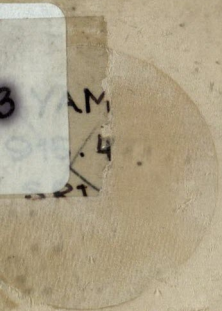


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SPIRIT OF INDIA



M. Srinivasan

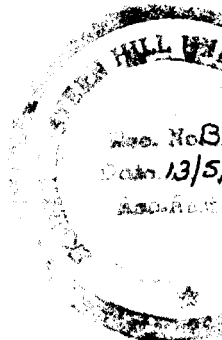
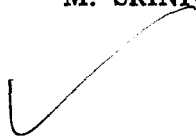


MYSORE

SPIRIT OF INDIA.

7

BY
M. SRINIVASAN



MYSORE

PREFACE

This composition in verse purports to be a commentary on some aspects of Indian history from its dawn till the rebirth of freedom.

The prologue, an imaginary conversation between "Mother" (India) and "Son" (the author), sets out the arguments for choice of the theme and of the language.

The text begins with the geological concept of the land mass being all one at the time of the earth's origin, followed by drift which resulted in the continents and in India.

The emphasis, in conformity with Mother's directive and warning, has been on the causes that made her slip from her paramount position, and exposed her to invasions and ills. In illustration, a few of the salient historical episodes are critically featured. They are rather in order of importance than in chronological sequence.

With acknowledgements to history of India and to contemporary religions.

"AMRIT"

Mysore-2

M. SRINIVASAN

August, 1968

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VANDE MATHARAM

There! Tricolour ensign bursts on the mast
and brass bands blare,
“Jana Gana Mana”

DEDICATION

NATION is born from the bosom of peace
Through labour of love of a noble soul.

To that Angel of Peace who knew not sins
Ye promise him now, while he is here*
At the finest hour in the Country's life,
To dedicate self in the Nation's cause.

* Gandhiji was still alive when these lines were first composed by the author, while a captain at the Army HQ.

PROLOGUE

Son :

“Rise, dear Mother! it's glorious dawn:
On historic Delhi the gloom is gone.
Free is fresh air, and ushers again
An august reign for the common gain”.

“Bow for blessings from Chamundi Goddess:
Here a garland of Kashmiri roses.
These are thy robes and inspiring mantle;
Give us thy blessings and Motherly counsel”.

“Mother! oh Mother! happy are we:
Long have we laboured for today to be.
Mother! Mother! take in thy arm
Children your own, fondle and warm.
And let us all feast: pardon our glee:
In ecstasy are we, now you are free”.

Mother :

“Born is freedom: yet feast you may not:
Build up the *Bharath* and that be the thought.

“Forget not how in the heyday of yore,
When blessed I was and wanted no more,
Thy noble forbears to prayers were sworn,
Seeking at leisure the treasures there borne.
And neglected house was invaders' pawn,
Till yester daybreak they left on their own”.

“Now is thy turn for precoc'ous deed
To fill up the void with merit and speed.
Where struts as scientist a whining tyro,
Plough up that evil, ere it is morrow.

Rear those species the perennials rare,
Like Ramans and Tagores the Nobel ware.
So, secure the State to stature of yore
With plenty and peace, with merit and more”.

“Be cautious my child! and always avoid
Planning and pursuit of credit devoid”.

Son :

“No more rebuke: no more provoke:
Surely our plans will tributes evoke.
Assembled here in this historic town
Are lawyers and statesmen of long renown
To tailor for you the republic robes
For playing thy role at UNO probes”.

“The path of duty given my care
I follow in climate foul or fair”.

“May Lord be pleased, with kindly light
To lead us on, the path of right.
May we all dance to chorus divine,
Of exciting names, a thousand in line”.

“Able I were on this holiest day
Beckon the Muse to brighten my lay”.

“You with learning of Goddess Saradha!
You with music of master Naradha!
Part to thy lispings, ambit’ous own,
A tithe of thy lore, a shade of thy tone”.

Mother :

“Devotion divine has given thy meed.
Shed lustre and light and merit in deed.
Play on the delicate chords of *Veena*
A simple *varna*, and thy best, *CHEENA*”.

Son :

“Grant us the freedom to revel in science
Without questions asked nor bridled by reins:
Nor”

Mother :

“Seek not, my child! through prayer a gain:
Such is not prayer: it's pure in strain.
From prayer restrain till all of you knew
To offer the one whence nothing is due”.

“No more of sci'nce as theme tonight
She is far from here at a distant height.
Pure was sci'nce as one more star,
Till profaned by man as weapon of war”.

“In the river of sci'nce there is no lull:
She is not for those, the easy and dull.
Only the savant can open the seal
To wonders of Nature, not showy genteel”.

“While the river can gush in fury rude
And inundate banks in inebriate mood:
Art is a distant, picturesque hill
In blue-clad contour on horizon's frill.
The hill serene on the shimmering scene
A weighty asset has always been.
Admirable stands the profile of Art:
Fresh and dynamic is scientific thought”.

“Then choose the theme from sci'nce or art:
Wait:
I commend an other of fleeting gait”:

“She struts the stage of passage of Time:
Records faithful the deeds of a clime”.

“So, make it your task, aspiring child!
To narrate hist’ry in style to be hailed.
Let couplets rhyming in language simple
Convey morals to the listening pupil”.

“Bemoan those deeds and fateful follies
That enslaved children, that made them *coolies*.
Freedom lost in the past shall warn
Freedom regained from sleep in the morn”.

“Enrich thy poem with the English pen
In meters, then, chosen from its proven men.
With tradition’l charm, its sweep and sway
Despite opposition, English will stay”.

“Arts and sciences, music and poetry
Belong to the world, not to a country.
So is lit’rature free from barrier:
So is Shakespeare all the world over”.

“Patri’tism is’nt of languages born:
Let not the Country by languages shorn”.

“Is’nt your sci’nce mostly foreign?
Why then condemn the languages’ doyen?
Built is no nation on language alone:
Their renown is borne on merits they own”.

“ ’Twas in Samskrit in the ages of yore
The great bards sang of my triumphant lore.
Now is it shelved with Latin and Greek,
Remotely revered as a hoary classic”.

“Again till Samskrit is Nation’s language,
Continue English for Nation’s vantage”.

“Go to! my dear! season your pen
With reason and argument: use it then”.

INTERLUDE

When cadence sweet of Mother stopt
Her dossier to me she passed,
And as connoisseur watched over me.
I am energised,
Instruments keyed and my tone harmonised,
Poised am I to the committed task:
Ere I proceed,
Of audience I ask
Indulgence for a brief interruption.
Hark! "Welcome, Muse!"
Given her reception,
Condescends she to punctuate my art.

Set is the stage and lit!
Let music start.

CANTO I

DAWN

I. ARCHITECT OF THE UNIVERSE

Behold an artist and models around:
Many a one to his credit redound!
Behold him plying in time and space
Moulding a piece of infinite grace!

When passionate lovers of his peaceful art
Surround the show-piece, and would not part
Sans one more look and yet an other,
Behold him smile, as the pleased father!

Now has the Artist posed His nudes:
Would one dare expound their overt moods!

II. DRIFT OF THE CONTINENTS

There! a judge on that aerial perch
Under azure dome with a twilight touch:
And slanting light to illumine his view
From east'rn arc of auburn hue.

On the feckless dome he discovered nought:
Far below, his di-vision caught
Terrestrial orb in diurnal spin.
This spherical urn held within
Placid water in greyish blue.
On this poised a colorful canoe
Which brief rejoiced its staid sojourn.
The spin of the urn set waves in space
Which heaved the boat and ript in turn.
The lighter parts, in smaller chunks,
Drifted apart to distant coasts.

CANTO II

THE GOLDEN AGE

IX. EMPEROR ASOKA

Among the students who gathered to learn
Beneath the banyan where the Master preached
His simple lessons of ethical code,
Best was a pupil in purple attire.
Buddhism claimed this King as its own
To use his powers in making it known
The tenets common for the weal of man.

Asoka the King adorned the throne
With piety and love as sceptre and crown:
These to the land were a tower of strength,
Visible without as a source of light.

This kingly gesture of renunciation
Was featured aloft for the Nation's good:
Imperious pillars proudly announced
Imperial message from Master begot:

If glory there was, from service it stemmed:
'Twas teaching mankind to fulfil itself.

A twilight ushered the hopeful morning
To wake up neighbours from slothful slumber.
Soon would be on a tournament fair,
Borne on Buddhism as the envied prize
Which nations east'rn could win and carry.

Monarch of monks sent eminent coaches
To prepare neighbours for the noble sport.
Armoury of peace gave weapons equal
For trial of strength between man and man.

On the day of sport on Indian field
Marched nations' athletes with fluttering flags
Past standard banner and lion in front:

That was Asoka, the Monitor of Man!

CANTO III

MOSLEM PERIOD

XVIII. MOHAMMAD, THE PROPHET

In Arabian deserts
Where sand-storms gyrate the date-nibs
In sizzling alarms:
And humped animals plough the desert main
In wavy motion, which their swings attain:
There a mount, weary and wan,
Panting with thirst, jogs along,
Listless and breathless and sweating strong.
Hostile host in this grim expanse—
The mirage—
Deceives with hope his endless advance,
And baits him to battle against odds.
In despair gnashes his teeth on the gods
To deliver a curse:
Ere that escapes,
Perceives an oasis for which he makes
And slakes his thirst.
Now, appreciation
Wells in him of divine dispensation.
Then, in penitence
Prays to God to forgive his petulance.

On human desert a prophet walked
To waken masses in ignorance bogged.
Recipe was based on components pure:
His elixir 'twas, known for its cure.

Thus rose religion, Mohammadanism,
Which abjured most, force and schism.
And so was the banner of Islam raised
For love among men, as in *Khoran* priced.

CANTO IV

BRITISH HEGEMONY

XXXIII. COMING OF THE BRITISH

Nadir left Delhi a city in flames
Which flood-lit far off London-on-Thames.

Men of England had outgrown their island:
Children were many, narrow the toyland.
Ayah could'nt control the kicking for room
When they saw due East a flower in bloom—
Prosperous India glowing in health,
Inviting England to this uncommon wealth!

The heart of England athwart in London
Ached for India sons did abandon!
Came, England's children as humble hawkers
With Christ'an manners, and wares in lockers!

XXXIV. PILGRIMS TO INDIA

To this house of learning, knowledge and wisdom
Came pilgrims many to study in freedom.
To these from China or west'rn Arabia
Records we owe in praise of India
As help to construe her prec'ous past
Which she, in humility, would not cast.
Thus, India's fame did spread to Europe,
Whose nationals many cherished the hope
That they would some day behold the pageantry,
That's India,
Not simply one more country!

CANTO V

SEEDS OF DISAFFECTION

XLV. FAMINES

Waves of famine starved India's millions,
Already trampled by foreign aliens.

To those that have shall more be given:
Have-nots seek, get nought from heaven.
Some ov'rfeed, unearned, surfeit:
Impair digestion, have rich fare albeit.
Others famish, and die of hunger
In peaceful escape from a world of anger.

Who ask in penury for small alms ask
From power to give which power doth mask.
India in penury asked for alms
From Britain gone rich at her cost without qualms.

XLVI. THE MUTINY

Vanished the appeal that once was British:
Their numbers increased India's anguish.

They angered *Varuna* and he withheld rain!
They displeased *Ravi*: he scorched the terrain!
Benefits were reaped from showers in time
When *Vedas* were sung and there was no crime!
Then Nature gave gifts and there were no needs:
Not in this era of daily misdeeds!

Poison was poured for fury to rise
'Gainst those for whom ere now they had praise.
The British-made guns by Indians manned,
Used components, *now* their religion banned!
And so was broadcast the hymn of hatred
For a war of crusade for freedom sacred.

CANTO VII

UNTO VICTORY

LVIII. RESURRECTION

Then was roused the SPIRIT OF INDIA,
Earlier known in Rama of Ayodhya!
That sinless soul of pristine purity,
Virtue's temple, but not divinity!

Before in Natal it braved its breast:
Sweet was its tongue which the opponent heard.
It inspired peace, cleansed hearts not pure:
Found for the Nation its titles to truth,
Which strangers had lost during their tenure.

If there was a soul with a mind so raised
Where all could see the thoughts it reared,
And no one could find but the purest thoughts,
That was the Sage from Sabarmathi hailed.

Through exp'riments made to conquer the will
He chose a weapon, as second to Truth,
Of sacrifice mettle with core of love,
For that had been proven by Jesus Christ.

On the wheels of *Charka* he trained the canon,
And ordered his men to turn it full on
On the distant base of the island foe
Whose fact'ries fell to its crippling blow.

Idol of people in transparent frame,
Harijans' champion, Angel of Peace,
Guardian of Hindu and Muslim rights—
This Commander of Congress strode the front
Of freedom struggle without battle dress.

EPILOGUE

JAI HIND

And so was re-born the dormant Nation
As an orphan child with Father not there.
But lucky it was they had in station
Jawaharlal Nehru, emotion'l and fair,
And statesmen Vallabhai and Rajaji,
Descendents of Dadabhai Naorojee.

With labour begun in fortyseven
Through double the pain came Pakistan twin.

Was post-natal life so full of anguish,
It could'nt have been worse, a war with British.
The price was too much even for Freedom,
To have lost reason to brute orgasm.