI: O Destiny of darkness ! With your last great storm come and sweep all away.

### Scene III

*Mohabat Khan's tent on the edge of a mountain in Mevar. Mohabat Khan watching the sunset.*

MOHABAT: The sun has set.....at last.

#### *Enter Gaja Singh*

GAJA: Khan Saheb!

MOHABAT: Maharaja !

GAJA: How is it that though you have been victorious, you have not yet entered Udaipur with your soldiers?

MOHABAT: Have I to submit to you the why and wherefore of my every move ?

GAJA: No, no—no offence. I merely asked a question. Khan Saheb, I wonder if you have heard the latest ? The women of Mevar have taken up arms now and are preparing to fight.

MOHABAT: Women — taking up arms ? Women ? Who ever heard of such a thing ?

GAJA: Yes, but let us wait and see what kind of war they wage ! A soft and tender element is bound to grace such an encounter ! I shall certainly take part in it.

MOHABAT: Maharaja, is it really possible for you — a Rajput — to mouth such vulgar innuendos at the expense of Rajput ladies ? Are you a Rajput ?

GAJA: Mohabat Khan...how dare you...

MOHABAT (*hotly*): Silence, sir !.....I counsel you

strongly to reserve what little valour you have against that day for the future when your country shall need it. Go.

GAJA (*furious*): You shall pay for this !

*Exit Gaja Singh*

*Soldiers enter*

What news do you bring, Soldiers ?

SOLDIERS: The Shahzada has arrived with his army.

MOHABAT: Oh, has he ? You may go.

*(Exeunt soldiers)*

His coming is useless. The devastation of Mevar is complete. Yet I do not wish to enter the fort of Udaipur myself. Let this be undertaken by Shahzada and his Moghul soldiers. My work is done.

*Enter Govind Singh*

Who are you, old man ?

GOVIND: I am a citizen of Mevar.

MOHABAT: What brings you here ?

GOVIND: Wait: let me get back my breath.

MOHABAT: Are you an envoy from Rana Amar Singh ?  
Do you come with news of peace ?

GOVIND: Never ! Before that should happen, may my head be blasted by a thunderbolt !

MOHABAT: Then what does bring you here ?

GOVIND: I'll tell you. I have become old. I wish now to close my eyes in honourable death. But I do not wish to die at the hands of a common soldier. O my God ! If only I had the strength I once had.....No, no, Mohabat Khan ! I know that I can no longer stand up to face you in a duel. But surely one can die like a man. I want to die at your hands.

MOHABAT: But old man, this is a fantastic desire !

GOVIND: Not at all. In fifty odd battles, I have fought beside Rana Pratap. My body can testify to that with its countless wounds. Let the last be inflicted by your heroic sword.

MOHABAT: What will that profit you ?

GOVIND: Little indeed ! And yet, though you have changed your religion, the Rajput blood still runs in your veins, as you can scarcely deny. And you are Rana Pratap's own brother's son. I am proud to come and beg for my death at your hands.

MOHABAT: Are you—by any chance—Govind Singh ?

GOVIND: Ha ! Ha ! you have recognised me at long last, Mohabat Khan ! Now, do you understand why I am so eager to die, Mohabat Khan ? You have this day conquered and devastated unhappy Mevar. But even so, we shall not allow you to enter the fort of Udaipur, be sure of that. Mevar's soldiers are all dead . . . there is not even the shadow of an army left to defend her. But there is *one* man, *one* warrior, still left: myself. I stand alone to face the Moghul army and challenge its power. You shall not enter Udaipur unless you pass over my dead body. Take up your weapon.

*He unsheathes his sword and flourishes it*

MOHABAT: Hero of heroes ! Believe me when I tell you that I do not intend to enter the fort.

GOVIND: I am not concerned with your intentions. I tell you to take up your sword.

MOHABAT: Listen.....

GOVIND: I am not here to listen. My heart is consumed with fire. I have lost my son, my only dear son and my daughter.....and now I want to end my life. I want to die



before these eyes see my beloved Mevar trodden under and crushed. I want to die before I see the son of Rana Pratap become a slave of the Moghuls. And I want to die at the hands of one who is a slave of another, though a child of my country, who, though born a Hindu, is a Moslem by conversion, who is an enemy of his own brother...Come, oh come ! Where is your sword ?

*Mohabat Khan draws his sword and swears an oath by it.*

MOHABAT: Stay...not one single wound shall my sword inflict on your body—no, never.....never !

GOVIND: I don't want to hear you speak. Defend yourself. Raise your sword, I say !

MOHABAT: Govind Singh, I beseech you —

GOVIND: Kill me.....kill me.....

MOHABAT: I have renounced the sword.

GOVIND: I shall *not* leave you. Take up your sword, I say !

*As he is preparing to attack Mohabat Khan, Gaja Singh rushes in and fires at Govind, bringing him to the ground.*

MOHABAT: What have you done, Maharaja ?

GAJA: I have killed him.

MOHABAT: Do you know whom you have killed ?

GAJA: A robber.

GOVIND: I am no robber, Maharaja ! You are the robbers. I have never wanted to loot another's kingdom. You have come and looted another's kingdom. Mohabat Khan ! go now to Udaipur. Nobody will oppose you. Go, seize your own mother and consign her to slavery. (*He dies.*)

## SCENE IV

*The royal road running past the fort of Udaipur. Night. A soldier and some old men are gathered together under the fort.*

1ST MAN: Why has the Rana left this fort, soldier? Where has he gone?

SOLDIER: I could not tell you. I have heard rumours that Mohabat Khan has renounced his sword and written a letter to the Emperor. And that is why the Shahzada Khuram has come. Last night, a Moghul messenger came, bearing a letter from the Shahzada. I hear that in this letter he made offers of friendship to the Rana. Early this morning, when the Rana awoke, he mounted his horse and rode away towards the camp of the Shahzada.

2ND MAN: And then?

SOLDIER: I know nothing after that.

3RD MAN: The Rana has not returned as yet?

SOLDIER: No.

4TH MAN: Who went with him to the camp?

SOLDIER: No one. He was alone.

1ST MAN: S-sh! Who's that over there?

2ND MAN: Surely it cannot be our Rana?

3RD MAN: Yes, there he is. But wait! Can it be the Rana, are you sure?

4TH MAN: He is dressed like the Rana. Who is that man, can you tell us, soldier?

SOLDIER: That is the Maharaja of Jodhpur. His name is Gaja Singh.

1ST MAN: Is he not the Raja that came with Mohabat Khan to attack Mevar ?

SOLDIER: Yes, the same.

2ND SOLDIER: He is a Rajput, is he not?

3RD MAN: Though he is a Rajput, he is yet the enemy of all Rajputs.

*Enter Gaja Singh with soldiers*

GAJA: Soldier, the gates of the fort are closed ?

SOLDIER: Yes, Maharaja.

GAJA: Then open them. This fort is ours.

SOLDIER: Maharaja, I am sorry, but I cannot open the gates of this fort except by the orders of our master, Rana Amar Singh.

GAJA: Master ? Amar Singh is no longer your master. I am your master now.

SOLDIER: You ? I am impressed ! But even so, I regret I am not allowed to open the gates of the fort for you unless I have orders from Rana Amar Singh.

GAJA: Soldiers, take the keys of the gates from this insolent fellow.

SOLDIER: Not while I have life within me ! *(He draws his sword)*

GAJA: Kill this man at once.

1ST MAN *(to the others)*: Why do you stand and gape? Come, down with this fellow ! *(All together attack Gaja Singh.)*

GAJA: Soldiers.....*(He defends himself)*

*Enter from behind the Rana Amar Singh with Moghul soldiers.*

AMAR: Hold, soldiers!

*The Rajput soldiers withdraw their swords on seeing the Moghul soldiers.*

RANA: Maharaja Gaja Singh, what business have you here?

GAJA: This fort is mine. I come to claim it.

RANA: Royal guest! The Rana Amar Singh will welcome you as best as he can. O dog of the Moghuls, accept the welcome that you so richly deserve! (*He strikes him a blow in the face knocking him down.*) Brave soldier! Open the gates of the fort. Come.

*Moghul soldiers enter the fort with the Rana. The gates close behind him.*

### Scene V

*A mountain path in Mevar. Enter Satyavati, Arun and peasant women singing:*

All shattered lies my cherished dream  
and broken my lyre's leading string:  
Oh, how on this vast sepulchre  
my soul her threnody will sing?

Vanished the ancient halo round  
our Mevar-mountain's purple brow!  
Dense clouds with futile flares dislimn  
They melt no more in showers now!

The blood-red banner floats no more  
on the Mevar-mountain like a flame:  
Descend, O darkness, and outblot  
this scene of ignominy and shame.

No more in Mevar's groves, dream cuckoos  
trill forth joy in leafy trees,  
No more the flowers blossom, inviting  
the eager honey-haunted bees.

Spring zephyrs waft no more delight,  
nor laughs the full moon in the sky,  
No more the rivers dance to winds  
nor purl in simple ecstasy.

The blood-red banner floats no more  
on the Mevar-mountain like a flame  
Descend, O darkness, and outblot  
this scene of ignominy and shame.

Mevar's rich glades are steeped in grief,  
the bowers brood in silent gloom  
And burghers walk the earth like wraiths  
and happy homes like shadows loom.

No more keen sabres flash out challenge  
wielded by her fearless kings;  
The eyes of beauty are dark with pain  
And juvenile laughter's taken wings.

The blood-red banner floats no more  
on the Mevar-mountain like a flame,  
Descend, O darkness, and outblot  
this scene of ignominy and shame.

What shall survive in a house of doom ?  
who will to us deep solace bring,  
Except it be Mevar's last bards  
who of the perished grandeur sing ?

When high-born glories pass away,  
Oh, may the lore in legend live !  
May only the minstrels' ballads now  
their dim far echoes still revive !

The blood-red banner floats no more  
on the Mevar-mountain like a flame,  
Descend, O darkness, and outblot  
this scene of ignominy and shame.

*Enter Hidayat Ali with three soldiers*

HIDAYAT: Who are you ?

SATYAVATI: A peasant woman.

HIDAYAT: And you wander about from place to place  
singing songs such as these ?

SATYAVATI: Yes, indeed, soldier ! that is what I live  
for.

HIDAYAT: You must not sing that song any more.

SATYAVATI: And why not, soldier ?

HIDAYAT: The country is not yours now; it has passed  
into the hands of the Moghuls.

SATYAVATI: We mean no harm to them. We warred as  
long as Mevar was a free country. But now that Mevar has  
bowed her head and accepted the Moghul's rule, there is  
nothing left to dispute. But does that mean that we must  
also cease to mourn? O Moghul soldier! All the world  
over, the Mother is loved and revered. Shall we alone be  
forbidden the right to love our sweet mother, Mevar ?

HIDAYAT: Yes—I mean—no, you are not to sing the  
song which you have just been singing.

ARUN (*flaring up*): We will sing it ! Who is going to stop us ? My sisters, sing !

HIDAYAT: If you disobey me, I shall have to take you all prisoners.

SATYAVATI: Soldier, you may. Come, we are ready. We shall sit in the gloom of your prison and make it resound with our deep and doleful song. My son, let us sing.

HIDAYAT: Well then, I declare you my prisoners. (*He steps forward*)

ARUN: Beware ! (*He draws his sword*) You touch my mother at your peril.

HIDAYAT: Impudent young rascal ! Sheathe your sword.

ARUN: If you dare—show me how to do it !

*The soldiers attack Arun. Arun fights them bravely.*

SATYAVATI: Well done, my son, well done ! Protect your mother !

*One of the soldiers drops to the ground.*

Well done, my son, well done ! do not part with your sword while there is life in you. That is all I ask of you for my sake. Oh, what triumph !

*Hidayat Ali attacks Arun himself. Arun Singh battles with him while the soldiers surround him. Satyavati closes her eyes unable to look on while death hangs over her son. At this moment Mohabat Khan rushes in.*

MOHABAT: Enough, Hidayat Ali ! enough I say ! Are you not ashamed of yourself ? Three Moghul soldiers pitted against one helpless boy, and not content with that, must you draw your sword, too ? Shame, a thousand times, shame ! Brave boy, may God bless you ! You were ready to save your mother at the cost of your own life.

*Satyavati presses her hands to her bosom and gazes into Arun's eyes adoringly. Then she advances towards Mohabat Khan, but suddenly, bowing her head, retraces her steps. Mohabat looks her full in the face.*

MOHABAT: Sister ! what can I say to you ? I dare not even claim the right to call you sister. Forgive me ! — Oh you must !

SATYAVATI: O God, what irony is this ? To think that my own brother should be entreating me, and yet I cannot take him to my breast ! Oh . . .

ARUN: Mother, who is he ?

SATYAVATI: He is the Moghul Commander, Mohabat Khan.

MOHABAT: And your mother's brother.

SATYAVATI: Come, my son ! Let us go.

MOHABAT: No, sister, don't ! Oh, give me your pardon first !

SATYAVATI: Do you know what sin you have committed, Mohabat ?

MOHABAT: I do. I have set fire to my own house, and with fiendish joy have watched the flames.

SATYAVATI: Is that all ?

MOHABAT: And what else ? Perhaps you mean that I sinned when I embraced Islam ? But there I do not agree with you. Each one of us has a right to his own beliefs . . .

SATYAVATI: Enough ! Come, my son !

MOHABAT: No — wait. Even if it was a sin . . . was it one which could wipe out all tender feelings and noble qualities in the human heart ? Sister, I know that a woman's heart is pure as a lake at evening, sweet as a garden of



roses, and her soul mirrors the sky. Is this world so harsh and relentless that it can transform a thing so delicate and divine as that into a block of stone? Forget for a moment that you are a Hindu and I a Moslem, that you are the oppressed and I the oppressor; remember only this: that you are a woman and I am a man, that I am the brother and you are the sister. Recall for one moment the days of our childhood — when you carried me in your gentle arms and smothered my cheeks in kisses, and rocked me to sleep in your lap. Remember that we are two motherless children, sister and brother . . . Sister !

SATYAVATI: O my God!

MOHABAT: Sister !

SATYAVATI: I cannot bear it any longer. What is to be, must be. My little brother, I forgive you all your sins . . . My little brother ! I pray to the Lord of his tenderness and mercy to forgive you too. You are no longer the Commander of the Moghuls to me. You are once again the younger brother of our childhood days. Go now, brother !

MOHABAT: Goodbye, sister ! (*He prostrates himself before her.*)

SATYAVATI: Long life to you. Come away, my son !

HIDAYAT: Hold !—I cannot allow you to escape. We have made you our prisoners.

MOHABAT: I should like to see the man who dared to touch a hair of my sister's head while I stand by to protect her ! Go, sister, go unharmed.

HIDAYAT: You are Commander no more. Mohabat Khan! We are not bound to obey you now, nor do we care what you say. Shahzada Khuram is our Commander.

*Enter Shahzada Khuram*

SHAHZADA: I myself give you leave to go, sister ! Go home, and fear nothing.

HIDAYAT: But this woman wanders about from place to place singing seditious songs.

SHAHZADA: I heard the song from a distance. It is a plaintive and deeply moving song.

HIDAYAT: But if it should stir the country to revolt and disturb the peace, Shahzada—what then ?

SHAHZADA: The Moghul Emperor knows quite well how to put a stop to unrest, Hidayat Ali Khan ! Why speak of Mevar alone ? I say that if the whole Kingdom of India were just to melt away like an autumn cloud before the frail breath of such a song, then — let it vanish, it is not worth the keeping. The empire of the Moghuls was never built on such airy foundations. It is built on the rock of love and devotion, the loyalty of the men and women and children of India. The Moghul Emperor will never stand in the way of those that worship the Motherland with pure and single hearts.

HIDAYAT: The Shahzada's commands must be obeyed.

SHAHJAHAN: Sing on, sing on, my sister ! I am not grieved because you sing this song, I only grieve to think how few are the mourners left in Mevar to hear it. I will listen to that song, my brave sister ! sing on fearlessly so that I too may mingle my tears with yours and weep for the fallen glory of Mevar. Come, soldiers, come Hidayat Ali, let us join in their song . . . come !

## Scene VI

*The banks of Udaisagar on a cloudy evening. Rana Amar Singh alone.*

RAÑA: The sky of Mevar is muttering with suppressed fury. The mountains of Mevar are hiding their crests behind a veil of shame. The household gods of Mevar turn their faces away in deep humiliation. Mevar's downfall! . . . . Yes, she has fallen—Mevar, the mighty Rana Pratap's beloved Kingdom . . . . and this was the hand that . . . Oh! . . . (*He paces up and down restlessly*) Here at last he comes!

*Enter Mohabat Khan*

I salute you, great general!

MOHABAT: Victory to the Rana of Mevar!

RAÑA: Commander of the Moghuls! I see that you are not only skilled in the art of murder, but that you are something of an adept in the art of mockery as well! Victory to the Rana of Mevar? Victory indeed! But why mock the fallen foe?

MOHABAT: No, Rana! I did not speak in mockery.

RAÑA: Well, let that pass, it is of little account. What I wished was to meet you once.

MOHABAT: I have come to obey.

RAÑA: The pink of courtesy! . . . Listen. I sent for you to request one thing which none but you can concede.

MOHABAT: You have only to command me, Rana!

RAÑA: Look me well in the eyes, Mohabat! (*They gaze at each other intently*) Tell me: what are you to me?

MOHABAT: I am your brother — your first counsins.

RAÑA: You have, indeed, done a deed that befits a

brother. You have helped the Moghuls to rape the land of your fathers. You have stained your hands in the blood of your kith and kin. You have —

MOHABAT: Rana, you forget that I have eaten the salt of the Emperor.

RANA: And since when was that, Mohabat, since when? But let it pass. You have done your work. To gird at you would be futile now — especially as your handiwork is perhaps not ill-suited to one who lives on the charity of our enemies — who has laughed our traditions to scorn — who shamelessly champions unbridled licence in the name of liberty — who — but where's the use? . . . Listen, Mohabat! You have devastated Mevar—but the devastation is not complete. You have yet to make an end of the Rana of Mevar . . . Here is the sword. Take it and run me through.

*He offers the sword*

MOHABAT: Rana! . . . .

RANA: Why do you hesitate, Mohabat? Surely not because this act could blacken your conscience further? And in asking you this favour I am well aware that I am asking nothing which is not already dear to your heart. I know you desire my blood — your right hand is a-tremble to be tearing at my heart now. Well, here it is. Kill me, and you shall have your desire.

MOHABAT: Rana! Mohabat Khan has not fallen so low. It is true that I have spread d solation through Mevar with my sword . . . . yet I claim that I have not fought wrongfully. If I have waged war — it was from first to last a just war.

RANA: A just war, Mohabat! A just war! How can you call war just when a mere handful of half-armed men

are ground to dust under the heels of a vast and overwhelming horde? Call it anything — call it hell let loose on the soul of a babe, a thunderstorm out to quench one candle, a deluge set on blasting a single rose — but a just war, this? . . . But what am I saying? Let it pass, let it pass . . . you have won and that is all there is to it. Here, take this sword now. This was the sword the Rana Pratap gave me as he lay on his death-bed. "See that it is not dishonoured," he said. But I have brought dishonour upon its hallowed blade. Now let the dishonour be washed away in my repentant blood.

MOHABAT: Rana, I must refuse. Mohabat Khan is a soldier, not a murderer.

RANA: Then fight. Take up your sword.

*He unsheathes his sword*

MOHABAT: Rana, I have sworn never again to draw my sword against Mevar.

RANA: And when was that, Mohabat—pray, when was that? No, it will not do, I tell you. Take up your weapon. I now invite you to a duel, a duel to the death on the funeral field of Mevar and see, on my shoulders I bear the dead body of my Mother. So you may not decline this sacred challenge.

MOHABAT: Rana, listen!

RANA: I will *not* hear another word. You are a coward, a parasite and a traitor. Come, I dare you to a duel. I should dearly love to measure the worth of that prowess which caused all Hindustan to tremble at your name, Mohabat Khan! Come, take up your weapon. I will not rest content till you have done so. Vile worm, foul rake-helly fiend!

MOHABAT (*flushing*): Very well then, Rana, I accept

your challenge. (*He unsheathes his sword*) Beware, Rana ! If there be a man to match Mohabat in the whole of Mevar, that man is you . . . yet I tell you to think twice before you enter into a duel with *me*.

*They flourish their swords*

RANA: Today brother fights brother . . . . and it will be a spectacle for the gods to see.

*Just at this juncture Manasi rushes in with dishevelled hair and stands firmly between them.*

MANASI: Oh ! what are you doing, father ? What does it all mean ? (*To Mohabat Khan*) What are you about, sir ?

RANA: Go away, Manasi ! You must not stand between us and our quarrel.

MANASI: Oh, don't—father ! The havoc already done is dark enough. You shall not add to the horror with this unbrotherly strife. How can murder and revenge help us to heal the wounds of this tragedy ? All we can hope for is to forget the wrong and rise above ourselves once more.

RANA: I do not understand you, Manasi !

MANASI: Come, my sisters ! sing, sing aloud the song our heart does an understand but the mind still questions.

*Enter in a file Manasi's band of peasant women dressed in saffron-coloured saris, followed by Satyavati . . . Rana Amar Singh and Mohabat Khan attend in silence, strangely moved. The chorus starts, Manasi leading.*

Shed tears, O brothers, now no more  
Nor sigh : "Our freedom's gone !"  
Sing, sing from manhood's pinnacle :  
"We'll live for Truth alone."

Wherefore would you the others blame ?  
 First your small egos learn to tame.

Not for the others are we fallen :

'Tis falsehood holds us down.

Sing, sing from manhood's pinnacle :

"We'll live for Truth alone."

All over the world two forces battle :

Darkness affronting Light.

Aligned with Heaven's own radiant legion.

Defy Hell's hordes of Night.

There's no alien, there's no foe :

All all are friends incognito.

The unfrontiered earth's your cradle and home :

The house of self disown.

Sing, sing from manhood's pinnacle :

"We'll live for Truth alone."

If you would slay the abysmal gloom,

Waken Love's Sun within

And in its new Dawnrise behold :

All hail you as their kin !

Affianced to your sentinel soul,

With God on high as the Gleaming Goal,

Disclaim the cry of race and clime,

For you belong to none

But the Lord of Love and Truth — so sing :

"We'll live for Him alone."

*A pause*

RANA: Mohabat !

MOHABAT: Amar !

RANA: It was not *your fault*. It was our nature — our human nature — to blame . . . Forgive me.

MOHABAT: No — it's for me to ask forgiveness.

*(They embrace)*

The End.



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