

ACT IV

SONG-PRELUDE

[There enters a troupe of young things, and they introduce themselves in a song as follows:]

THE SONG OF RETURNING YOUTH

*Again and again we say "Good-bye,"
To come back again and again.
Oh, who are you?
I am the flower vakul.
And who are you?
I am the flower parul.
And who are these?
We are mango blossoms landed on the shore of light.
We laugh and take leave when the time beckons us.
We rush into the arms of ever-returning.
But who are you?
I am the flower shimul.
And who are you?
I am the kamini bunch.
And who are these?
We are the jostling crowd of new leaves.*

[Winter is revealed as Spring and answers to the questions put by the chorus of young things.]

THE SONG OF BURDENS DROPPED

*Do you own defeat at the hand of youth?
Yes.
Have you met at last the ageless Old, who ever grows new?
Yes.
Have you come out of the walls that crumble and bury those
whom they shelter?
Yes.*

(Another group sings)

*Do you own defeat at the hands of life?
Yes.
Have you passed through death to stand at last face to face
with the Deathless?
Yes.
Have you dealt the blow to the demon dust, that swallows
your city Immortal?
Yes.*

(Spring's flowers surround him and sing)

THE SONG OF FRESH BEAUTY

*We waited by the wayside counting moments
till you appeared in the April morning.*

*You come as a soldier-boy winning life at death's gate, --
Oh, the wonder of it!
We listen amazed at the music of your young voice.
Your mantle is blown in the wind like
the fragrance of the Spring.
The white spray of malati flowers in your hair
shines like star-clusters.
A fire burns through the veil of your smile, --
Oh, the wonder of it!
And who knows where your arrows are hidden
which smite death?*

(Night)

[The rear stage is darkened, and the light on the main stage dimmed to the heavy purple blackness of mourning.]
(Enter the Band of Youths)

Chandra has gone away again, leaving us behind.

It is difficult to keep him still.

We get our rest by sitting down, but he gets his by walking on.

He has gone across the river with the blind Minstrel, in whose depth of blindness Chandra is seeking the invisible light.

That is why our Leader calls him Diver.

Our life becomes utterly empty when Chandra is away.

Do you feel as though some thing was in the air?

The sky seems to be looking into our face, like a friend bidding farewell.

This little stream of water is trickling through the *casuarina* grove. It seems like the tears of midnight.

We have never gazed upon the earth before with such intentness.

When we run forward at full speed, our eyes keep gazing in front of us, and we see nothing on either side of us.

If things did not move on and vanish, we should see no beauty anywhere.

If youth had only the heat of movement, it would get perched and withered. But there is ever the hidden tear, which keeps it fresh.

The cry of the world is not only "I have," but also "I give." In the first dawning light of creation, "I have" was wedded to "I give." If this bond of union were to snap, then everything would go to ruin.

I don't know where that blind Minstrel has landed us at last.

It seems as though these stars in the sky above us are the gazing of countless eyes we met in the forgotten ages. It seems as if, through the flowers,

there came the whisper of those we have forgotten, saying Remember us.
Our heart will break if we do not sing.

(They sing)

*Did you leave behind you your love, my heart,
and miss peace through all your days?
And is the path you followed lost and forgotten,
making your return hopeless?
I go roaming listening to brooks' babble,
to the rustle of leaves.
And it seems to me that I shall find the way,
that reaches the land of lost love beyond the evening stars.*

What a strange tune is this, that comes out of the music of Spring!

It seems like the tune of the yellow leaves.

Spring has stored up its tears in secret for us all this while.

It was afraid we should not understand it, we were so youthful.

It wanted to beguile us with smiles.

But we shall sleep our hearts to-night in the sadness of the other shore.

Ah, the dear earth! The beautiful earth! She wants all that we have - the touch
of our hands, the song of our hearts.

She wants to draw out from us all that within, hidden even from ourselves.

This is her sorrow, that she finds out some things only to know that she has not
found all. She loses before she attains.

Ah, the dear earth! We shall never deceive you.

(They sing)

*I shall crown you with my garland, before I leave.
You ever spoke to me in all my joys and sorrows.
And now, at the end of the day
my own heart will break in speech.
Words came to me, but not the tune, and the song
that I never sang to you remains hidden behind my tears.*

Brother, did you notice that some one seemed to have passed by?

The only thing you feel is this passing by.

I felt the touch of the mantle of some wayfarer.

We came out to capture somebody, but now we feel the longing to be captured
ourselves.

Ah, here comes the Minstrel. Where have you brought us? The breath of the way-faring world touches us here, -- the breath of the starry sky.

We came seeking a new form of play. But now we have forgotten what play it was.

We wanted to catch the Old Man.

And everybody says that he is terrifying, a bodiless head, a gaping mouth, a dragon eager to swallow the moon of the youth of the world. But we are no longer afraid. The flowers go, the leaves go, the waves in the river go, and we shall also follow them. Ah, the blind Minstrel, strike your lute and sing to us. Who knows what is the hour of the night?

(The Minstrel sings)

*Let me give my all to him, before I am asked
whom the world offers its all.
When I came to him for my gifts, I was not afraid;
And I will not fear, when I come to him, to give up what I have.
The morning accepts his gold with songs,
the evening pays him back the debt of gold and is glad.
The joy of the blooming flowers comes to fruit
with shedding of its leaves.
Hasten, my heart, and spend yourself in love, before the day is done.*

Minstrel, why Chandra is still absent?

Minstrel: Don't you know that he has gone?

Gone? -- Where?

Minstrel: He said, "I shall go and conquer him."

Whom?

Minstrel: The One who is feared by all. He said, "Why else I am young?"

Ah, that was fine. -- Dada goes to read his quatrains to the village people, and Chandra has disappeared, -- for what purpose nobody knows.

Minstrel: He said, "Men have always fighting for a cause. It is the shock of that which ruffle the breeze of this Spring."

The shock?

Minstrel: Yes, the message that man's fight is not yet over.

Is this the message of Spring?

Minstrel: Yes. Those who have been immortal by death have sent their message in these fresh leaves of Spring. It said, "We never doubted the way. We never counted the cost: we rushed out: we blossomed. If we had sat down to debate, then where would be the Spring?"

Has that made Chandra mad?

Minstrel: He said, --

(The Minstrel sings)

*The Spring flowers have woven my wreath of victory,
The South wind breathes its breath of fire in my blood.
The voice of the house-corner wails in vain from behind.
Death stands before me, offering its crown.*

*The tempest of youth sweeps the sky-harp with its fingers;
My heart dances in its wild rhythm.
Gathering and storing are not for me,
I spend and scatter.
And prudence and comfort bid me adieu in despair.*

But where has he gone to?

Minstrel: He said, "I cannot keep waiting by the wayside any longer. I must go and meet him, and conquer him."

But which way did he take?

Minstrel: He has entered the cave.

How is that? It is so fearfully dark. Did he, without making any enquiries ---

Minstrel: Yes, he went in to make enquiries himself.

When will he come back?

I don't believe he will ever come back.

But if Chandra leaves us, then life is not worth living.

What shall we say to our Leader?

The Leader will also leave us.

Didn't he leave any message for us before he disappeared?

Minstrel: He said, "Wait for me. I shall return."

Return? How we are to know it?

Minstrel: He said, "I will conquer, and then come back again."

Then we shall wait for him all night.

But, Minstrel, where have we got to wait for him?

Minstrel: Before that cave, from whence the stream of water comes flowing out.

Which way did he go to get there?

The darkness is there like a dark sword.

Minstrel: He followed the sound of night-bird's wings.

Why did you not go with him?

Minstrel: He left me behind to give you hope.

When did he go?

Minstrel: In the first hour of the watch.

Now the third hour has passed, I think. The air is chilly.

I dreamt that three women, with their hair loose----

Oh, leave off your dream-women. I am sick of your dreams.

Everything appears darkly ominous. I didn't notice before the hooting of the owl. But now----

Do you hear the dog whining on the far bank of the river?

It seems as though a witch is riding upon him and lashing him.

Surely, if it had been possible, Chandra would have come back by now.

How I wish this night were over!

Do you hear the woman's cry?

Oh, the women, the women. They are ever crying and weeping. But they cannot turn those back who must go forward.

It is getting unbearable to sit still like this. Men imagine all sorts of things when they sit still. Let us go also. As soon as we are started on our way fear will leave us.

But who will show us the way?

There is the blind Minstrel.

What do you say, Minstrel? Can you show us the way?

Minstrel: Yes.

But we can hardly believe you. How can you find out the path by simply singing?

If Chandra never comes back, you shall.

We never knew that we love Chandra so intensely. We made light of him all these days.

When we are in the playing mood, we become so intent on the play that we neglect the playmate.

But, if he once comes back, we shall never neglect him any more.

I am afraid we have often given him pain.

Yet his love rose above all that. We never knew how beautiful he was, when we could see him every day.

(They sing)

*When there was light in my world
You stood outside my eyes.
Now that there is none,
You come into my heart.
When there were dolls for me, I played;
You smiled and watched from the door.
Now that the dolls have crumbled to dust,
You come and sit by me.
And I have only my heart for my music,
When my lute-strings have broken.*

That Minstrel sits so still and silent. I don't like it.

He looks ominous, -- like the lowering autumn cloud.

Let us dismiss him.

No, no. It gives us heart, when he sits there.

Don't you see that there is no sign of fear in his face?

It seems as if some messages were striking his forehead. His body appears to espy some one in the distance. There seem to be eyes on the tips of his fingers.

Simply by watching him we can see that some one is coming through the dark.

Look. He is standing up. He is turning towards the East, and making his obeisance.

Yet there is nothing to be seen, not even a streak of light.

Why not ask him what it is that he sees?

No, don't disturb him.

Do you know, it seems to me that the morning has dawned in him.

As if the ferry-boat of light has reached the shore of his forehead.

His mind is still, like the morning sky.

The storm of birds' songs will burst out presently.

He is striking his lute. His mind is singing.

Hush. He is singing.

(The Minstrel sings)

*Victory to thee, victory for ever,
O brave heart.
Victory to life, to joy, to love,
To eternal light.*

*The night shall wane, the darkness shall vanish,
Have faith, brave heart.
Wake up from sleep, from languor of despair,
Receive the light of new dawn with a song.*

(A ray of light hovers before the cavern)

Ah! There he is. Chandra! Chandra!

Hush. Don't make any noise. I cannot see him distinctly.

Ah! It cannot be any other than Chandra.

Oh, what joy!

Chandra! Come!

Chandra! How could you leave us so long?

Have you been able to capture the Old Man?

Chandra: Yes, I have.

But we don't see him.

Chandra: He is coming.

But what did you see in the cave? Tell us.

Chandra: No, I cannot tell you.

Why?

Chandra: If my mind were a voice, I could tell you.

But could you see him whom you captured? Was he the Old Man of the World?

The Old Man would like to drink up the sea of youth in his insatiable thirst.

Was it the One who is like the dark night, whose eyes are fixed on his breast,
whose feet are turned wrong way round, who walks backwards?

Was it the One who wears the garland of skulls, and lives in the burning-ground
of the dead?

Chandra: I do not know, I cannot say. But he is coming. You shall see him.

Minstrel: Yes, I see him.

[The light strengthens and gradually throughout the scene grows to a culminating brilliance at the close.]

Where?

Minstrel: Here.

He is coming out of the cave. -- Some one is coming out of the cave.

How wonderful!

Chandra: Why, it is you?

Our Leader!

Our Leader!

Our Leader!

Where is the Old Man?

Leader: He is nowhere.

Nowhere?

Leader: Yes, nowhere.

Then what is he?

Leader: He is a dream.

Then you are the real?

Leader: Yes.

And we are the real?

Leader: Yes.

Those who saw you from behind imagined you in all kinds of shapes.

We didn't recognize you through the dust.

You seemed old.

And then you came out of the cave, -- and you look like a boy.

It seems just as if we had seen you for the first time.

Chandra: You are first every time. You are first over and over again.

Leader: Chandra! You must own your defeat. You could not catch the Old Man.

Chandra: Let our festival begin. The sun is up.

Minstrel, if you keep so still, you will swoon away. Sing something.

(The Minstrel sings)

*I lose thee, to find thee back again and again,
My beloved.
Thou leavest me, that I may receive thee all the more
when thou returnest.
Thou canst vanish behind the moment's screen
Only because thou art mine for evermore,
My beloved.
When I go in search of thee, my heart trembles,
spreading ripples across my love.
Thou smilest through thy disguise of utter absence
and my tears sweeten thy smile.*

Do you hear the hum?

Yes.

They are not the bees, but the people of the place.

Then Dada must be near at hand with his quatrains.

Dada: Is this the Leader?

Yes, Dada.

Dada: Oh, I am so glad you have come. I must read my collection of quatrains.

No. No. Not the whole collection, but one.

Dada: Very well. One will do.

*The sun is at the gate of East, his drum of victory sounding in the sky.
The Night says I am blessed, my death is bliss.
He receives his alms of gold, filling his wallet, -- and departs.*

That is to say----

No. We don't want your that is to say.

Dada: It means----

Whatever it means, we are determined not to know it.

Dada: What makes you so desperate?

It is our festival day.

Dada: Ah, is that so? Then let me go to all the neighbours----

No, you must not go there.

Dada: But is there any need for me here?

Yes.

[Dada.] Then my quatrains----

Chandra: We shall colour your quatrains with such a thick brush that no one will know whether they have any meaning at all.

And then you will be without any means.

The neighbourhood will desert you.

The Watchman will take you to be a fool.

And the Pundit will take you to be a blockhead.

And your own people will consider you to be useless.

And the outside people will consider you queer.

Chandra: But we shall crown you, Dada, with a crown of new leaves.

We shall put a garland of jasmine round your neck.

And there will be no one else except ourselves who will know your true worth.

THE SONG OF THE FESTIVAL OF SPRING

[In which all the persons of the drama, not excepting Sruti-bhusan, unite on the main stage in the dance of Spring.]

*Come and rejoice, for April is awake.
Fling yourselves into the flood of being
bursting the bondage of past.*

*April is awake.
Life's shoreless sea is heaving in sun before you.
All the losses are lost,
and death is drowned in its waves.
Plunge into the deep without fear,
with the gladness of April in your heart.*

PART THREE

The Songs with Notations