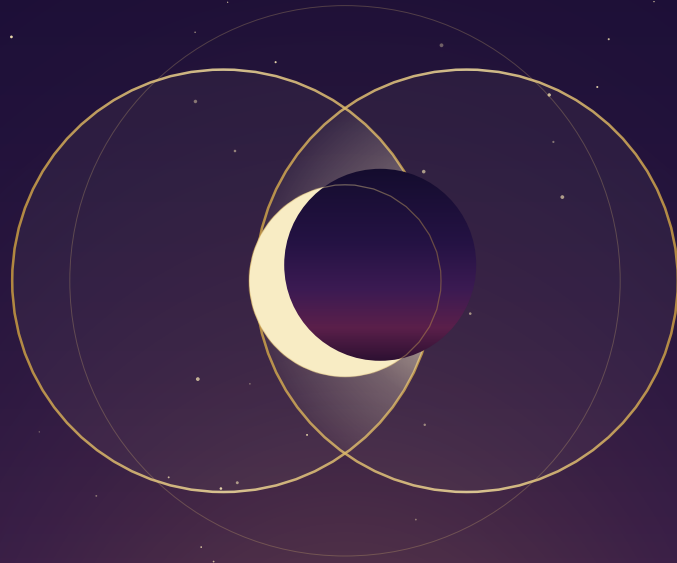




WHEN DREAMS MERGE

A Collection of Verse

Translated Maithili Poems

GAJENDRA THAKUR

VIDEHA

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A Collection of Verse

GAJENDRA THAKUR

Gajendra Thakur

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When Dreams Merge — an anthology of original and translated Maithili verse by Gajendra Thakur. Language of the original: Maithili.

A Note to Readers

Some of my writings have also appeared in Nepal's Gorkhapatra, Aangan, Dhua Dhaja, Mithila.com, and other Maithili periodicals and columns. Almost all my original and translated writings have been published electronically in VIDEHA, the Maithili e-journal (since 2000), at www.videha.co.in, ISSN 2229-547X.

Some poems in this book are expanded versions of poems I published earlier in print or online. The poems as they appear in this volume are hereby declared their authoritative versions. This also applies to anyone wishing to include them in an anthology, refer to them, or translate them. In some previously published or electronically published poems, the titles too have been changed along with the revisions.

— Gajendra Thakur

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PRELIMINARY POEMS

Unfamiliar Letters

My mind went numb.
 I yoked the ox and fell into thought—
 this and that,
 and by the time every furrow had been turned, evening had come.
 I looked all around for the ox that had gone astray.

.....
 And in the dream this was exactly how it was—so lucid, so intelligible;
 but here, if I tried to tell this one the story of that place,
 I would no longer remember it.
 And where, now, does memory live in me?
 The two have merged.

...
 When dreams merge.....

Death Song (Folk Song)

O my dear, with such care I raised a parrot,
 fed it milk and sugar;
 and that very parrot flew up and sat upon a tree,
 leaving its cage stretched upon the earth.
 From where did the swan come,
 and where has it dissolved?
 O Rama, in what fortress has it made its dwelling?
 From the city of the gods the swan descended,
 and entered the realm of humankind.
 O Rama, it made the fortress of the body its abode,
 and wrapped itself in Māyā.

SECTION I — WHEN DREAMS MERGE

Beyond the Current of Time, the Light of the Infinite

The clock ticks on the wall, but where,
inside the clock, does time live?

The hands go round; days change; leaves turn yellow;
hair grows white. Cities rise, towns vanish,
empires become dust, and a human being,
carrying the brevity of a single life, stands within time's immeasurable current.

He asks: 'Is what goes on changing the final truth? Of what is born and passes away—is there nothing beyond it?'

'History is the long tale of kings and wars,
victories and defeats, building and destruction. Is that,
then, the final home of the human being?'

At first, time gives no answer. It simply flows like an ancient river. A newborn draws its first breath in that river; an old person, the last.

Before that current a king is as momentary as a beggar.

Wealth cannot stop death. Power cannot bribe old age. Fame cannot bargain with the mortality of the body. Learning too cannot erase the appointed date of death.

Death brings everyone before the same naked question:

'How long did the thing you took for your whole truth endure?'

And the human being looks for an answer—
sometimes in the house of wealth, sometimes in power,
sometimes in fame; sometimes in children,
in art, in knowledge, in victory won through war.

But at every door time leaves its small inscription:
'This too will change.'

That sentence is not despair. It is the first bell of awakening. For wherever change is seen, a question begins to grow:

'Where does the gaze that witnesses change stand? What unchanging ground is needed before we can call a moment a moment?'

A river does not watch its own flowing. The bank gives us a sense of the flow. If everything were nothing but flowing, by what could flowing itself be named?

Some visions remain within time. Some questions peer beyond it.

Between these two levels,
a profound conversation begins. This world is not false.

Hunger is real. Pain is real. Love is real. Rain is real. The smell of earth is real. The wounds of history are real. The body dying in war is real.

Yet this reality has a limit. It is relational,
changing, conditioned by circumstance,
bound to time.

The moon seen in water is not a false reflection,
yet the moon is not imprisoned in that water. The world is real as experience, but it is not the final, self-sufficient reality. It rests upon some deeper ground.

There is a very subtle distinction here:
to say 'not ultimate' is not the same as saying 'unreal.'

Many eyes looking from outside failed to hear this distinction. They saw from afar and declared:

'Whoever does not treat history as ultimate does not understand history.'

'Whoever seeks something beyond time denies time.'

'Whoever calls the changing world a limited truth calls the world an illusion.'

And a mist of accusation settled over an entire civilisation.

Someone said: 'The people of this land cannot write history.' Someone said: 'Their minds live in dreams.' Someone said: 'They flee from reality.' But time laughed.

For if a civilisation knew nothing of history,
how did it carry memory across so many millennia?

How did it carry stories and genealogies,
the rise and fall of kingdoms, changes in religion,
layers of language, ruined cities,
memories of pilgrimage, the reckoning of seasons, the cycles of time?

Why must historical consciousness have only one form? Is history only a straight line? Is cyclical experience not history?

If memory preserves fewer dates of conquest and more of the recurring patterns of existence, why should that be called unconsciousness?

A culture may regard time not as a god but as a condition. It may regard history not as the final gate of liberation but as a mirror of human bondage.

This difference is not unconsciousness. It is another philosophical altitude.

History shows us the human being—
but which human being? Fighting. Greedy. Loving. Building states. Breaking states. Seeking justice. Committing injustice. Fighting disease. Spreading disease. Creating art—and weapons. Building civilisation, then setting fire to the civilisation it built.

History does not show the human being in the fullness of freedom. Much of the time it tells the story of the human being caught in bondage.

Ignorance, craving, fear, ego, rivalry,
collective hatred, the desire to dominate—
how many pages of history have been written in this ink?

If the human being seeks final liberation from history alone,
he may go on circling forever within his own bondage—
just as reading the map of a prison wall in exquisite detail does not, by itself, break the wall.

The map is necessary. The wall is real. But the question of freedom is larger than the map. Time gives us history. But what if liberation requires a gaze that reaches beyond time?

In this thought, history is not diminished;
its place becomes clearer. In practical life,
history matters: to understand politics,
to understand the wounds of society, to remember injustice, not to repeat old mistakes, to know how a culture changed. But history is not the final existential refuge.

These two levels are not enemies. They are like the plan of a house and the act of living in it—different, yet joined. They are like wave and sea, both real.

The wave has no independent existence apart from the sea,
yet the wave need not be denied. The time-bound world is the wave;
the timeless ground is the sea. One may stare at the wave and forget the sea. Another may speak of the sea and deny the wave. A whole vision keeps both.

One spiritual vision says:
the world is established in experience,
but it is not ultimate. Another, equally profound,
says: everything is flow; there is no fixed, self-sufficient essence.

In different languages,
both put temporal bondage in question. One looks toward an unchanging ground. The other opens every claim to independent permanence and finds an emptiness that is also interdependence.

Yet their ethical fruits can come close to one another:
lighten the ego. Do not make the fleeting ultimate. Lessen greed. Wake up in the presence of death.

Let knowledge become not information alone but transformation. From this perspective, knowledge seems to open on two levels.

One works through the senses and the intellect. It manages the world: science, history, language, calculation, cause and effect, the analysis of society. This knowledge is real, useful, necessary.

Yet its truth is contextual. What one age establishes can be changed by new evidence. One point of view can be revised by another.

That too is the beauty of such knowledge:
it is humble.

But there is another hunger for knowledge—
the kind that changes the life of the knower himself. It does not merely reveal objects; it loosens the bondage of the seer. It gives not merely answers, but peace; not merely information, but freedom.

It says: 'You are within time,
but your final truth is not time alone.'

This knowledge cannot be fully tasted from a book. It asks for inward intuition, direct seeing, self-transformation.

One day the human being understands that every moment he tries to seize slips through his hand.

Youth. Wealth. Fame. The forms of relationships. The body. Ideas. States. Civilisations. He gives up the insistence on holding them forever.

Then death may become less an invisible monster and more a doorway to truth.

Death says: 'What belongs to time will return to time. Are you nothing more than this changing?'

The question turns the human being inward. History gives the sequence outside; self-knowledge gives depth within. There is tension between them, but the tension can be fertile.

History says: 'See what human beings have done.' Inward vision says: 'See what a human being may become.'

History says: 'Here is a war.' Inward vision asks:
'Where was hatred born?'

History says: 'Here is a revolution.' Inward vision asks:
'Is freedom only a change of power,
or also the liberation of the mind?'

History says: 'Here is an empire.' Inward vision asks:
'Where is the limit of pride?'

History says: 'Here is a triumph of science.' Inward vision asks:
'Power—joined to what value?'

This conversation does not make history smaller. It gives history moral depth.

There is another vision that seats history upon the final throne. It says: 'What happens in history is the ultimate reality. Perfection lies in the history yet to come. Progress itself is liberation. Time itself is judge.'

Then history can cease to be memory and become a deity. Progress can become worship.

A nation, a class, a civilisation,
an ideology may proclaim:
'We are the chariot of the future. Whoever comes before us may be sacrificed, and history will accept the offering.'

At that moment history can become a dangerous temple,
where the living person is only a means to some imagined perfection ahead.

A face disappears. A child becomes a number. A village becomes a dot on a map. A dead worker becomes a 'necessary cost.' A war becomes 'a stage in the march of progress.'

Such language can devour human dignity.

When history is treated as ultimate,
the human being of the present can become a sacrifice to the future.

And the irony is this:
a civilisation seeking perfection in the name of history can create a weapon capable of ending history itself.

Human intelligence touches the sky and unlocks the fire inside the atom. But if moral vision falls behind in the race of time, progress can blow up its own house.

What an astonishing paradox:
the power to erase history in the name of extending history without end; instruments capable of ending life
in the name of improving life.

In searching for perfection,
humanity can forget the human being.

Before this darkness,
a vision beyond time is not escape. It can offer moral height.

If history is not ultimate,
no historical victory is greater than human dignity. If progress is not the final god, the murder of the present
in the name of the future is not holy. If states, nations and ideologies are all bound to time, none can make
an absolute claim.

From this understanding can grow tolerance. Compassion. Restraint. Humility.

A spiritual height does not flee history. It gives history its proper measure:

‘You are important—but not ultimate. Your wounds are real—
but your hatred need not be eternal. Keep your memory—
but do not turn memory into a god of revenge. Make your future—
but do not crush today’s human being beneath it.’

This is the discipline of history:
a consciousness of time that remembers the past,
lives the present, and makes the future,
yet treats none of the three as the final refuge.

It is like a traveller sitting in a train. Stations arrive and depart. They matter. One may be a birthplace,
another a place of separation, another of meeting. But the train is not any single station, and the traveller is
not the train.

Time is the sequence of stations. History is the traveller’s book of the journey. But the final being of the
traveller may be greater than the page.

This way of seeing history is not amnesia. On the contrary,
it teaches the ethical use of memory.

Remember what war does. Remember pandemics,
greed, empire, slavery, discrimination,
violence. But do not turn the suffering of history into an argument for fresh violence.

Let memory become a warning,
not a poison. Let the past become knowledge,
not fate.

A civilisation that says, ‘We are prisoners of the past,’
closes the future. A civilisation that says,
‘The past is nothing,’ cuts away its own memory.

Freedom lies between the two:
remembrance joined to transcendence. Know history,
but do not become its slave.

Live in time, but do not live by fear of time alone. Remember death, but do not make death the whole
meaning of life. Accept change, but seek within change some deeper stillness.

One evening the sun sets. A child asks,
‘Has the sun died?’ The mother says,
‘No. It has only disappeared from your sight.’ Philosophy sometimes searches for an answer of this kind.

What appears to us as an ending may, perhaps,
be the limit of our sight.

Names and forms change. Yet the question of a deeper ground remains open.

One stream of thought says that the witness within and the all-pervading ground are ultimately two
names for one deep truth.

Another stream dismantles every image of a fixed self and says:
where we imagine an independent substance,
there is interdependence and emptiness.

The two are not the same. Yet both question the ultimacy of time. Both lighten the solid fortress of ego: one through the insight of an unchanging unity, the other through the insight of intrinsic emptiness.

One says: beyond name and form, unity. The other says:
name and form are not self-sufficient;
they arise through one another.

Both invite the human being to see beyond the transient ego of history.

If that invitation enters real life,
ethnic arrogance may grow lighter,
national pride more measured,
ideological obstinacy less rigid, personal greed softer.

For why make an eternal god of anything that enters the river of time?

A profound sense of history and time need not make the human being meaningless; it can make him more responsible.

If a moment is fleeting,
why should it be worthless? It is precious precisely because it will never return in exactly the same form.

If the body is mortal,
pain does not matter less. It becomes more poignant.

If civilisation is transient,
that is not a reason to burn it. It is a reason to preserve it more tenderly.

If history is not ultimate,
its moral value is not empty. It becomes clearer.

Historical events are not eternal,
but the wounds they leave upon living human beings can be deep.

A timeless vision does not teach indifference to the world. It teaches the difference between attachment and compassion.

Attachment says: 'This is mine;
let it remain forever.' Compassion says:
'This is fleeting; therefore care for it with tenderness.'

Attachment grasps. Compassion accompanies. Attachment multiplies fear. Compassion acts while accepting impermanence.

A sense of time that can make a human being calm rather than mad in the presence of death is not outside history; it is useful to history too.

For one who fears death beyond measure may wage war for an immortal name—for monuments, empires, dynasties, fame.

One who accepts impermanence may demand less blood. He may say:
'Whether my name remains or not,
let life remain.'

Such an understanding may help save history itself.

The question of progress rises again. Does progress always move forward? Science grows—and weapons too. Production grows—and greed too. Communication becomes faster—and lies become faster. Medicine advances—and new diseases appear. The state becomes more organised—and surveillance too.

History is not a straight staircase on which every next step is morally higher.

Technological advance and moral advance can move in different directions.

So progress needs a measure. More power—
or more wisdom? More things—or more justice? More speed—
or more humanity? More history—
or more liberation?

If there is no value beyond time,
by what measure shall progress be measured? If whatever happens is therefore right, on what ground can injustice be called wrong?

Here a moral horizon beyond history may become necessary.

A value greater than the victorious state. A dignity greater than the majority. A compassion greater than the fashion of an age. Only then can we judge history.

Otherwise history becomes at once its own judge and its own criminal.

A timeless vision, while we remain within time,
is like a high watchtower. From there we can look upon war and say,
‘Victorious though it was, it was unjust.’

From there we can look upon prosperity and say,
‘Wealthy though it is,
it is inhuman.’ We can look upon tradition and say,
‘Ancient though it is, it is false.’ We can look upon modernity and say, ‘New though it is, it may still be delusion.’

Such a vision does not flee time. It measures time. It does not despise history; it warns against the excessive worship of history.

A civilisation that sees cycles in time can see the possibility of renewal after destruction. States rise and fall. Languages change. Religions are transformed. Yet life returns in new forms.

Cyclicity, rightly understood,
is not fatalism. It is a lesson in diminishing pride:
‘Your age is not final. Your empire is not forever. Your science is not complete. Your crisis too is not eternal.’

These sentences give less despair and more humility.

But if cyclicity becomes inaction—
‘Everything will come again; what need I do?’—
then it too becomes delusion.

The wheel of time does not erase duty. Rain returns every year,
yet the farmer still sows seed. Seasons return,
yet the loss of one harvest is real.

Whether history is cyclical or linear,
suffering asks for compassion now.

Time may be philosophical,
but a hungry child asks for bread at once.

Seek timeless truth,
but do not abandon time-bound duty.

This wholeness is necessary: one hand toward the Infinite,
the other toward the wounded human being of today;
one eye beyond time,
the other upon the page of history.

Only when both are open does vision become fuller.

If a society speaks only of the timeless but does not see injustice, its spirituality is empty. If it speaks only of history but not of the deep freedom of the inner self, its politics may become exhausted.

Freedom is needed both within and without.

Historical freedom—from slavery, discrimination,
hunger, fear. Existential freedom—from ignorance,
ego, and the delusion that clings to what cannot last.

The two are not enemies. One breaks the chains outside,
the other the chains within. Each can remain incomplete without the other.

In a free society, an unfree mind can create new forms of bondage through greed. A free mind that sits quietly inside an unjust institution has an incomplete compassion.

Whole liberation listens in both directions.

Perhaps the deepest lesson of history is not who won,
but how many victories were momentary;
how many powers disappeared; how much pride became dust;
how many monuments became ruins; how many ‘final orders’ became, in the end, a page.

History itself can shatter the illusion of finality. To those who worship it, history says: 'I have no permanent throne for anyone.'

There is a beautiful knowledge in this irony. Time turns every crown into the same dust.

Why, then, should human dignity not be greater than a crown? Why should the life of an unnamed worker count for less than an emperor's ambition? Why should the peace of a village weigh less than a national victory?

A timeless gaze gives the individual a face again. It returns a name to the one crushed beneath the great chariot of history.

If 'progress' devours human beings,
it is not progress. If 'victory' erases compassion,
it is another name for defeat. If 'history' makes living people into mere instruments, stop worshipping it.

A vision beyond time says:
the human being is not merely a brick in the wall of history.

There is within each person a depth that no document of the state can measure.

There is an inner sky where peace asks no political border,
where consciousness is not chronology,
where one moment of complete awareness may be deeper than a thousand years of history.

The belief that a human being can touch liberation in such a moment breaks history's claim to finality.

Liberation is not tomorrow's state,
not some coming age,
not merely a reward after death.

It is the transformation of consciousness now. The veil of delusion grows lighter now. The hand of greed loosens now. The fortress of ego cracks now. Another human being begins to appear as oneself now.

This liberation happens within history,
but history is not its final cause.

A flower grows in soil,
but the colour of the flower is not soil alone.

History is circumstance;
liberation is inward recognition.

One day the clock ticks again. Outside,
the city races. The news brings new crises. Politics brings new promises. The market brings new things. Science brings new power. Humanity is again exhilarated by the work of making the future.

In the rush, a quiet voice asks:
'What future? For whom? At what cost? Is your progress making you more compassionate? More free? More awake? More humble?'

If not, the clock may be moving faster—
but where is the journey going?

Time can pass without progress. History can grow without wisdom. Technology can grow without intelligence.

A timeless vision teaches this distinction.

In the end, history is not to be denied but placed rightly. It is our memory, but not our soul. It is our teacher, but not our god. It is the archive of our wounds, but not the final gate of liberation. It is a page flowing in time, whose reading grows deeper before a timeless light.

That light belongs to no single name. It is a way of seeing that calls the moment a moment without despising it; seeks the Infinite without abandoning the earth; reads history without building a temple to history; desires progress without sacrificing the human being; sees death without hating life; understands suffering without surrendering to despair; admits ignorance while keeping the door of knowledge open.

The current of time will go on flowing. New states will come. Old names will disappear. New ideas will be born—some magnificent, some terrible. Human beings will write history again.

But if one remembrance remains within them—
'History is important, but not ultimate'—
perhaps they will be less arrogant.

If this remembrance remains—
‘Progress without values can be blind’—
perhaps they will pause for a moment before their weapons.

If this remains—‘Beyond time there is a moral horizon’—
they will ask about justice before asking about victory.

If this remains—‘Impermanence does not diminish the value of life;
it heightens it’—they will place the tears of an unnamed person above the grand slogans of history.

And if one day death knocks at their door,
perhaps they will look not toward the clock but inward,
and say: ‘What belonged to time,
I return to time. What belonged to history, I leave in history. But the question of the light that watched all
these changes remains open.’

Then, for the first time,
time may not seem only an enemy.

It may appear as a teacher who has written the same lesson into every moment:

‘Do not grasp. See. Live. Remember—
but do not bind yourself to memory. Make history—
but do not worship history. Progress—
but make nothing greater than humanity. Walk in time—but do not forget the direction of the timeless
light.’

And the clock will keep ticking. The river will keep flowing. History will keep being written.

Yet within the human being a quiet sky will slowly open—
where the moment and the Infinite are not at war with one another;
where memory and liberation are two petals of the same lamp;
where the light of the Infinite, beyond the current of time, does not deny history, but makes it human.

From the Threshold of Questions to the Sky of Liberation

One day someone tried to measure the world in his own mirror. He said: 'What appears here alone is truth. Whatever does not fit my frame is not thought at all.' And then the many skies of distant lands fell silent.

Some things were called songs. Some, myths. Some, beliefs. Some, stories. Yet there too the questions burned:

'What is this world? Who am I? Is what I see the whole truth? Is change true, or permanence? One, or many? Is the body everything, or is there something more? Where does knowledge come from? Where do faith and proof part company? How far does freedom reach? Why is there suffering? What is a good life?'

Questions belong to no single tract of earth. Just as the sky refuses boundary stones, so does inquiry.

One culture looks at the world through its own spectacles;

another through its own. When the first declares,

'My spectacles are the eye itself,

' understanding darkens.

To understand another vision does not mean abandoning one's own. It means keeping one's own window open while looking toward another window. Then the sky grows larger.

Why should the thought of a people be called less philosophical where thought, experience, faith, art, ethics and life do not sit in separate rooms but share the same courtyard; where prayer sits beside questioning, where reasoning is not severed from conduct, where the end of knowledge is seen not upon the last page of a book but in the nature of the human being? That too is a form of thought.

Philosophy is not merely a palace built of words. It is the concentrated sap of a culture. As ghee lies unseen within milk, a deep way of seeing gathers within the many experiences of life: the field, the fear of death, the wonder of birth, the longing for justice, the touch of beauty, the bonds of love, the question of renunciation, the mystery of the world. Their mingled essence becomes philosophy.

A culture is understood only when we ask how it sees itself,

how it sees the world,

how it sees the other. It is easy to arrive with an outside scale and pronounce a measurement. But what is easy is not always just.

How many confusions are born when we force our meanings upon another people's words. What 'dharma' means there need not be what another word means here. Why must 'philosophy' have everywhere the shape it has in one place? Why should the meaning of 'science' in one age become the permanent measure of every culture?

Words carry history. Standards of measurement do too. Humility, therefore, is the first stair of knowledge. Say:

'My definition is one definition. Let us look further.'

Where arrogance recedes,

dialogue grows. And where dialogue grows,

both sides become richer. Another tradition is not merely an object to be studied; it is also a mirror. Its questions may reveal our blind corners, and ours may reveal its own.

When two traditions meet in this way,

no one needs to lose. The horizon widens.

How many questions have been born far apart and yet resemble one another: one or many? Momentary or enduring? The visible world or a deeper reality? Matter or consciousness? Name and thing? Particular and universal? Can knowledge be trusted? What are the limits of inference? What of human freedom, destiny, action, society, the good life?

The waters of distant rivers may touch the same salt of the sea. The question is human; the answer takes the colour of a culture. That colour does not make the answer less true. But to understand it, one must understand the history of the colour.

Here a distinctive image of philosophy arises:

truth is not only something to be thought. It must descend into life.

If I know the truth yet live against it,

knowledge remains incomplete. If I write of peace while anger rules me; if I argue for nonviolence while my words wound another; if I condemn greed while my own hand forever reaches for more—then book and life have become two separate countries.

True thought builds a bridge between them. Knowledge becomes character. Thought becomes conduct.

Understanding becomes temperament. Learning is then no crown upon the head but a rhythm of life.

A thinker does not argue only to defeat someone else. He also argues to defeat ignorance within himself. If debate desires only the other's defeat, how much truth will survive?

Across the table of questions,

an opponent is not an enemy. He is an examiner of our thought. First hear his position accurately. Do not shrink another view merely to make your answer easy. Place its strongest form before you. Then question it. Then criticise it. Then give your answer.

In that discipline lies intellectual honesty. First understand the other house from a faithful plan. Then show where the cracks may be. Then show your own house. This is the dignity of dialogue.

Knowledge is not a stick. Reason is not an instrument of humiliation. Severe thought may still be accompanied by gentle conduct. Disagreement and nonviolence can sit at the same table. 'I see differently from you'—why should that sentence require hatred? If truth is strong, why must it shout? A quiet argument may also have an edge.

One deep vision says:

thought is not only meant to satisfy the curiosity of the mind. It should change life, lessen suffering, break ignorance, lead toward freedom. If philosophy never touches human life, however beautiful it may be, it can become an empty palace of words.

The human being moves in four directions:

the direction of duty, the direction of livelihood,
the direction of enjoyment,
and the direction of liberation.

Dharma is not ritual alone. It is the sustaining power that holds both person and society together: duty, justice, responsibility, regard for one another. No human being lives alone; one person's actions touch another's life. Dharma is therefore also a social pulse.

Yet duty cannot take exactly the same form for everyone. Situations differ, capacities differ, responsibilities differ. Even so, some values may be shared: truth, nonviolence, justice, cooperation, the dignity of the other.

Artha is the ground on which life stands:

bread, shelter, clothing, medicine, work,

wealth. Wealth is not evil. Poverty is not holy merely by being poverty. How far can lofty spiritual sentences travel into the ear of a hungry person? When the body is ill, meditation itself becomes difficult. Livelihood is necessary.

But livelihood must not destroy dharma. Wealth is a means,

not a master. If wealth is gained through deceit,

violence, theft or injustice,

the means may set fire to the very house of life it was meant to sustain. Artha becomes meaningful when it sustains life without becoming greed.

Kāma is the direction of delight: the savour of food,

friendship, love, the warmth of home, beauty,

bodily pleasure. Life is not merely an austerity emptied of joy. Delight is not a crime.

Yet if delight stands upon another's suffering,

it ceases to be delight. Without dharma it can become a blind river of indulgence. Both artha and kāma need the banks of responsibility. A river without banks can drown the village.

But the final horizon of life is not bread,

wealth and pleasure alone. The human being asks:

'Even after gaining these things,

why does unrest remain within? What I obtain will one day leave me. This body will change. This name will be forgotten.'

Then the question of liberation rises. Liberation from what? Not only from an outer prison—from ignorance, from mistaken identity, from the illusion that what is momentary is the whole of what I am.

The body is mine—but am I only the body? The mind is mine—

but am I only the mind? The ego says,

'This is mine. This is me.' Yet everything changes. Childhood has gone. Youth will go. Thoughts change.

The name remains while the person is new each day. What, then, is the witness within? This question is a doorway to liberation.

Liberation is not merely a distant reward after death. If ignorance is present now, knowledge is possible now. If bondage is within, freedom too may awaken within—in the living body, in this breath, in this very moment.

The body is not an object of contempt. It is the boat of practice. Without the boat, how is the river to be crossed? Keep the body well. Discipline the mind. Gather attention. Keep the senses awake. Knowledge is not merely something heard by the ear; it is lived by the whole person.

Discipline, therefore,

is not punishment. It is preparation for freedom. As a tightened bowstring sends the arrow farther, a disciplined mind sees more deeply.

There is an astonishing trust here in the human being:

a person is incomplete,

yet the direction of completion lies open within. There is ignorance, but knowledge is possible. There is suffering, but peace is possible. There is bondage, but liberation is possible. There is greed, but generosity too. There is anger, but compassion too. There is pride, but humility too.

This profound hope in the human spirit is a lamp in darkness. Philosophy sees suffering, yet does not end in despair.

First see the illness. Then the cause. Then the treatment. Then health. Ignorance is the illness; knowledge the medicine; discipline the treatment; freedom the health.

This journey belongs to no single doctrine. Many paths, using different words, travel between this darkness and this light. Some accept the authority of sacred texts; some do not. Some affirm God; some do not. Yet despite these differences, the questions remain shared. Reason and experience both matter. The world cannot be built from imagination alone; nor from the senses alone. The circle of experience is wider: everyday experience, scientific experience, unusual states of inward consciousness. Human beings have more than one road to knowing. Yet every claim must still be tested. Faith without reason may wander; reason without experience may become an empty fortress. Let the two meet.

A comprehensive vision does not reduce the world to matter alone, yet neither does it deny matter. The body is a real field of experience. Society is real. Suffering is a real experience. Yet human depth goes on asking beyond all these.

A farmer touches earth. A scientist studies the particle. A seeker watches the silence of the mind. A poet sees beauty. A person devoted to justice sees injustice. Why should truth appear in only one form? Experience has many doors.

And still there lives the aspiration that ultimate reality may lie beyond the limits of sense and speech. Some profound truths cannot be fully said; they can only be lived. The whole taste of love does not enter a definition. The depth of grief cannot be measured. The meaning of silence is not a word. Words mark one boundary of knowledge; beyond them lies experience.

But to speak of what lies beyond words does not mean abandoning reason. Let reason take us honestly as far as it can. Then let silence do its work.

One vision of life sees an ethical relation between action and consequence. An action does not disappear into nothing. It becomes a habit of mind, a character, a relation, a society, a future. One act of anger makes anger easier the next time. One compassionate act strengthens compassion. Action cuts a path within the one who acts. Today's choice helps make tomorrow's person.

In this sense the moral order is not merely an external guard. Action writes its own record. Yet destiny is not stone. If everything were already written, where would liberation be? A person carries the fruits of the past, but the choice made now can open a new direction. Within bondage there remains a seed of freedom. This is hope.

One vision does not see the human being as born only in sin; it sees the human being as wandering in ignorance. The difference is profound. If the root illness is ignorance, what is needed is not hatred but awakening—not punishment alone, but knowledge; not self-contempt, but self-understanding.

Not: 'You are darkness at the root.' Rather: 'There is a light within you that you have yet to recognise.' Such a sentence allows a human being to stand upright.

Fulfillment is not merely a gift arriving from outside; it is a possibility within. Knowledge removes the covering. The lamp may already have been there; ignorance was only the lid. When the lid is lifted, the light has not just been born—it has become visible.

Liberation may sometimes be such a recognition: 'What I kept seeking was within.'

But that sentence is not poetry alone. It demands a life. If I truly see an inward unity, how can I humiliate another? If every life is joined to some deeper truth, against whom is violence committed? If liberation lies beyond ego, why the pride of superiority?

Spiritual knowledge should bear an ethical fruit. Otherwise it becomes another ornament of the intellect. The measure of an ideal thinker is not the number of books possessed or remembered: a quiet mind, less greed, a lighter ego, a wider gaze, the capacity to hear another view, nonviolence in speech, restraint in life, humility in knowledge. This is a difficult examination.

Winning an argument may be easy; mastering one's anger is hard. Memorising scripture may be easy; lessening greed is hard. Seeing another's fault is easy; seeing one's own pride is hard. Philosophy remains alive where it leads us toward these harder tasks.

The four directions of life now appear like four branches of a single tree: duty the root, livelihood the trunk, delight the leaves and flowers, liberation the crown opening into the sky.

Without the root there is no trunk; without the trunk no flower. The flower is beautiful, but the tree is not flower alone. Its crown touches the sky without abandoning the earth. A whole life holds all four together.

Spirituality should not romanticise poverty. Material pleasure should not become the final truth. Duty should not murder joy. Joy should not break duty. Liberation should not flee from life. Let life itself become the road toward liberation.

Historical classifications place many schools in separate houses. Some accept ancient revelation; some reject it. Some affirm God; some do not. But such labels are not the final truth.

Sometimes positions placed in the same house differ greatly within. Sometimes schools placed far apart reveal astonishing affinities. Classification is a map, not the land. The map is useful, but to mistake it for the land is an error.

A tradition changes as it crosses ages. Its earliest form and its later form may differ. History moves. Remembering this loosens the hardness of labels.

See synthesis and difference together. One path may be more practical, another more theoretical; sometimes the two are joined, like map and journey. Theory gives direction; practice makes the feet move. Without a map the journey may wander. Without a journey the map is only paper. A deep philosophical tradition asks for both.

Reason and practice. Thought and character. Knowledge and liberation.

Across many doctrines a shared current can be seen:

claims about reality must bear both reasoning and experience;

claims about life must be tested in living. Human beings are caught in ignorance and suffering, yet there is within them a power toward liberation. Knowledge can break ignorance. Discipline can transform the mind. Complete freedom may be sought in life itself.

Action has moral gravity. The human being is not merely matter. Ultimate reality may exceed the senses.

Suffering may be the beginning, but hope need not surrender the final word.

This is the remarkable rhythm:

first acknowledge the darkness,

then the possibility of a lamp. Do not deny suffering,

but do not call suffering the ultimate truth. See bondage, but do not say that the human being is nothing but bondage. Admit ignorance, but keep the door of knowledge open.

In this hope the human spirit rises again and again:

a deep optimism that is no cheap smile,

but is born after looking fully at suffering—

faith in dawn after seeing the whole night, faith in freedom after seeing the prison, faith in knowledge after seeing ignorance.

The human being stands with his incompleteness,

yet carries within an immeasurable possibility. It is this trust that gives philosophy life.

At the end, a traveller asks a teacher,

‘Where is truth?’ Perhaps the answer does not come in a single sentence. It says:

‘First make the question true. Hear the other view accurately. Reason, but do not become arrogant. Test it in life.’

‘Earn wealth, but do not sell dharma. Take delight,

but not upon another’s suffering. Care for the body,

but do not imagine yourself to be the body alone.’

‘Do not merely accumulate knowledge;

absorb it into yourself. Do not seek liberation only in a distant tomorrow; look for it in the consciousness of now. See ignorance, but do not despair of yourself.’

‘There is a direction within you.’

The traveller sets out again. He carries no final map in his hand. But he has a few lamps: an open mind, reason, experience, duty, joy, self-restraint, the longing for liberation, faith in the human being.

The road is still long. But the darkness is not complete.

Beyond the threshold of questions a vast sky opens. There,

no single culture owns the truth. No single method is final. No single word contains the whole of reality. Yet the human search for truth can extend a hand from every direction toward every other.

Then philosophy is no longer merely the name of a book. It becomes a humble way of seeing, an attentive way of living, a nonviolent way of arguing, a measured way of possessing wealth, a responsible way of enjoying, a profound way of understanding suffering, a long pilgrimage of lamps against ignorance, and a sky opening toward freedom.

There the human being calls himself not merely a bondage,

but a possibility. There the night cannot write the final sentence. There, behind every question, dawn goes on being born—slowly, slowly.

A Palmful of Earth, Eyes Full of Truth

Morning dew is cold upon the palm. That coldness asks for no doctrine. The eye sees the sun; the ear hears a bell; the nose receives the smell of earth; the tongue tastes salt; the skin feels the heat of a warm stone.

The body says: "Begin with what stands before you. Begin with what can be touched, what can be heard, what can enter experience."

This beginning is not small. From it an entire scepticism is born. Someone says, "There are invisible worlds in the distant sky." The mind asks, "How much of them has been seen?" Someone says, "Behind the body there dwells a separate, immortal shadow." The mind asks, "How much of it has been experienced?" Someone says, "An unseen craftsman made this world." The mind asks, "Where is that craftsman seen?"

The question is not an insult to faith. It is the demand of a severe touchstone: "What is the ground for what you say?"

At one time, the story of a distant school of thought reached us through the mouths of others. How much of the original voice survived, how much was changed into mockery, how much was coloured by opponents - no one can say with certainty.

So the first caution is this:

do not measure a thinker whose own books have been lost only by what his enemies say of him. History is sometimes written in the victor's ink. Philosophical dispute sometimes arrives with the knife of satire in its hand.

To understand a doctrine is not to draw its weakest caricature. Hear its strongest question first.

And here the question is clear:

how many doors does knowledge have? Only as many as the eye can see? Or is there also a road of inference beyond the eye?

Perception says, "I place my foot upon the earth." Inference says,

"From a visible sign I travel toward what is unseen." Smoke appears; the mind says, "There must be fire somewhere." But scepticism rises again: "Is there fire behind every smoke? What happened yesterday - must it happen tomorrow as well? How can a handful of observed examples become a law for all time?"

The question shakes the roots of knowledge. Every human being observed until today has one day died. But from where comes the leap to "all human beings will die"? Experience is finite; the sentence is infinite. How can a finite footpath reach an infinite horizon?

Scepticism creates a deep unease here,

because life cannot proceed without inference. We hear footsteps at the door and suppose someone is coming. We see clouds and expect rain. We hear a child cry and infer distress. A farmer reads the colour of the sky and thinks of the season. A physician reads symptoms and thinks of disease. We hear a word and understand a meaning. We see a face and imagine a state of mind. Every day we build small bridges from the seen toward the unseen.

Then if one says, "Inference is wholly unreliable,

" what perception has given us that very sentence? Where before the eye is the claim "Only perception is trustworthy" itself visible? It too is a general conclusion.

Scepticism comes to stand before its own mirror. That is both its beautiful weakness and its beautiful strength. Its strength is that it breaks the arrogance of knowledge. Its weakness is that it raises questions about its own foundation. This is the savour of philosophy: one question gives birth to another.

Someone says, "This person is trustworthy,

therefore what he says is true." Scepticism asks,

"Since when did trustworthiness become infinite?" That someone spoke rightly yesterday does not guarantee that he speaks rightly today; that too is an inference.

To accept testimony is to rest upon some memory of previous experience and some act of trust. If inference is forbidden altogether, testimony too becomes difficult. Yet how much can a human being know without the words of others? Distant lands. Distant stars. Microscopic life. Ancient times. The difficult discoveries of specialists. Everything cannot be seen with one's own eyes.

So the world of knowledge cannot be compressed into a pair of private eyes. And still the stern voice is needed: "Believe, but ask why. Listen to testimony, but do not call it infallible. Infer, but recognise the leap. Honour perception, but know its limits too." These four sentences could still keep the house of knowledge clean.

Now the question turns toward the structure of the world. If what cannot be perceived is doubtful in existence, what remains before us? Earth. Water. Fire. Air. Body. Touch. Smell. Form. Taste. Sound. The world seems like an interweaving of material elements.

A stone is one arrangement. A tree another. The body a subtler arrangement still. But then comes the hardest question: from where does consciousness arise? A stone does not speak of its suffering. Water does not write poems. Fire does not reflect upon its own heat.

Yet the body, itself an arrangement of elements, thinks, laughs, dreams,

remembers. Can a new quality arise from combination? Salt is one thing, water another; mixed together,

their taste is new. Two elements without a certain quality can combine into a substance whose qualities differ from both.

Then consciousness too might arise from the body's intricate organisation - a daring thought. The mind is not a separate bird; it is a flower of the body. Consciousness is not another sky; it is a fragrance flowering in the complex garden of matter.

This vision does not belittle the body. It makes the body more astonishing. Bone, blood, nerve, flesh, breath - what an unbelievable composition, capable of asking questions about itself! A particle of earth one day rises into poetry. The body is earth in a form that can look back at earth.

Here the soul is not a separate eternal traveller. The living conscious body is the person. What, then, is death? An ending like the extinguishing of a lamp. When the body's organisation breaks, the flower of consciousness falls as well.

No promise of rebirth. No fear of an afterworld. No greed for heaven. No terror of hell. Suddenly the weight of this one life becomes immense.

If there is no second life beyond this,

then this evening is priceless. This friendship. This meal. This love. This laughter. This rain. This body. This moment.

But from this one might draw a dangerously easy conclusion:

"Then do whatever you please." A deeper vision does not stop there. If there is only one life, why multiply suffering? If there is nothing beyond this body, why wound another body? If joy is valuable, why should another's joy be worth less? If pain is real, then reducing pain is wisdom.

Pleasure need not mean a momentary frenzy. It can mean a delight that does not become tomorrow's mountain of pain; food that does not destroy the body; wealth that does not increase fear; love that does not turn another person into an object; laughter that is not founded on someone's humiliation.

Pleasures differ in quality. Cheap intoxication and enduring contentment are not the same. Selfish pleasure and shared happiness are not the same.

This subtle distinction saves a material view of life from collapsing into crude indulgence.

A meal tastes sweeter with a friend. How happy can a human being be without society? What is security without law? What is friendship without trust? The search for happiness itself begins to acknowledge the need for society.

We are not merely constraints upon one another;

we are also conditions of one another's joy. Shared peace is the soil of private happiness. If the village is burning, how sweet is the sweetmeat in one house? If the neighbour is hungry, how innocent is the pleasure of one's own plate? If there is no law, how safe is wealth? If there is no friend, with whom will laughter be shared?

A refined pursuit of happiness slowly opens the door from "my pleasure" toward "our life together." That movement matters.

Wealth here is not a god. It is an instrument - for bread,

shelter, music, travel,

pleasure. But if accumulation itself becomes suffering,

what use is it? Greed may become the enemy of joy. The more that is "mine," the greater the fear: "What if it is lost?"

Thus even a material wisdom can teach restraint,

because the body is limited. The stomach is limited. The day is limited. Life is limited. How well does limitless greed fit inside a limited body?

Such a vision is sceptical too of the commerce of ritual. If someone says, "Perform this rite and an invisible reward will come," the mind asks, "What is the evidence?" If fear is sold for profit - "Fail to do this and an unseen punishment will fall" - then scepticism becomes a social instrument. It asks, "Who gains? Whose fear is being used? Whose wealth? Whose power?"

These are not merely ancient questions. Wherever claims about the unseen are joined to money, prestige, obedience or authority, special caution is required.

Yet if scepticism makes mockery of every form of belief,

it too can become arrogant. Ask for reasons,

but listen to inner human experience. Where there is no evidence,

"I do not know" may be more honest than "It does not exist."

This distinction matters. Ignorance is an empty space. To fill it too quickly with imagination is error; to fill it too quickly with denial is error as well. "I do not yet know" is one of knowledge's beautiful sentences.

A material vision tries to understand the world through causes within the world, without an external craftsman. If matter exists, if it has qualities, combinations and transformations, why should the world's formation not be understood through laws within those processes?

Before declaring an unseen maker necessary,

ask: "From where did that maker come?" If every thing requires a cause, what caused the cause? And what caused that? The road recedes without end.

Sometimes an easy answer does not solve a problem; it merely gives the problem a new name. "Why is there a world?" is difficult. "Someone made it" is easy. But then: "Why is that someone there?" The question stands again.

In this severity one can glimpse the seed of a scientific temperament: wherever possible, understand the world through causes within the world. Invoke an unseen explanation only when it becomes necessary.

Modern science, however, travelled farther. It did not stop at direct perception. Inference to invisible particles, mathematics, experiment, repetition, shared evidence - together these make knowledge.

Thus the old insistence on perception alone appears as a historical challenge rather than a final method. Its importance lies in the question it forced upon us: "How many claims have we accepted without grounds?"

That question is still necessary. Is a picture true simply because we see it? It may be fabricated. Is a voice true simply because we hear it? It may be imitation. Is a report true simply because we read it? It may be incomplete.

Perception itself is not always innocent. The eye can be deceived. The ear can mishear. Memory changes. The mind carries prejudice.

So the newer house of knowledge needs many pillars:

perception, inference, testing, testimony, reason, repetition,

criticism. Yet the first pillar seized by that severe vision remains the ground of experience: "Before you build a palace in the sky, touch the earth."

This earthbound vision can reconcile the human being with the body. The body is not sin. Hunger is not guilt. Pleasure is not shame. The senses are not enemies. Life is not punishment. This earth is not merely a prison to be abandoned.

It is an opportunity. Yet honouring the body does not mean becoming its slave. Taste, but do not let taste become your master. Rest, but do not let idleness consume life. Have wealth, but do not let wealth buy human beings. Love, but do not turn love into ownership.

Enjoy life with discernment. One may pluck a flower and breathe its fragrance; ravaging the whole garden does not increase the scent. One cup may give delight; ten may give pain. Measure too can become an ethics.

A human being asks: how much pleasure, and how much suffering follows behind it? Yet happiness is not number alone; it has quality. A friend's hand. A clear conscience. Undisturbed sleep. Shared laughter. Music. Knowledge. Bodily health. Freedom. These are different notes of happiness.

It may therefore be unjust to reduce a material vision of life to the crude slogan "eat, drink, and make merry." Discernment can dwell within enjoyment. Friendship can open within self-interest. The need for social order can arise within the pursuit of personal pleasure. The singularity of this life can deepen respect for another's life.

If this life does not return, destroying someone's life becomes more grave, not less. If there is no second chance,

why postpone justice until tomorrow? If there is no heaven that will compensate the wounded, justice upon this earth becomes more necessary.

This is one humane possibility within an earthbound vision. "This world alone is" can produce meaninglessness, but it can also produce responsibility. Which direction is taken depends upon human discernment.

A child plays with earth and needs no proof of heaven in order to feel joy. An old person watches the evening sun and knows that this moment will never return in exactly this form. Therefore he looks more attentively. Impermanence need not be the enemy of joy. It can sharpen joy. If flowers lasted forever, how precious would spring be? Death can sometimes deepen the taste of life.

Yet before death another question opens:

if everything ends with the body, why seek truth? Why justice? Why beauty? Why friendship?

The answer may be utterly earthbound:

because these make life better. Truth reduces the suffering born of illusion. Justice reduces fear. Friendship reduces loneliness. Beauty reduces deadness. Knowledge reduces helplessness.

Meaning need not fall from the sky. Human beings may create it in the relations of their lives. Earth is only earth, yet in a potter's hands it becomes a vessel. The body may be an arrangement of elements, yet within that arrangement song, love, discernment, memory and courage may arise.

Emergence belongs not only to consciousness,

but to meaning as well. Human beings can create value while remaining material, because value need not be a heavenly substance. It may be a quality of living relationship.

A single note is not a raga;

raga arises in the relation among many notes. Consciousness may not lie in a single element, yet arise in a complex organisation. Society does not exist inside an isolated person; it exists in relations. Why then must materiality and humanity be enemies?

Earth and poetry can inhabit the same world. Blood and love. Nerve and memory. Brain and dream. Matter and beauty. Perhaps these pairs are not contradictions but stories of astonishing transformation.

But scepticism does not cease its work. It asks the material vision too: "Why only the eye? The eye can be deceived. Where is the claim 'only perception' itself perceived? How secure is the claim that consciousness is merely an emergent quality? If inference is rejected, how can science proceed?"

True philosophy questions even the view it loves.

Therefore this severe,

earthbound doctrine is not the final house but a necessary doorway. It brings airy speculation down to the ground and says, "First evidence. First experience. First this life."

Then other visions ask it in return:

"Where are the limits of experience? What is the place of reason? How deep is consciousness? Upon what ground do moral values stand?"

In this exchange the courtyard of thought becomes richer. This is not a story in which one doctrine finally wins. Different visions become touchstones for one another - many windows opening upon one sky.

The special character of this window is that it opens very low,

close to the earth. From it we see feet, food,

body, death, pleasure, wealth, suffering,

touch. It says, "Human being, first be honest about these."

"Do not ruin the visible life in the name of invisible worlds. Do not sell fear in order to build power. Before calling an inference knowledge, notice the leap it makes. Take pleasure, but count the suffering as well. Do not forget friendship. Do not forget society. Do not belittle the body."

That stern reminder of the earth remains useful even now.

In an age when digital images can resemble truth,

counterfeit voices fill the ear,

and rumours gain a thousand mouths,

the old questions awaken again: "What did you yourself see? What is the source? Where does inference enter?

What grounds belief? Who benefits from this claim?"

In this sense ancient scepticism can become a new instrument. But remember one thing more: scepticism that forever says only "no" becomes rigid as well. Genuine scepticism does not close the door; it opens investigation. It says, "Show me. Test it. Then I will believe." And if new evidence appears, change your view. This humility is scepticism at its best.

A palm holds earth. The eye sees its colour. The nose receives its smell. The skin feels its moisture. But the farmer does not know only this much. From old experience he infers which seed may thrive in that soil.

Knowledge is never the kingdom of a single sense. Yet without the senses, where is its first step? Therefore earth is the first school. The sky opens afterward.

At last the human being looks at the body. What wonder dwells within this transient frame: blood flowing, the heart beating, nerves carrying signals, the brain holding the past, eyes seeing stars, the tongue singing, a hand holding the hand of a friend.

If all this has arisen from the elements of earth,

then how astonishing earth itself must be.

A human being can be filled with wonder even without naming a heavenly soul. Wonder is not the property of spirituality alone. Matter too is mysterious: from particle to body, from body to consciousness, from consciousness to question, from question to philosophy.

Earth thinking about itself in the form of a human being - this image is itself a poem.

Then a palmful of earth is not small,

and eyes full of truth are not complete. Between them human curiosity continues its journey. Perception is its first lamp. Scepticism its wind. Reason its road. Experience its soil. Delight the sap of life. Discernment its restraint. Friendship its social warmth. Death its boundary.

And among all these, a stern earthbound voice says again:

"Do not despise the life now in your hands for the sake of an invisible promise. Look. Ask. Test. Live. Take delight, but understand the cost of suffering. Another person's life too may be just as singular - therefore honour its dignity."

Then the palm slowly opens. The earth falls away. The eyes rise toward the sky. But the feet remain upon the ground.

The remembrance of those feet becomes the longest poem of this vision.

Dew of Seven Directions on a Single Leaf

At dawn seven drops of dew rested upon a single leaf. The sun was one, yet in each drop its colour differed. One drop was red, one golden, one faintly blue. One was almost transparent; one trembled; one lay still; one bent slowly toward the earth.

If someone looked at a single drop and said,

"The sun is only this much,

" another might laugh. But if someone gathered all seven in thought and declared, "Now the whole sun is in my fist," the sky would still smile.

From how many directions does truth appear? The human eye stands in one place. Its time is one. Its body is one. Its experience is limited. How large, then, is the claim our words have the right to make?

This is the first humility:

"This is how I see it." Sometimes that is wiser than saying,

"This alone is final."

The world is not a single plain line. It is a web of innumerable qualities, forms, relations, changes and continuities.

A tree is old and new at once. Its roots may be many years old;

its leaves belong to today; its flower is brief;

its seed is future;

its trunk seems still while sap moves within. If someone says, "The tree is only change," what of the root? If someone says, "The tree never changes," what of autumn?

Life is a duet of continuity and change - a melody that moves and yet keeps an identity. The human body changes. Childhood passes. Youth arrives. Illness may come, then age. Yet we feel some thread of continuity within. What thread strings these changing beads into one garland?

One answer turns toward consciousness. To be alive is not merely to breathe. It is to experience, to know, to feel pain and pleasure, to remember, to respond. Consciousness appears like a subtle inner light, yet that light does not show itself everywhere in the same form.

In a sprout there may be the faint quiver of touch. In an insect,

a sense of direction. In an animal, fear,

affection, memory. In the human being,

many senses, mind, language, reflection.

Life is not merely a ladder;

it is a vast field of pulsation. There is a difference between a particle of earth and a living pulse, yet the world contains both: living and non-living sharing one immense sky - matter, space, conditions that make motion possible, support for rest, time, and countless conscious lives.

The world does not appear like a court built by a single ruler,

but like a beginningless expanse in which innumerable beings and realities stand in their own forms. All existence is not subordinate to one master. Plurality is not a defect. Plurality is real.

A flower has its own fragrance. Stone its hardness. Water its fluidity. A living being its consciousness. Space its vastness. Time its sequence. None is merely a copy of another.

Within this plural world lies a great lesson:

another is not less merely because it is not like me. Difference is not an insult to existence. It is a character of existence.

A stone is not a human being. A human being is not a tree. Yet difference does not make the existence of either empty. The world is an immense plural. The arrogance of the singular slowly melts here.

Many things retain a principal character while changing state. Gold becomes an ornament, melts, takes another shape. Shape changes; a continuity of substance remains. A river floods today and lies quiet tomorrow. Its water changes; something of its course remains.

A person is sorrowful today,

joyful tomorrow. Sorrow is not the person's final form;

neither is joy. Something carries identity through these states. Permanence and change are not enemies.

Together they make reality.

A vision that sees only stability may forget movement. One that sees only flux may forget identity. Between them lies a difficult balance: "It is" and "it changes" can both be true at once.

Time is the invisible field of this change. The clock is not the whole of time. Seconds, minutes, hours are human measures; the flow of life is larger than its measurement.

Five minutes of waiting can feel long. An hour of joy can feel like a moment. Measured time and lived time are not the same. Beneath our divisions, some deeper continuity keeps flowing.

Time is like a quiet background to the world's changes,

and space the home of all extended things. Space is not merely an empty box; it makes dwelling possible, as a courtyard makes dancing possible.

One may also imagine conditions that allow motion,

and conditions that allow rest. Water does not teach the fish how to move, yet makes its movement possible.

Earth does not command the stone to stop, yet gives rest a ground.

In this subtle vision the world is not only a heap of objects. It is also a web of conditions. Something we cannot touch may nevertheless be necessary for an event to be possible. Here the doorway of knowledge moves beyond immediate perception: inference, testimony, reflection. Yet above them rises another longing - knowledge that needs no outer sense at all. As the sun by its own radiance illuminates itself and the world, perhaps consciousness, when free of coverings, may see truth directly. Such is the dream. Ordinary knowledge gives us fragments. The eye gives colour. The ear gives sound. The mind compares. Memory brings an older image. Language gives a name. But how many aspects does one thing possess? A clay pot is labour to the potter, merchandise to the buyer, a toy to a child, a vessel of water to the thirsty, a cultural sign to the historian, a composition of earth to chemistry, a form to the artist. How many doors of truth can one object possess? How, then, can one sentence contain the whole object? This is the second humility of knowledge: "I have seen one aspect." Within that sentence the heat of argument lessens. One says, "It is blue." Another says, "No, green." One saw the blue of evening; another the green of morning. One stood in shadow; another in sunlight. If both forget their position and make an ultimate claim, quarrel begins. If each says, "From where I stand, it appears so," dialogue becomes possible. Relativity is not the death of truth. It is the discipline of a claim. Where am I standing? At what time? From what angle? Of which quality am I speaking? By what measure? These questions make a sentence humble. Truth need not become a hard staff. It may become a many-sided lamp. Yet a harder question rises here. If every statement is only a viewpoint, then from which viewpoint comes the statement "every statement is only a viewpoint"? If relativity itself becomes the one absolute truth, it may turn against itself. Even humility can become its own arrogance: "Only I understand that no one understands completely." What a strange sentence. Therefore many-sided vision requires a deeper openness. Perhaps the ordinary mind sees in fragments, but we need not wholly abandon the aspiration toward a fuller seeing - a consciousness without covering, able to behold many aspects together. The ordinary human being does not stand at that height. Yet the direction remains a horizon, and a horizon reminds us of our limits. Like an old tale of several blind men touching a great animal: one touches a leg and says, "A pillar." Another an ear: "A fan." Another the trunk: "A rope." Each touched something real, yet none touched the whole. There is less laughter in that story than a mirror for our knowledge. We too may be touching one part of a reality larger than ourselves. From this remembrance, non-violence becomes not only a rule for the hand but a style of thought. If another view may contain some truth, why crush it? The non-violence of thought means: first listen. Then understand. Then disagree. Do not twist another person's statement into weakness merely to defeat it. Present its strongest form; only then place your question. This is intellectual compassion. Non-violence is born in the gaze before it reaches the hand. Do not see a living being merely as an object for use. Walk on grass with awareness. Strain water with awareness. Speak with awareness. Think with awareness. Violence is not only blood. A bitter word wounds. Greed consumes another's right. A lie injures trust. Arrogance tramples dignity. Therefore non-violence is a subtle discipline of mind, speech and action. If the hand does not strike but the mind is full of hatred, non-violence remains incomplete. If the words are sweet but deceit lies within, it remains incomplete. If there is charity but pride makes another small, it remains incomplete. Purity is not an outer garment. It is the clearing of inner dust: greed, anger, deceit, hunger for authority, intoxication with possession. How heavy the word "mine" can become. My house. My wealth. My idea. My prestige. My body. The more "mine" grows, the harder the grip; the harder the grip, the harder the bondage.

Karma is one subtle language of this bondage. Karma is not merely an outer ledger. Every thought, every word, every act leaves an imprint - upon the mind, upon relationships, upon the world, upon the future. One burst of anger makes the road to anger easier next time. One compassionate act widens the path of compassion.

In this sense karma is like fine dust falling upon human nature. Dust gathers. Vision grows dim. Knowledge is covered. Freedom lessens.

If karmic bondage is imagined as subtle particles of matter,
the image becomes sharper still:

every greed a particle clinging to consciousness,
every violence a hard layer, every lie a smoke, every attachment a glue.

The soul is light, but around it the dust of karma accumulates. Liberation then is not forgiveness handed down by some distant deity. It is one's own cleansing, discipline, vigilance and effort.

No outer hand can completely sweep the dust from within you. A way may be shown. Inspiration may be given. But the walking is yours.

This vision does not make the human being weak;
it makes the human being responsible. Before saying,

"Save me," ask, "What must I change?"

If action binds, restrain the flow of new bondage and weaken the old. Discipline. Restraint. Meditation. Truth. Non-violence. Non-greed. Inner cleanliness. These are brooms of liberation.

Layer by layer the coverings thin. The light grows clearer.

Knowledge is not an outer object stored by the soul in some warehouse. Knowledge may be the nature of consciousness itself, as a lamp does not borrow its light, as the sun is sun together with its radiance.

If consciousness becomes free of coverings,
knowledge becomes natural. In this vision the senses can assist knowledge and yet limit it. The eye sees only one direction. The ear receives one range of vibration. The mind mixes perception with memory and imagination.

Perfect knowledge would be where the walls of mediation fall away. It is a profound spiritual aspiration beyond the ordinary limits of intellect.

Yet this aspiration comes with another unusual insight:

a single almighty craftsman is not required. The world is beginningless. Existence is beginningless. Living beings are countless. Matter is countless. The law of karma works by its own order.

No one sits above distributing reward and punishment. The seed one plants bears fruit according to law. Law is impartial. The sky takes no side. Fire does not burn the rich man's hand less. Karma knows no personal favour.

In this vision, religious life and belief in a creator are not the same. Spiritual life can be lived even without imagining a creator of the universe.

If prayer exists, it need not be begging for grace. It may be the awakening of possibility within oneself by looking toward a liberated life.

A mountain can inspire the traveller,

but the mountain does not lift the traveller and place them on its summit. The road must be climbed by one's own feet. The ideal is a lamp; the walking is one's own.

This self-reliant spirituality is difficult because it leaves fewer excuses. "Someone will forgive me" does not break bondage. "Someone will liberate me" does not excuse laziness. See for yourself. Change yourself. Walk for yourself.

This is a path of courage. But self-reliance must not become arrogance. "I alone" is another bond. There is gratitude for those who show the road, companionship of community, remembrance of exemplary teachers - yet the final work remains one's own.

As the physician gives medicine but the patient must drink it;
as the map shows a road but the traveller must walk it.

A deep ethical vision joins this self-reliance to non-violence. If every living being carries the possibility of liberation, by what right can I cut off another's road? Whose body is trivial? Whose pain is small? Even the existence of a minute creature is its own.

Human beings are not masters of all life merely for their convenience. In this awareness compassion grows vast. An animal is not merely food. A tree is not merely timber. A lake is not merely an instrument of industry.

Life has its own voice. Non-violence then becomes an ecological language as well: less harm, less consumption, less possession, less waste.

Greed wounds not only the mind but the earth. Non-greed,
though an inward discipline,
can become medicine for the planet.

How many houses could grow lighter through a single word:

"Enough." This much food. This much clothing. This much wealth. This much accumulation. The rest may be another's right.

Non-possession does not mean merely empty hands. It means a light heart. The one who grasps much also fears much. The one who grasps less has hands open for others. Perhaps liberation is also this slow opening of the hand.

Truthfulness is another lamp on the road. Why does a lie bind? Because one lie asks for another. Memory grows burdened. Fear appears: "What if it is uncovered?" The mind must carry two realities.

Truth makes the mind one. Yet speaking truth does not mean inflicting needless injury. Truth itself must pass the test of non-violence.

First ask: "Is it true?" Then: "Is it necessary?" Then:

"How should it be said?" Ethics becomes subtle - not merely a list of rules, but awareness in each moment.

A small insect on the path. A harsh word at the tongue. A greed rising in the mind. A convenient lie. A swelling arrogance. Each moment holds a small decision toward bondage or freedom.

Karma is not merely a distant account for the future. It is shaping your mind now. What you repeatedly do, you slowly become.

In this sense destiny is not wholly external. The past exists, but the present is not powerless. Results of older actions may arrive, yet the doorway of new action remains open.

A human being is both prisoner and maker:

carrying old chains,

yet free not to forge another link.

This is a profound hope. If everything were determined by the past,

why practice? If everything were already free,

why speak of consequences? Between them lies a responsible freedom.

We cannot alter what has already been done,

but the direction we choose now belongs partly to us. A river may already have received its valley, yet the living current still cuts one bank, carries another soil, finds another turn.

Liberation is not a miracle of one flash. It is the removal of dust grain by grain; discipline day by day; wakefulness moment by moment. One violent thought less. One lie less. One greed less. One attachment loosened. One compassionate act more. One truth more.

Slowly the inner sky clears. Knowledge and character are not separate here. If someone knows much yet remains cruel, where is complete knowledge? If someone is gentle but sunk in delusion, where is complete ethical clarity?

Knowledge and conduct are incomplete without each other. If truth is truly seen, life changes. If life moves toward truth, vision clears. It becomes a circle rising upward: right conduct clears vision; clear vision deepens conduct.

In the end liberation is not merely the absence of suffering. It is imagined as boundless expansion -

knowledge without limit, faith without trembling, power without bondage, joy without diminishment.

Yet this infinitude comes not from domination but from clarity. Where no karmic dust remains,

consciousness stands in its own full radiance: a lamp with clean glass, a sun without cloud, a mirror without dust.

This is the image of liberation.

Its most beautiful aspect may be that it sees this possibility in every living being. No one is born finally low.

No one is bound forever by action. Every consciousness may remove its coverings - such is the hope.

Yet social history can stand in contradiction to that hope. Traditions sometimes grow claims that certain bodies are less fit for liberation, that certain classes or genders must remain at a boundary.

Then the tradition's own many-sided and non-violent conscience may question the tradition itself: "If consciousness is fundamental, why should the form of the body be an ultimate barrier? If truth asks for many viewpoints, why should one social viewpoint be unchangeable?"

A living tradition keeps questions within itself. It is not stone. If non-violence is true, it applies to

discrimination too. If non-greed is true, it applies to greed for power. If many-sided vision is true, it applies also to voices pushed to the margins.

Thus philosophy gives its own tradition a lamp of criticism.

A deep moral order need not depend upon one deity in order to be severe. "No one is watching" - violence is still wrong because pain is real. "There is no reward" - truth is still precious because falsehood binds. "No one will grant forgiveness" - compassion still matters because another life bears its own dignity.

In such morality outer fear diminishes and inner responsibility grows. This is a difficult freedom.

If a child refrains from stealing only out of fear,

what happens when fear disappears? But if the child understands another's right, morality has entered within.

The aim is an inward law,

a discipline that no guard must enforce. A city in which everyone is peaceful only from fear of law has a fragile peace. A society in which compassion has become inward is stronger. Non-violence is a culture larger than law.

Even a choice of food can be ethical. A trade. A garment. A journey. A word. A political decision. How many lives are hidden behind our convenience?

Many-sided vision turns the eye toward those hidden faces:

"My pleasure" is one viewpoint. "Their suffering" another. "Damage to nature" a third. "The future generation" a fourth. Look at the value of one thing from seven directions.

Decision may become slower,

but perhaps more just. Quick certainty is a friend of arrogance. Slow reflection makes room for compassion. The sentence "Perhaps I have not seen the whole" can stop a war. It can stop a quarrel in a family, political hatred, religious intolerance.

One says, "My view alone is true." Another says the same. Two total claims collide and violence is born. If both can say, "My view may be partial," a door opens.

Many-sidedness is not weakness. It is intellectual non-violence. Yet it does not mean that all views are equally true. Some have stronger evidence, some weaker. Some are violent. Some contradict themselves.

Humility is not indecision. Listen first;

then weigh. Reason. Experience. Compassion. Coherence. Then decide. But even within decision keep one window open: "A new viewpoint may arrive."

Through this window knowledge stays alive. A completely closed doctrine may become a tomb with time. An open doctrine breathes.

The world is many. Knowledge is partial. Liberation requires personal effort. Ethics is non-violence. These four streams meet in one river.

If the world is many,

make room for another. If knowledge is partial,

let arrogance lessen. If liberation requires your own effort,

accept responsibility. If non-violence is fundamental, show compassion toward life.

A whole image of the human being slowly emerges:

neither omniscient now, nor a hopeless prisoner. Limited,

yet capable. Bound, yet able to become free. Ignorant,

yet facing a horizon of complete knowledge. Covered by action, yet able to alter the flow of action.

This hope asks for discipline,

not cheap reassurance. The road is hard. One step,

one vow, one renunciation,

one attentive breath at a time. No miracle. Slow transformation.

The mountain stands far away. The summit is not reached on the first day. There is only the first step, then the next. Practice is the name of this patience.

One day a person looks back. Where anger once burst out at once,

now there is a moment of silence. Where greed once stretched out its hand, now comes the word "enough."

Where a lie was easy, now truth. Where another's belief invited laughter, now a question. Where a creature was merely an object, now compassion.

These small changes are foretastes of liberation. Liberation may be a distant infinity, but its small shadow can be seen in daily life: a lighter heart, less fear, less hatred, less accumulation, more awareness, more truth, more compassion, more openness.

If philosophy does not bring such transformation,

it is only a garden of words. If it does,

even a small silence may be greater than a book.

Moving a hand away so as not to crush an insect. Leaving one harsh word unsaid. Not buying one

unnecessary thing. Listening to one different view. Admitting one mistake. These are subtle philosophical acts.

Action lives outside the book.

One day the seven drops of dew vanished beneath the rising sun. The leaf remained. The sun remained. But the child who had seen seven colours was no longer looking with the same eyes.

When the child later saw people quarrelling,

he said, "Perhaps you are two drops seeing the same light differently."

When someone said, "I know the whole truth,

" he looked toward the sky. When someone moved to crush a tiny creature, he stopped the hand. When greed rose, he loosened the fist. When he made a mistake, he did not place the blame upon another.

He said, "The road is mine to walk." When he prayed,

he did not beg. He looked at the coverings within and said,

"Do not give me the power to become clean - let me awaken the courage to clean myself."

Then silence. No one sat upon a throne above that silence,

yet the spirituality was no less. It was more responsible.

An empty sky can still feel sacred,

because sacredness need not be only the presence of a personal god. A clear consciousness. A non-violent

gaze. A truthful life. A hand free of greed. A mind committed to its own effort. Together these too can make sacredness.

The world is not the theatre of one will. It is the coexistence of countless living and non-living realities. In this coexistence no one is complete owner.

One reality makes room for another. Space holds all without becoming anyone's master. Time flows over all and takes no side. Conditions of motion and rest belong to all. It is an image of an impartial universe. In such a universe justice is not the whim of an external will but the unavoidable responsibility of action. Yet if the doctrine of karma diminishes compassion - "their suffering is only their karma" - non-violence itself must question that use of karma.

When someone is in pain, help first;

do not begin with the account book. How could we know the whole of another person's past? Many-sided vision teaches humility here too.

The causes of suffering are not one:

the individual, society, nature, accident,

history, one's own action,

the action of others - a tangled web.

Therefore the language of karma must not become harsh blame. Moral responsibility is not the enemy of compassion; it is its companion.

A person may accept responsibility for their own acts and still extend a hand into another's suffering. This balance is beautiful: self-reliance and cooperation, individual and society, discipline and compassion, truth and non-violence, plurality and decision, continuity and change.

The world is music made from such pairs. Pull one string too hard and the instrument breaks. In balance, there is tone.

The dew of seven directions returned on another morning. This time the child did not choose one drop. He saw the whole leaf, then the tree behind the leaf, the earth behind the tree, the water beneath the earth, and in the water the reflection of the sky.

He smiled: "How many relations live within one thing." With that sentence plurality grew deeper.

Something may possess its own existence and still exist in relation. Difference is not isolation. Plurality is not chaos. Each reality keeps its form within a shared world.

Why should the ethics of such a shared world not be non-violence? If we live together, one person's violence falls upon another; one person's greed diminishes shared resources; one person's lie breaks trust; one person's compassion increases safety.

Non-violence, though spiritual,

is also social arithmetic.

Preserve another's existence and your own existence becomes safer. In a city where everyone frightens everyone else, even the wealthy are restless. In a village where trust survives, even the poor possess some safety. Ethics is a foundation of shared life.

And non-possession is a question of justice in resources. If a few hands seize everything, other hands remain empty.

Possession can become not only private bondage but social inequality. "Hold less" may be a spiritual sentence, yet it has an economic echo. The empty hand of one practitioner may leave grain for a hungry hand.

Personal restraint may become shared justice.

Its modern meaning opens further. The climate warms. Forests are cut. Rivers dry. Species disappear.

Unlimited human consumption burdens the limited body of the earth.

Non-greed suddenly ceases to be only an old vow. It becomes a necessity for the future. Non-violence applies not only to humans but to the earth.

Many-sided vision is not merely a philosophical debate. It belongs in public decision as well: the view of industry; of the farmer; of the river's ecology; of an indigenous community; of the child who will inherit the future.

How many viewpoints does one dam contain? One mine? One highway? The dew of seven directions is needed in the council chamber too.

"Our single measure is not the whole" - accepting this can make decisions more just.

Yet decisions still must be made. Many-sidedness is not endless postponement. Hear every voice. Weigh the harm. Use non-violence as a test. Use justice as a test. Then decide.

And after deciding, leave review open. If knowledge is incomplete, policy too must remain revisable. Here lies the seed of humble governance.

A liberated consciousness might see seven directions at once. We do not. But we can take small steps toward that ideal: hear one more viewpoint, carry one less hatred, own one thing less, speak one more truth, perform one more act of compassion, make one more effort of our own.

With so little, the light upon the leaf grows.

Life cannot finally be contained in one sentence:

"It is." "It is not." "It is and in another sense is not." "It is difficult to say." Language walks around reality from many sides.

Sometimes a thing cannot be caught by one straight line. What appears contradictory becomes intelligible when the standpoint changes.

One house is small beside a palace and large beside a bird's nest;

old beside a new house and new beside a ruin. The same house can bear four sentences.

Truth sometimes asks not merely for an object but for a relation. Awareness of relation makes language humble.

Let our moral language be humble too. Someone makes a mistake; that person is not merely "a bad person." There are circumstances, ignorance, habit, greed, fear, history - and responsibility too.

Many-sidedness does not erase fault; it deepens understanding. Understanding can deepen compassion. Compassion need not weaken justice. Even punishment can be non-violent if its purpose is not revenge but safety and reform. Ethics is larger than a severe black-and-white line.

Yet subtlety must not become deceit. Do not hide injustice behind the phrase "everything is relative." Violence causes pain - that matters. Falsehood destroys trust - that matters. Greed can consume another's right - that matters.

Many-sided vision does not erase moral direction. It teaches us to see the whole field before choosing a direction.

If a liberated soul possesses complete knowledge, why should that knowledge not also be the highest form of non-violence? One who sees every side - how could such a being regard another as trivial? One who sees every creature's bondage - how could such a being be cruel?

Thus complete knowledge and complete character belong together. The deeper the knowledge, the deeper the compassion. If knowledge increases arrogance, perhaps it is still partial.

A true knower may speak less and see more; grasp less and give more; judge less quickly and listen more; hate less and recognise more relation.

Here scholarship and practice become one. Knowledge from the book enters the daily gait: feet attentive, hands non-violent, tongue truthful, mind non-greedy, vision many-sided, spirit committed to its own effort.

This is a walking poem.

One day the dew vanished again. The child had grown old. His hand trembled; his eyesight had dimmed. Yet he told a young person: "Love what seems true to you, but do not turn it into a weapon. Before judging what another says, look from where they stand."

"Do not consider the pain of any living being small. Do not place the burden of your own actions upon another. Do not abandon your effort while waiting for a miracle. The less you grasp, the lighter you can walk. Keep knowledge not only in the head but in life."

The young person asked, "When will complete truth be found?"

The old man looked toward the sky and said,

"I am still only one drop. But when a drop understands that it is not the whole sky, its light becomes clearer than before."

Then he saw a tiny insect crossing the path. He stopped his foot. The young person did not laugh. He stopped too.

Two human beings stood still for a moment to let a minute creature cross the road.

The history of the world will never record that event. Yet from the viewpoint of non-violence it was a complete scripture; from the viewpoint of karma, one light particle less; from the viewpoint of knowledge, one new aspect; from the viewpoint of non-possession, a little less claim upon one's own speed; from the viewpoint of liberation, one subtle step.

The seven drops of dew shone again in his mind. One said,

"Continuity." Another, "Change." A third,

"Plurality." A fourth, "Partial knowledge." A fifth,

"Non-violence." A sixth, "Self-effort." A seventh, "Liberation."

The sun did not appear in exactly the same way in all seven, yet light was present in them all.

And in that many-coloured radiance a quiet sentence was born:

"Truth is not the prisoner of any single fist. Life is not an object for anyone's convenience. Liberation is not a gift handed to us by someone else. Non-violence is not merely a rule; it is a way of seeing."

"And knowledge becomes fuller when it makes us less arrogant, less violent, less greedy, and more awake."

Morning had become complete. The dew dried. Yet upon the leaf remained the memory of seven subtle lights.

And the human being set out again upon the road - slowly, attentively, with a light hand and eyes open toward many directions.

Dawn Unknotting the Knots of Sorrow

Palace or hut, one day the body hears the faint knock of illness. In the mirror a white hair appears without announcement, the feet begin to slow, and death, once remote, suddenly becomes a possibility standing at the door of the house.

The happiness that seemed secure only yesterday is changing today. Whatever I have clenched in my fist and called "mine" - its form, its value, my relation to it - all of it is quietly altered in the waters of time.

Sorrow is not only the pain of a wound;

it is also the incompleteness of desire. If I obtain what I wanted,

there is fear of losing it; if I do not obtain it,

dissatisfaction; and even within the happiness I possess lies the fine seed of its ending.

To understand this is not to deny the brightness of life. The flower is beautiful, yet it falls. Friendship is sweet, yet its form changes. Part of the root of sorrow lies in the hardness of the fist with which we cling to what cannot remain still.

At times the mind wants to send enormous questions flying through the sky of argument - questions whose answers do not immediately lessen the pain of a wounded human being. Then discernment says: first look at the wound; draw out the poison; save the breath.

Whether the universe is infinite or finite,

whether the self is separate from the body or not - such questions may be grave in their proper place. But when the house is burning, the first duty is a vessel of water, not the final metaphysics of fire.

In such practical compassion,

thought does not become smaller;

it becomes more responsible. The test of knowledge is not complexity alone, but also what it does to suffering. If truth does not yet liberate us, let it at least loosen a knot of ignorance.

There is suffering - this is the first awakening,

not a proclamation of despair. Suffering has causes - this is the second hope, for the darkness is not causeless.

Causes can cease - this is the third light. There is a path - this is the fourth breath.

The world of causation is not a single cord but a net of interwoven knots. When this arises, that arises; when this quiets, another vibration may quiet with it. Nothing is wholly alone, absolute, self-sealed like an island that owes nothing to anything else.

From the mist of ignorance arise habits;

from habit, a shaping of consciousness;

then the forms of body and mind,

the doors of the senses, contact, feeling, craving, grasping, the insistence on becoming again, and the cycle of birth and decay.

This sequence is not an iron fate. Each knot is only a condition for the next. If every link were unavoidable, liberation would remain merely a word. But once the conditions are seen, awareness can place its hand between one link and the next.

Craving has arisen - grasping need not follow at once. Pain has come - hatred need not follow. Pleasure has come - we need not seize it by the throat and command, "Remain forever." In this brief interval one can hear the first crack in the wheel.

How far back the beginning of ignorance lies may be impossible to count. Yet in one present moment its effect can be seen: we treat things as fixed, the "I" as hard, desire as a command.

Knowledge here is not merely an accumulation of books. It is the unsparing clarity of seeing things as they are: whatever has arisen will change; whatever is made through causes will change when those causes change; whatever is held in a clenched fist loosens its hold when the fist itself loosens.

The fundamental human burden, then,

is not an inherited stain of sin but a fog of ignorance. Fog is not beaten with a whip; a lamp is lit. The

remedy for ignorance is not humiliation but the capacity to see - discernment joined with practice.

The path does not run toward ruthless torment of the body,

nor toward a crazed pursuit of every sensory wish. Between those two extremes opens a living, vigilant, difficult middle way.

A mind that makes the body its enemy often becomes trapped in bodily pain. A mind that turns pleasure into a god becomes pleasure's servant. The middle way says: care for the body, but do not treat every desire of the body as an order.

Right view means seeing clearly the impermanent,

conditioned shape of life. Right intention means turning the mind away from greed, violence and revenge.

View without intention is a dry map; intention without view is blind enthusiasm.

Speech too is part of the path. Lies, slander,

insult and needless harshness plant thorns in another mind and,

in the end, turn one's own mind into the same thorn-forest. Truthful speech is not fact alone; it requires compassion, timing, proportion and responsibility.

Action is a path. Whatever the hand touches bears something of its moral imprint. Non-violence is not passivity; it is the attentive art of reducing suffering in every act - restraint where one has power, presence where help is possible.

Livelihood too lies within philosophy. Bread is necessary, but if bread is earned through deceit, intoxication, exploitation, killing, fear, or the breaking of human dignity, then even with a full stomach the hunger within may deepen.

Effort is necessary, but not frenzied strain. To turn the mind again and again toward the right direction; to rise after falling; to cross both the swamp of laziness and the thorns of self-hatred - this practice is no spectacle. It is the ordinary discipline of a long life.

Memory is not the same as mindfulness. Mindfulness is seeing clearly what is happening now: the breath, the step, the first heat of anger, the first glint of greed, the first shadow of sorrow. Once awareness arrives, habit can no longer work in complete darkness.

Concentration is not imprisoning the mind in one place; it is gathering scattered energy. Moonlight breaks into fragments on water shaken by wind, but in still water the same reflection becomes whole. A quiet mind gives sight its clarity.

The path is not eight separate stairways where one must finish one before beginning the next. View changes speech, speech changes action, action changes mind, mind reshapes view. Knowledge, conduct and discipline turn within one another like a living wheel.

Liberation is hardest to understand because language itself was born within the limits of ordinary experience. How can a cord made of words fully measure a state beyond the senses, beyond habitual thought, beyond definitions we can clutch in the hand?

To admit this limit is not to erase liberation by calling it mere nothingness. Nor should the image of a flame going out be simplistically equated with the destruction of the body. Liberation is not flight from life; it is the ending of the causes of bondage and the arrival of complete peace.

When craving ceases to issue commands,

when grasping loosens,

when the ego stops writing "mine" upon every object,

when the fog of ignorance thins - the peace that rises then cannot be called death without insulting life.

A liberated mind is not an inert stone. It may become more open to another's suffering, because when the noise of private greed has quieted, another person's cry can be heard more clearly. Its natural movement can become not withdrawal but compassionate participation.

The middle way does not make meditation and action enemies. Sometimes silence is necessary; sometimes a compassionate intervention in the marketplace. Sometimes one must sit alone and watch the mind; sometimes one must stand in the crowd and take the hand of the wounded.

If extreme austerity breaks the body but leaves ignorance intact,

it has failed. If excessive indulgence multiplies momentary pleasures but makes craving endless, it too has failed. The path is that practice which gradually makes the whole of life more healthy.

Someone may object to the first truth of suffering:

but life contains happiness too. Yes - the fragrance of flowers,

love, a child's laughter, bread, rain,

music. The question is not whether happiness exists. The question is its impermanence.

We suffer through happiness when we try to turn happiness into permanent property. Let the moment remain a moment; its joy will not diminish. On the contrary, the knowledge that it will end can deepen gratitude and soften the disease of ownership.

Craving is more than ordinary wanting. It is an inner command like thirst: "Without this I am incomplete."

"If this does not remain, I am destroyed." "This must become mine." In that hard insistence the mind slowly mortgages its freedom.

There is a fine distinction between natural desire and binding craving. To want food is life; to seek one's worth in the taste of food is bondage. Affection is life; to call another person "mine" and restrict that person's freedom is bondage.

Grasping clings not only to objects but also to ideas:

"my opinion," "my identity," "my insult,

"my victory." Fists clenched around such words can widen until they become the violence of societies.

Liberation therefore cannot remain confined to a private chamber of meditation. A greedy mind creates a greedy market; a hateful mind creates a hateful politics; an ignorant mind creates rumour. Inner states take form outside us in institutions and relationships.

An attentive mind can become the soil of social compassion. If we see our own pain clearly, it becomes harder to laugh at another's pain. If we understand the workings of our own craving, another person's greed becomes not merely an object of moral abuse but also something to understand.

Understanding does not excuse wrongdoing;

it clarifies the direction of healing. Hatred is not reduced by hatred alone; fire does not extinguish fire.

Justice is necessary, but intoxication with revenge can turn justice itself into another form of bondage.

A deep question arises: if everything is conditioned, where is freedom? Perhaps freedom does not lie in arbitrary independence, but in knowledge of the conditions that move us. Once we see the forces that shape us, our relation to them can change.

Unconscious habit drives us;

awareness opens a window in the machine. Freedom of action does not arise from nowhere. It creates alternatives by understanding circumstances. This small freedom is the practical hope by which the cycle can be broken.

Words pass from generation to generation;

memory becomes scripture;

interpretation changes. Yet no written page can completely replace experience. A map of the road is useful, but the exhaustion of walking and the landscape itself must be encountered by the traveller.

For this reason reverence need not mean blind acceptance. "Someone said it, therefore it is true" is not enough. "The tradition is ancient, therefore it is true" is not enough. Test thought again and again against life, reason, experience and compassion.

Yet intoxication with doubt is not liberation either. To break every statement is easy; to break one's greed, fear and anger is hard. When intellectual brilliance does not alter character, ignorance has merely changed its clothing.

A genuine test must also ask:

what kind of human being is this idea making of me? More arrogant or more humble? More violent or more compassionate? More grasping or more free? More confused or more clear?

The word nirvana may sound mysterious,

yet its direction appears in daily life. Where one craving passes without giving orders, one anger subsides without becoming violence, one fear is seen clearly - there is a very small foretaste of peace.

To imprison final peace within a definition may itself become another act of grasping. If I turn liberation into "my doctrine," the irony is complete. Silence, therefore, is not always the absence of an answer; sometimes it is the discipline of the answer.

Language works within the conditioned world:

naming, dividing, arranging relationships. If liberation is an experience beyond those grasped structures, words can lead us to the doorway, but the inward journey must be made by oneself.

Silence, however, is no excuse for laziness. The path asks for unmistakable ethical labour: speech made clean, action non-violent, livelihood just, effort sustained, mind attentive, concentration deep, view discerning, intention compassionate.

In such practice, the walls of caste, lineage,

wealth and status can be seen through. Suffering does not ask colour; illness does not ask ancestry; old age does not ask prestige. The search for liberation therefore opens like a common right of every sentient being.

One day a traveller on the royal road and a person from an unpaved lane are drenched by the same rain. The same death is possible at both doors; the same craving, taking different forms, rises in both minds. Such recognition can shake very old thrones of pride.

The middle way is not a convenient half-and-half compromise. It is not a "middle" between truth and falsehood. It is release from two extremes that both increase bondage: tormenting the body and unrestrained indulgence.

This third direction is not necessarily easy;

it often demands more attentive labour. Extremes offer simple commands - "renounce everything" or "enjoy everything." The middle asks in every moment: how much, why, for whose good, at whose cost?

Through such questions ethical life remains alive rather than mechanical. The same action may have different effects in different circumstances. Awareness is the spirit of the rule, compassion its heart, discernment its eye.

Once the causes of suffering are understood,

it is not always necessary to invent an enemy to blame. To turn ignorance itself into a hated adversary may simply become another form of ignorance. Healing intervenes in the chain of causes - clearly, patiently, compassionately.

A physician does not become angry with the patient and ask,

"Why are you ill?" The physician examines causes - infection,

food, environment, habit,

the condition of the body. Moral healing too examines causes, without erasing responsibility.

The medicine for the illnesses within us is not a vow made for one day. It is daily repetition, failure, rising again, seeing again. The dignity of the path lies in this: it does not wait for miracles; it trusts practice.

In the end dawn arrives gradually. Darkness does not disappear at a single command. First a fine light in the east; then the shapes of things; then colour; then the road. Knowledge too clarifies the world of the mind little by little.

When we see suffering not merely as a curse but as a conditioned process, despair recedes. What has arisen through causes can change when those causes change. Within this understanding, liberation becomes for the first time a possible sentence.

When we stop trying to imprison happiness and instead receive its momentary fragrance, gratitude separates itself from craving; love can separate itself from ownership; life can deepen without the insistence that it must become immortal.

When the mind asks questions but,
in its intoxication with questions,
does not forget the wounded,

intelligence becomes the companion of compassion and philosophy becomes service to life. And when silence is needed, words learn to stop their feet and listen.

The knot of suffering will not come undone with one violent pull. One knot is desire, another fear, another ignorance, another memory, another ego. Yet once the threads of each knot become visible, the hands feel less helpless.

Perhaps the final teaching of dawn is only this:

the world changes - therefore hold it lightly. Suffering is conditioned - therefore look for its causes.

Liberation is possible - therefore walk. And while walking, do not increase another's pain.

Do not wait for deliverance to descend from some distant throne. To clear the sight in this breath, to choose non-violence in this sentence, to lessen greed in this act - the road to liberation begins here.

And when sunrise becomes complete,

it does not erase the memory of night. It reminds us:

there was darkness, but it was not endless. Light arose outside us,
but its true direction was made by opening the eye within.

The Flame Keeps Changing, the Light Moves On

I run my hand over an old table and say,
 "This is the same table." Yet the wood has worn down,
 the polish has faded,
 the corners have changed. Perhaps the name remains steady while the thing itself is quietly becoming other than it was.

For our convenience,
 language holds a word still across time. We say "house,"
 "river," "human being," "I,"
 and forget that the stillness of the name does not halt the ceaseless change within the thing named.

A seed becomes a shoot, the shoot a tree;
 the flower falls, the fruit ripens,
 a branch dries. A child becomes young;
 the body moves toward illness, age and death. Mountains, stars, the earth itself - what we call stable also changes when time is long enough.

So even to say that the world "is changing" may be only half the truth, as though a fixed world stood behind while change passed over it. A deeper seeing says: the world itself is this flowing of conditioned change.

Nothing stands by its own power,
 wholly free of relation,
 sealed inside itself. When this arises,
 that arises; when this changes, something else is touched. Existence is not a heap of separate stones but a living web of conditions.

Within that web two extremes tempt the mind and mislead it. One says that beneath all change there must be some eternal substance, forever untouched. The other says that things perish utterly in an instant, as though they leave no consequence behind.

Between them a third path opens: a thing is,
 but through conditions; it endures,
 but not absolutely. Even in ceasing it leaves an effect upon the next moment and enters a sequence of causes. Neither perfect eternity nor meaningless annihilation - rather, a relationship continually being born.

Yesterday's thoughts,
 words and actions leave their imprint on today's life. Today's choices shape tomorrow's direction. Fate and freedom need not be enemies: the past gives conditions, while the present, within those conditions, can choose a new response.

Karma here need not mean merely the punishment-book of an invisible accountant. Causation shapes habits of mind, relationships, decisions and futures. Greed widens the path of greed; compassion widens the road of compassion.

But the hardest question finally comes to the word "I." If the body changes, sensation changes, memory changes, thought changes - where is the unchanging owner within, the one we could always call the same "I"?

Look inward and what appears is a changing current:
 form, feeling, recognition, habit,
 consciousness. No fixed particle sits on a throne behind every state. Perhaps "I" is a shorthand name for these changing constituents, not a separate eternal thing.

This does not mean that the person is nothing. The changing person is real; suffering is real; responsibility is real. What is questioned is the imagined motionless substance behind the changing field of experience.

The water of a river is new from moment to moment,
 yet the river has continuity. A chain runs from one link to the next, yet no single wire lies unchanged through every link from end to end.

Look at the flame of a lamp. The flame in the next instant is not identical with the flame of the instant before, yet neither is it wholly unrelated. Oil, wick, heat, air and the preceding moment sustain the radiance, so that we see what seems to be one flame continuing.

One lamp lights another. Did the first flame physically travel into the second? No. Yet the causal relation was not broken. In this small radiance there appears a simple image of continuity without an unchanging soul.

From here the question of birth and rebirth takes on another shape. There need be no single permanent traveller moving from body to body; a stream of prior causes may condition another life, as one flame kindles another.

Why, then, should moral responsibility survive? Because the causal stream survives. What was done yesterday is present in the making of today's person. We cannot escape continuity by saying, "That was someone else."

Responsibility rests not upon a stone of identity but upon a river of causes. We change, but the changing sequence is not severed from its past. The "I" of today inherits yesterday's acts and helps create the "I" of tomorrow.

The ethical consequence is profound. If no hard,
 eternal ego sits upon an inner throne,

the walls of "mine" can grow lighter. Selfishness is not a law of nature but a learned grip, and a learned grip can loosen.

My honour, my victory, my property,
my ideas - the harder the grasp upon these,
the greater the fear and conflict. When the fortress of a fixed self begins to melt, a new space opens for compassion.

For the other person too is a stream of changing causes. Behind anger there may be fear; behind fear, experience; behind greed, insecurity. Understanding does not erase responsibility, but it complicates the easy picture that hatred prefers.

Ethics then becomes more than a list of commands. It grows from an understanding of existence itself. If all things are causally entangled, our words do not vanish into empty air: an insult echoes in another mind; an act of compassion may travel farther than we can see.

The wonder is that right seeing and right conduct are not separate lessons. If we view existence through the lens of a fixed ego, conduct bends toward self-interest. If we see relation, change and the absence of a permanent self, generosity can become more natural.

For this reason knowledge becomes the beginning of ethical life. To see rightly is not merely to win an intellectual contest. It presses upon desire, speech and action. If a vision never touches the life that holds it, knowledge is still only on the surface.

A serious freedom of thought also shines here:
accept no statement merely because of reverence,
tradition, prestige or fear. Examine it. Turn it within the mind. Place it against experience and reason.

Even a voice honoured as a teacher may say:
do not turn my words into blind belief. Doubt is not a crime. Doubt can be the breath of thought when questioning leads toward clearer understanding and more peaceful conduct.

Yet intellectual freedom is not reckless negation. Something is not false simply because it is old, nor true because it pleases us. The purpose of inquiry is not victory but the reduction of confusion and the seeing of suffering's causes.

A philosophy of change is not pessimism. If everything changes,
suffering can change too. Craving,
fear and anger are not permanent essences. What has arisen through causes can alter when its causes alter. The thought of no fixed self does not erase the human being;
it removes the frozen image. The hard sentence "I am like this and will always be like this" begins to crack. If change is a law of existence, self-transformation is a real possibility.

Someone may be angry,
yet anger is not an eternal soul. Someone may be greedy,
yet greed is not the person's final essence. Someone may be wounded, yet the wound is not the whole identity. This vision can give new meaning to education,
justice and compassion. Do not see a human being only through the permanent label of an offence; see also the history of causes. Keep responsibility, but do not close the door to change.

A society too has no unchanging self. Institutions change,
ideas change, traditions are transformed,
powers rise and fall. "It has always been this way" may be another illusion created by the table-like stability of a name.

Names endure while histories move inside them. Caste,
nation, community, institution - the words may survive for generations while the life arranged beneath them changes continually.

Therefore respect history,
but do not turn a name into an eternal essence. Tradition is a stream of causes, not a stone. Understand it, test it, alter it. Preserve what lessens human suffering; question what deepens it.

The image of the flame returns. So long as the conditions remain,
there is flame. The air changes, the oil declines,
the wick bends: the flame changes,
yet causal continuity gives the light its sequence.

Our lives are like this too: new in every moment,
yet not wholly orphaned from what came before. Yesterday is present in today, and today in tomorrow, by the fine thread of causes.

There is no need to call that thread an "eternal soul,"
and it is equally mistaken to deny it and say there is no responsibility. The difficult middle truth is continuity without immutability.

The mind often wants one of two extremes:
either a completely permanent answer or absolute nothingness. Life offers a more intricate music of relation, condition, sequence and change.

A raga takes a new note in every instant,
yet the raga keeps its identity. Music does not exist in one fixed sound but in the order and relation among sounds. Human continuity too may be the continuity of such music.

Liberation, then, is not the immortality of an eternal ego. It may be the understanding of the ego's hard centre, the loosening of grasp, the clear seeing of the web of causes, freedom from craving's command. To insist on permanence in what cannot remain permanent enlarges suffering. To make a stone of the changing "I" enlarges fear. To imagine a conditioned relationship as isolated existence enlarges delusion. Liberation may be the gradual melting of these three confusions:

the illusion of a fixed thing,

the illusion of a fixed ego,

the illusion of independent existence. Where grasping diminishes, peace grows; where peace grows, compassion comes more easily.

Yet peace is not passivity. When the noise of self-interest lessens, another person's suffering can be heard more clearly. If knowledge is alive, it does not turn its face from the world; it extends a hand.

A transformed person still goes to the market,
cares for a family, works in society. The difference is this:

a role is no longer worn as the crown of an eternal "I." One acts,

but the handcuff of greed for the fruit of action grows lighter.

Vision and ethics thus flow into one another. The world is relational - therefore responsibility. Everything changes - therefore loosen attachment. There is no fixed self - therefore question the throne of ego.

From this threefold seeing,

even the language of life can change. In place of "mine,

" say "our relationship." In place of "forever,

" say "for now." In place of "that is simply what he is," say, "within these causes, this is how he is now."

Language becomes our teacher again,

but now a teacher of awareness rather than illusion. Use words while remembering that they do not freeze what they name. Keep a window open in every name for the wind of change.

At last the question returns within. The one I call "I" today will not be exactly the same tomorrow. Why then make today's anger immortal? Why make today's humiliation eternal?

To let go is not to forget. It is to move with changing truth;

not to break relationship,

but to free it from the chain of ownership.

As the flame of a lamp changes at every instant and still gives light through the night, a human being can create love, responsibility and meaning without a fixed soul. Continuity need not be the hardness of substance; it may be the living beauty of causation.

At dawn, as one lamp goes out,

another is being lit. No one catches the flame and carries it in a vessel from one to the other, yet the sequence of light is not broken. In that mystery lies a deep poem of life.

Perhaps our journey is like this:

one moment becoming the cause of another,

one life becoming a condition for the next. No eternal object is travelling, yet neither is everything utterly disconnected.

The flame keeps changing;

the light keeps moving on.

And within that light a simple humility is born:

nothing is alone, nothing is permanent,

nothing is without consequence. Therefore be attentive - today's smallest act may become tomorrow's darkness, or tomorrow's light.

Four Windows and One Open Sky

When an ancient assembly broke apart,
thought too moved away in several directions. Some wished to preserve the tradition within the hard lines of discipline; others said: if liberation is only for oneself, compassion remains unfinished.

One road leads a person toward the solitary shore. Another says:

once you reach the shore,
turn the boat around. So long as even one living being is drowning,
your own peace is not complete.

The lotus rising from mud became an image for this second longing. It lives in the water, yet the mire of the water is not the final meaning of its petals. Live in the world, but beyond greed, ego, and the narrow centre of private gain.

One teaching says: walk by your own strength,
through your own effort. Another,
more popular voice offers courage to the weary mind:

some vast source of compassion is not unaware of your suffering.

This tension between faith and self-effort is not merely a story of religion. In every age the human being asks: how much of my liberation lies in my own hands, and how much do I long for a compassionate presence that will hold me when I cannot hold myself?

Then a still deeper division opens. Is the seed of awakening already present as light within every living being, or is liberation possible only for a few after long and difficult discipline?

If the seed of light is present in all,
the distance between the ordinary and the awakened is no longer a difference of being but a difference of veils. Let the mist lift, and the same world shines in another form - as though the walls of a prison had suddenly become sky.

Then the world and liberation are no longer two separate countries. The same reality, seen through ignorance, is bondage; seen with clear vision, it is peace. The place has not changed. The structure of seeing has.

From this thought arises a difficult question for social compassion. If every being carries possibility within, how just is it to call anyone 'unworthy'? If the inward seed is shared, how can outward rank be the final measure?

But philosophy does not stop there. It opens a debate about the very texture of reality. One window says: the world is a real flow of minute events; whatever appears before us is real, and its constituent moments are real as well.

In this view, to exist is to possess the power of producing an effect. Whatever can alter something, whatever can enter into relation, is real. What is wholly changeless, causeless and without effect may be little more than a name.

Reality, then, is not a fixed stone but a swift current of moment after moment. One instant gives rise to the next, becomes its condition, and passes away. Continuity comes not from an eternal substance but from an unbroken sequence of causation.

An astonishing claim is even made about time:

past, present and future may be thought together so that the present is neither born from a blank, vanished past nor cast toward an utterly empty future.

But a second window disagrees. The past has passed,
it says, and the future has not yet come. A moment lives only for a moment. Continuity is not the transfer of some solid entity through time, but a succession in which one dependent event gives way to another.

The central question of this second view arises between the eye and the thing seen. Do we perceive the external object itself, or only a form of it within the mind - a representative image from which we infer the world outside?

The illusion of water in a mirage is possible only because water has at some time been experienced before. Illusion itself remains tied to memory of an external world - so runs the argument that tries once more to save the reality beyond the mind.

The debate between perception and inference becomes subtle. If the external object is never directly perceived, of what is the inner image a 'copy'? And if there is only the image, from where does the word 'outside' receive its meaning?

A third window turns the whole curtain of the dispute. What we call an object, it says, may be a form arising within consciousness; the independent existence of something wholly outside experience cannot finally be established.

I see a stone - but what is actually seen is a form present in consciousness. If the object is made of atoms, those atoms are too minute to be directly seen; if it is a whole composed of parts, how are all the parts ever perceived together at once? The solidity of the external world begins to tremble under the question.

Consciousness and its object arise together in the same instant. Wherever there is experience, where can an object wholly separate from consciousness be seized? In this argument the world becomes a vast festival of waves rising in the mirror of mind.

Yet mind does not become a permanent soul. Consciousness too is a stream changing from moment to moment - memory, desire, impressions, imagination. Within that stream the seeds of earlier action may remain concealed like a hidden storehouse.

Among countless memories, one suddenly rises to the surface. In the same way innumerable latent impressions, given the right conditions, may flower into forms, objects and attractions. The world we experience and the history of the mind are knotted deeply into one another.

Practice, here, does not mean destroying an external world. It means understanding the current of those mental impressions and preventing craving and delusion from reproducing themselves. As the mind clears, consciousness moves toward its own quiet transparency.

But the fourth window questions all the windows. Every statement that says, 'Reality is like this,' is made of names and concepts. Can the net of concepts ever capture reality in its entirety?

The little word 'table' receives its meaning from the whole world of what is 'not-table'. 'Long' is incomplete without 'short', 'light' without 'darkness'. The mind makes meaning through paired opposites; language lives inside a web of relations.

No single concept, then, is self-sufficient. A theory makes truth within its assumptions, methods and prior commitments;

the limits of what it can call true are often set by the spectacles through which it began to look.

The trouble begins when the spectacles become the sky itself. A thinker says, 'My framework is the only language of reality,' and every other way of seeing is named illusion. Debate slowly begins to learn the gait of war.

The thirst for knowledge can, paradoxically, become another bondage. The insistence on possessing final truth clenches one's doctrine inside a fist. Once the fist hardens, the opposing view becomes an enemy; from the enemy comes fear, and from fear, conflict. The task of this fourth way is not to build a new throne for yet another theory. It lets an opponent's statement stand at its full strength and examines it by its own rules. If a contradiction opens within it, the statement bends beneath its own weight.

Yet when one position falls, its opposite does not automatically become true. Even the assumption that there are only two doors may be an illusion. A third door, a fourth, an unknown direction may still remain open.

This is a serious discipline of disagreement. Do not weaken the opponent's thought into a caricature before answering it. Let it stand in its strongest form; then reveal the knot within - not for the pleasure of victory, but so that the grip of certainty may loosen.

Causation becomes a testing ground for this method. If the effect is already wholly present in the cause, what has truly been born? If cause and effect are entirely different, what relation allows us to say, 'this arose from that'?

If they are identical, the very word 'cause' becomes unnecessary. If they are absolutely different, why should milk not come from stone, or oil from sand? Relation joins and separates at once; when one side is made absolute, the concept begins to break.

'Produced from itself', 'produced from another',

'from both', 'without a cause' - four doors are opened,

and behind each appears a wall of contradiction. The conclusion is not 'nothing exists', but rather: the absolute claim of the concept has failed.

Cause and effect remain useful words in ordinary life. Science, agriculture, medicine and daily action all move through causal relations. Confusion begins when 'cause' is turned into an independent, eternal, self-complete thing.

In the same way, substance and quality,

one and many, existence and non-existence,

rest and motion, object and knower - every paired category can be asked the same question: are we mistaking the language of relation for a map of independently existing things?

Emptiness, here, is not a destructive nothingness. It says that no thing possesses, by its own power, a complete, independent, unconditional essence. Whatever depends on conditions is empty of a self-enclosed nature.

To say that a house is 'empty' is not to say that the house does not exist. It means there is no independent, changeless master-essence hidden inside it. Walls, earth, labour, name, use and time together make the experience we call 'house'.

In this sense, emptiness can become another name for relation. Whatever is dependent is empty of independent essence; and precisely because it is empty of such essence, change, relation and compassion are possible.

If things were sealed inside complete natures,

they could never change. If a human being possessed an unalterable essence called 'angry', transformation would be impossible. Emptiness is therefore not nihilism. It opens the door of change.

The subtlest danger is to turn emptiness itself into the final object. If the statement 'all views are relative' is made into an absolute deity, the old illness has merely returned under a new name.

A path is a means for crossing,

not an idol to carry forever on the head. Thought is useful like a boat. Once the river is crossed, why marry the boat? The doctrine is for liberation; liberation is not for the worship of doctrine.

Two levels of truth need not oppose one another. In daily life we require names, logic, science, language, causes and persons. Bread is found by calling it bread; medicine works by dosage; bridges are built by calculation.

To despise this practical truth would be to insult life. Yet it is not an ultimate reality standing beyond dependence. It is useful, conditioned, shared understanding - and within the sphere of human practice, it has its full value.

A deeper insight points toward a peace beyond concepts. Words reach a point and grow tired; reasoning sees its own boundary. This is not an anti-intellectual darkness. It is the humility that comes when intelligence recognises the limit of its own reach.

Without reasoning, we could not understand even ordinary truth. But when reason says, 'I am the final master of reality,' a useful tool turns into an empire.

A hammer is marvellous for building a house. But if the hammer declares that everything in the universe is a nail, the success of the tool becomes the source of its delusion.

For this reason ordinary science,

logic and philosophy are not rejected. They are powerful instruments of truth within the practical world. The only reminder is this: their maps are not the whole existence of the earth.

Then the old question of the world and liberation returns. If bondage arises through an ignorant way of seeing, liberation is not the address of some other universe. It is this same world experienced without the clutch of greed, fear, ego and fixed concepts.

The change is not geographical but perceptual. The house is the same, the river the same, the body the same, the people the same; but the thorn of 'mine', the obstinacy of 'final', the solid wall called 'enemy' begin to grow light.

The world that once appeared a prison can become a field of compassion. Bondage is not only in the world but in the grasping manner in which the world is seen. When the curtain lifts, the scene is not new; the seeing is new.

Wisdom and compassion, therefore,

are not separate wings. Wisdom alone may dream of a dry liberation;

compassion alone may exhaust itself without direction. Together they make it possible to work in the world without being possessed by the world.

The ideal person does not leave the mud and disappear forever upon a mountain. Having crossed, that person returns to the city, to sickness, hunger and fear. Action no longer grows from the seed of private gain, but from a response to the suffering of others.

If liberation means only the ending of my own suffering,

the centre called 'I' may still survive in a subtle form. Deeper liberation does not place the suffering of others outside the boundary of one's own peace.

This thought has political and social echoes as well. An individual may awaken while institutions remain unjust; compassion then demands action. Inner peace that becomes indifferent to outward suffering remains incomplete.

At the same time, outward reform alone does not automatically remove craving from the mind. A new system, placed in the hands of an old ego, can create violence again. Inner awakening and outward compassionate action need one another.

The four windows do not agree. One says the external object is directly seen; another says we receive its image; the third says it is a wave of mind; the fourth questions the conceptual limits of every such claim.

Yet through their disagreement a shared discipline shines:

do not make anything into a fixed essence;

see the web of causes;

do not mistake your own view for the final one; loosen the grip; keep suffering in sight.

Debate itself can become a form of practice when the aim is not victory but the reduction of attachment. An opposing view shows us our own spectacles; the question that makes us uncomfortable may be the very one that reveals an assumption we could not see.

A school in which every student repeats the same answer may be quiet, but there is little air for thought.

When disagreement is held with dignity, the garden of truth becomes more richly coloured.

Plurality, however,

has value only if it does not abandon the search for truth. To say 'all views are equal' and end the inquiry is laziness. Openness should raise the level of questioning, not erase the standards by which we judge.

Test one claim by perception, another by reasoning,

a third by experience. And still remember:

the standard of testing may itself carry a conceptual framework. Such self-awareness does not weaken knowledge; it makes knowledge more honest.

The absence of a final answer can feel frightening. The mind wants a throne, a solid wall, a single map. Perhaps maturity is the courage to walk beneath an open sky.

Where certainty is less,
responsibility need not be less. On the contrary,
every decision becomes more attentive:

my view is limited, therefore listen to another voice; my action has consequences, therefore practise non-violence; everything depends on everything else, therefore compassion.

One day the four windows opened toward the same sky. The first said, 'Look, the cloud is outside.' The second said, 'I receive its image.' The third said, 'The cloud is a conscious form of experience.' The fourth smiled: 'Even the word cloud is a net.'

The sky did not become smaller because of any of their sentences. Each vision saw something and left something unseen; beyond the dispute, vastness remained quietly where it had always been.

Perhaps the highest humility of knowledge is only this:

let a sentence be useful, but do not call it the sky;

let a map be necessary,

but do not let it take the place of the earth.

Perhaps the highest compassion of liberation is only this:

after reaching the shore,

do not break the boat. Turn it around again and make room for those who still have to cross.

Perhaps the deepest meaning of emptiness is only this:

open the fist. Inside is not merely 'nothing',

but space for air, relation,

change and possibility to enter.

And perhaps the final lesson of the four windows is one:

light writes no deed of ownership upon any single frame. Wherever a window opens, a portion of sky can enter the room.

The Home No Fist Can Hold

Each day I stand before the mirror carrying a name. The face has altered a little, the weariness in the eyes is different, memory has taken on new colours; yet I say without hesitation: this is me, the same one who was here yesterday.

That easy sentence keeps life moving,

but inside it waits a deeper question:

does the 'I' endure unchanged across time,

or does a sequence of changing events give its continuity a single name and then mistake that name for something fixed?

If something remained forever the same,

how would we measure its not-changing? Measurement needs a stable standard; yet the standard itself changes in time, and to test it we need another standard, then another—the sequence opening endlessly outward.

Where in this world is there a measure that never moves? What seems fixed in one frame shifts in another. Perhaps eternal stillness belongs less to things than to our desire for them.

The most basic experience of life is change—

body, season, relationship,

belief. Whatever touches anything enters relation;

to enter relation is to change. Existence and change may be two words, but they are two shadows cast by the same current.

In the midst of that current,

a human being searches like a frightened child for something that will not move. Illness, age, death, separation—all raise the same question: 'If everything passes, what within my life will remain?'

In answer to that fear the mind builds foundations meant to outlast time: perhaps an ultimate power beyond us, perhaps an unmoving seed called soul, perhaps the state, caste, science, progress, love, friendship, or the stable emblem of one's work.

We say, 'I come from there,' 'I am a person of this work,

'What am I without this relationship?' 'This thought is my identity.' Slowly, relationships, possessions, offices, and ideas become pillars of the self.

When a pillar trembles,

the house shakes from within. In the loss of someone we loved,

it is sometimes not only the beloved who is lost;

a piece of the identity we built around that person breaks as well.

When a friend betrays us,

the wound is not only to trust. The image our mind made and declared unchanging has shattered. And as the image breaks, the old question returns: 'Who am I now?'

There is an easy escape from that crisis:

make a new image. An old relationship ends,

so find another; work grows dull, so choose new work;

one identity fades, so adopt a different one. The fist changes what it holds, but not the grip.

At times we say, 'I love this work.' Slowly the work takes possession of us. On a day of rest uneasiness appears: if I am not working, what proves that I exist?

Play, livelihood, reputation, knowledge,

relationship—all may be beautiful. The trouble begins when they cease to be parts of life and are forced to carry the weight of proving that our existence is permanent.

Then delight becomes compulsion;

love becomes a fortress of safety;

devotion becomes insurance for identity;

service becomes a way of polishing our moral portrait. Ego is not merely pride. It is the repeated labour of manufacturing a self.

Even the hand that gives may whisper inwardly,

'See, I am generous.' Even while helping,

the mind may ask for a subtle reward. Then,

in the middle of another's suffering, the 'I' keeps sculpting its little statue.

Perhaps free compassion begins where the noise of 'I am helping' grows faint; where only suffering is seen, and the hand reaches out of itself.

That state is deeper than pity. No centre is constantly calculating its moral profit. There is light, but the throne of the 'giver of light' is slowly left empty.

And yet we fear the empty throne. Ego is not only power;

it is also a household instrument of security. It tells us:

'You are somebody because you have a name,

a position, relationships, beliefs.'

When even one of these breaks,
loneliness can become fear. Loneliness is not merely the absence of people. Sometimes it is the absence of the relationship that used to tell us who we were.

A stranger met on a bus may disappear without breaking our life. But when someone to whom the meaning of 'I' was tied departs, a vacant room opens inside existence itself.

Then memory, imagination, old photographs,
old conversations can become a substitute home. We live in the past to preserve an identity. But the wind of time eventually lays dust even upon photographs.

A strange cycle turns within this search for safety. We want stability, so we invent an image. The image consoles us for a while. Then actual change breaks it, and fear returns more sharply than before.

We make a fortress of belief,
then become afraid for the fortress. We call the soul immortal,
then worry about its salvation. We make caste,
flag, ideology into fixed foundations, then manufacture enemies for them.

When identity is anchored in an external symbol,
a question directed at that symbol feels like an assault on our existence. Debate becomes war with astonishing ease; criticism becomes insult, disagreement becomes betrayal.

In this psychology,
war is not only external politics. Inner insecurity puts on an enormous flag and walks into the street. A frightened ego, magnified into collective ego, finds a voice a thousand times louder.

In one age the foundation may be an ultimate power;
in another, the state, progress, science;
at times love, friendship, profession. The object changes,
but the pattern remains: find something to which we can bind ourselves and say, 'Because of this, I am.'

Philosophy places its hardest question upon this knot:
if every relationship changes,
what can we call permanently fixed? If we ourselves are a changing web of relationships, where is the enduring centre?

The question does not deny life. It says:
have relationships,
but do not turn them into insurance against eternity. Love,
but keep beside love the truth that the beloved's body, thoughts, and presence will change.

Cherish friendship,
but do not imprison a friend in your image of them. Work,
but do not make success proof of existence. Seek knowledge,
but do not wear learning as the permanent crown of 'I'.

When our image is harder than the thing itself,
we continue gripping the old image even after the thing has changed. That mismatch becomes one of suffering's quiet sources.

We do not see a person as they are now,
but as the fixed portrait our mind has already painted. Then the living person changes, the portrait tears, and we say: 'They have changed.'

Perhaps they have—and perhaps we have too. The problem is not change, but the silent contract we make against it: 'You must remain the same so that my identity may remain safe.'

No one signs this contract,
yet it lies secretly inside relationships. Separation,
betrayal, boredom bring the hidden sentence into the light.

Boredom itself can be a crisis of identity. What gave the ego energy yesterday no longer answers today, and the mind says again: 'Something more. Something new. Something stronger.'

Overwork, excess play, excessive belief,
endless seeking are not always signs of aliveness. Sometimes they are noises made to cover an inner emptiness, so that the question within cannot be heard.

'If I am without all these things,
who am I?' It is difficult to escape this question. Yet perhaps liberation begins not by finding an immediate answer, but by seeing clearly the hunger for an answer.

Sometimes the truest answer may be:
'There is no fixed thing.' Fear rises at once—
'Then do I disappear?' But existence as changing flow is not nonexistence. It is the actual form of life.

A river is not a tank of motionless water,
yet it is a river. Light is not a flame frozen in one shape,
yet it illumines the whole night. Music is not a single unmoving note, yet the raga keeps its identity.

A person, too, may be such a continuity:
a changing sequence of body, memory, feeling,

relationship, and action—without an eternal owner,
yet not utterly disconnected.

If so, defending the ego is not life's unavoidable duty. The fortress called 'I' is not made of stone but of relationships. Loosen the wall and air enters; with the air comes the sound of another's pain.

Where the illusion of a permanent ego is weaker,
the border between 'mine' and 'another's' also becomes less rigid. Compassion can arise not from command,
but from understanding how existence is woven.

Then morality need not depend on fear of punishment from outside. I am not nonviolent merely because
someone may be watching, but because the idea of absolute separation itself begins to seem untrue.

If my life is part of processes bound to other lives,
another's pain is not a wholly external event. In that understanding, compassion finds its ground.

Yet it is not enough to read a book and say,

'There is no ego.' The sentence itself can become a new ego—

'I am egoless.' When the words of knowledge take the place of practice, the old illness simply changes
clothes.

Existential understanding requires long observation. Watch each moment: when insult comes, which
fortress trembles within? When praise comes, which statue grows taller? In loss, which claim to permanence
has broken?

Meditation here is not magic. It is the work of opening the mind's storehouse. Memory, fear, desire, the
repeated stories of identity appear one by one, and we begin to see: these are events, not masters.

We say, 'my anger'; a little later the anger is gone. We say,

'my sorrow'; that too changes shape. If the event itself were the owner, where would the owner remain while
changing from moment to moment?

Understanding slowly travels from words into experience. First we hear, 'Nothing is permanent.' Then
through loss, ageing, boredom, love, death, meditation, the sentence enters the body.

Then letting go is not failure. It is allowing things to move according to their nature. To open the fist is not
to destroy what it held; it is to give it room to be free.

Love may be truer in that open hand. You are not a pillar holding up my identity. You are a changing life
with whom I share a portion of time—grateful, attentive, without ownership.

Work too becomes freer in the open hand. If success comes,
welcome it; if failure comes,

learn from it. Neither is the final verdict upon my existence.

State, language, tradition, science—

all may be precious. But make none of them an absolute standard for whose protection we forget compassion
for living human beings.

Where love for an abstract symbol grows larger than human suffering, identity separates a person from their
own humanity. Here psychology meets ethics.

If someone sees the afflicted and suppresses their tears because group, belief, or flag has taught that such
compassion is weakness, outward loyalty has already imprisoned inward humanity.

So before asking, 'What do I believe in?' another question may come first: 'What is my belief making of me?'
More compassionate, or more afraid? More open, or more divided?

True morality can become the test of doctrine. If a philosophy speaks of saving the soul while increasing
selfishness, if a religion speaks of love while giving birth to hatred, examine the knot within it again.

Knowledge, freedom, compassion,

conduct are not separate rooms. If understanding reality does not alter life, something is incomplete. If
ethics rests upon a false vision of existence, conflict may grow within.

On one side the command says, 'Save the permanent self';

on the other, 'Be selfless.' The mind is pulled in opposite directions. Where the centre becomes less rigid,
selflessness can cease to be an order and become a natural ease.

Liberation then is not the acquisition of some special object. It is the weakening of the compulsion to keep
holding something all the time; less night-and-day guard duty around the fortress, more rest within.

That rest is not idleness. The one who needs less proof of self can work more freely—action without the
labour of building a private monument.

There is less need for declaration;

the act gives off its own warmth. Fewer signs saying 'I am kind,

' more kindness. Fewer crowns saying 'I am wise,

' more clarity.

Spontaneous morality may lie in this direction. The first response to another's suffering is not moral
arithmetic but direct openness—like a hand withdrawing from fire before calculation begins.

Yet such openness is rare without practice. The habit of ego is nourished by centuries of civilisation, family,
fear, language. One clever sentence will not pull up its roots in a day.

So there must be repetition—observation,
remembrance, meditation,

self-examination. Whenever the mind searches for a new permanent pillar, notice it. When the sentence rises, 'Without this I am destroyed,' look directly at its face.

Sometimes things truly are necessary—bread, shelter, affection,

safety. Non-attachment does not deny the needs of life. It keeps a need from being turned into an object of eternal self-definition.

A hungry body needs food;

that is not ego. A sick body needs medicine. The death of a beloved brings grief; that is humanity. The problem is not grief, but the extra clutch within grief that says: 'My fixed world has been broken.'

Non-attachment is not an order to dry the tears. It lets tears move with truth, without the illusion that the laws of life were obliged to obey my private wishes.

From this view, grief itself becomes a teacher. It shows us that the one we called 'forever' was a life within time. Love is not diminished by that truth—perhaps it becomes more precious because the moment is finite.

The free mind does not flee the world. It recognises its place within the world's processes. The loneliness of 'I have been thrown here from outside' softens; we are part of this world's changing web of causes and relations.

Where the mind imagines itself a foreigner in the world,

it seeks a permanent home outside and then makes a god of that home. Where it sees itself as part of the current, the story of exile weakens.

The border between earth and human being can soften as well. The body is a relation among soil, water, air, food, time. 'I' am not a master standing outside nature. From this understanding, ecological ethics can grow by itself.

Where the wall of self-interest falls,

new relations become possible between human and human,

human and nature. Compassion is no mere sentiment;

it is the ethical consequence of experiencing the deep interdependence of existence.

This poem offers no final answer. It writes only one question upon a house wall: 'The fixed home I spent my life defending—was it ever truly there?'

If the answer is 'no,

' fear is natural. Yet perhaps beyond that fear is an open field where nothing needs constant guarding, only an attentive life.

There identity is a name for practical use,

not a prison number. Relationship is an opportunity for love,

not insurance for existence. Work is service,

not a self-portrait. Thought is a window, not the sky.

There morality grows less from fear of commands and more from the nature of compassion. There freedom is not the power to grasp, but the courage to remain without grasping.

One day a hard wind rises and the paper walls of the old house tremble. For the first time I do not tighten my fist. I open the door. Outside nothing is eternal—but there is wind, there is sky, and life is still moving.

Then I understand: perhaps the home was never in the walls. Perhaps home was this openness where relationships may arrive and depart, while compassion, without signing the name of an owner, goes on giving light.

The One Who Sees Beyond the Mirror

At dawn, the moment the window opens,
two worlds stand face to face: one outside—
earth, sunlight, leaves, body, sound, fragrance,
movement; one within—that which sees all these, yet does not itself appear as an object among the things
seen.

The eye sees the flower, the ear hears the bird;
the mind gives a name,
the intellect decides. But if what is seen and what sees were simply the same kind of thing, why do these two
poles of experience feel so distinct each day?

The world is not merely a heap of outer objects;
inner experience belongs to it too. Yet if consciousness is made too quickly into just another object—a
property of stone, a shape of the body, a ripple of the mind—something fundamental slips away.

That which sees is difficult to turn into a thing seen. The eye sees objects, but it does not see its own seeing in
the same way. Consciousness is like the radiance of a lamp: it illuminates objects, while the light itself
belongs to another order of experience.

The outward world may be imagined as a primordial,
subtle, unmanifest womb:
a state where name has not yet separated from name,
form from form, colour from colour, yet countless forms sleep in possibility within three interwoven
tensions.

One current is light—clarity, balance, lucidity,
a fine quiet joy. The second is restless—
motion, effort, struggle, desire, pain,
longing. The third is heavy—inertia, resistance, sleep, ignorance, dullness, obscurity.

The three oppose one another and yet sustain one another. If there were only clarity, where would motion
arise? If only motion, what would give form? If only heaviness, nothing would rise. The world is fashioned
from the coexistence of contrary tendencies.

When their equilibrium breaks,
forms emerge. Here clarity predominates,
there restlessness,

elsewhere weight. As the proportions of tones change in a vast music, the diversity of the world appears.

The possibility of the tree sleeps already in the seed;
of curd in milk, cloth in thread,
a pot in clay. Nothing simply falls from an absolute nothingness:
the effect lies within its cause as a dormant possibility.

Change, then, is not magic but manifestation. What appears later must have had its conditions within the
body of the cause. Creation is not the making of something from sheer void, but the giving of form to what
lay concealed as possibility.

From nature's womb first arises the great mirror of discernment—
the faculty that distinguishes, weighs, judges,
separates 'this' from 'that'. Within that mirror a smaller voice then rises: 'I', 'mine', 'ours'.

From this first contour of 'I' open the paths of mind,
sense and action: the doors of sight, hearing,
touch, taste and smell; hands, feet, speech;
and then the subtler qualities condense into space, air, fire, water and earth.

The sequence is almost a poem: from invisible to visible,
subtle to solid. From the possibility of sound comes extension,
from touch movement, from colour radiance,
from taste fluidity, from fragrance dense earth—the world as one long transformation.

But mind, ego and intellect are not consciousness. They too are subtle instruments of nature. They may
become extraordinarily transparent, yet like mirrors in a dark room they reveal nothing without light.

A flower may stand before the mirror,
but if the room is dark where is its image? Light the lamp and the mirror begins to show the flower. So the
subtle intellect depends upon the light of consciousness to make knowledge possible.

Knowledge is a strange convergence:
the object presents its form, the sense-organ touches it,
the mind gathers the impressions,
the intellect assumes the form, and pure light makes that form known.

In this account consciousness does not labour or command. It is presence alone—a silent witness, an inactive
radiance. Yet without it the entire mental machinery would remain only an unlit thing.

Here the deepest difficulty begins. If one principle is wholly inactive and the other wholly unconscious, if
they are so radically distinct, how does the drama of experience ever begin between them?

A parable may be offered: one traveller cannot walk, another cannot see; together they cross the forest. But a parable cannot take the place of an answer. The knot that binds utterly different principles remains difficult.

Living philosophy does not curtain off its hardest questions. It admits that a beautiful system may still contain a crack, and to see the crack is not to insult the system but to practise intellectual honesty. Whether consciousness is many or one becomes another dispute. Each body has its own experience, birth and death, its own moral disposition; from these differences many witnesses may be inferred, but even that does not end the question.

If the witness is beyond the body, all-pervading and inactive, where does one all-pervading witness end and another begin? To speak of many witnesses that are each omnipresent and utterly separate is itself a difficult riddle.

Still, a simple fact of experience remains:

we do not feel like mere objects. Experience always seems to contain a pole of seeing. And the outer world is not simply a dream of the mind either—it resists us, answers us, pushes back.

For this reason a one-sided materialism and a one-sided idealism may both seem incomplete. Say 'only matter' and the light of experience is left unexplained; say 'only consciousness' and the hardness of stone, the pain of hunger, the laws of the body cannot be erased as dreams.

The two poles must therefore be honoured:

seer and seen, witness and appearance, consciousness and nature. They do not dissolve into one another, yet they stand together in the field of experience.

Three roads to knowledge open here—perception, inference, reliable testimony. The eye gives what it can, within its limits; smoke allows the inference of fire,

by a rule; and where neither perception nor inference is sufficient, experienced speech may guide—but only under the scrutiny of discernment.

Testimony is not true merely because a prestigious voice speaks it. A statement becomes trustworthy when it can endure reason, experience and the test of life. Authority should rest upon truth; authority itself is not the cause of truth.

Perception itself has two layers. First comes a raw touch of presence—colour, shape, sound before a name. Then the mind classifies: 'this is a flower', 'this is red', 'this is familiar'.

A child seeing the world for the first time may encounter an unordered tide of sound and colour. Language arrives and draws boundaries around things, gives names, creates recognition. These names are useful; they are not therefore the final truth of the thing.

The same flower will be seen differently by an artist,

physician, farmer, merchant and child. A changed viewpoint does not make the object false; reality has many aspects, and experience takes shape according to the aspect attention selects.

Knowledge, then, is not merely a copy of what is outside. It is also an act of inner selection. What we see is formed by the qualities of the thing and the condition of the observer together. This does not make truth a private fantasy, but it does require humility about our angle of vision.

Many viewpoints collide,

yet even collision presupposes a shared ground. Where experiences were wholly unrelated, disagreement itself would be impossible. Beneath dispute there remains some common world, seen from different angles.

Then arises the question of a supreme maker. If the world requires an eternal, immutable director in order to move, directing is itself an activity—and what can activity mean without change?

Where there is causation there is relation;

where relation, some kind of effect. If a wholly unmoving being becomes a cause, its immobility seems compromised. If it produces no effect, the word 'cause' becomes little more than an honorific title.

The immense presence of suffering raises another question. If one assumes a director who is perfectly compassionate and perfectly capable, disease, violence, disaster and undeserved pain are not easily reconciled with such a plan.

And if perfect being is truly complete,

why should it need anything? Would the desire to create not suggest some lack? Such questions need not insult faith; their purpose is to expose the pressure points of reasoning.

There is courage in trying to understand the world through powers within nature itself: form, movement, disrupted equilibrium, the long chain of cause and effect. In place of an invisible director stands nature as its own dynamic ground.

Yet nature is not conscious. That is why the witness is kept distinct. The outer world changes by its own laws; the inner light sees it, while remaining outside the machinery of action.

Bondage, then, is not that the two are literally chained together. It is false identification: the witness mistakes itself for the movements of mind, body and ego. 'I am unhappy.' 'I succeeded.' 'I was insulted.' 'This body is mine.' The knot tightens here.

Pain belongs to the body, feeling to the mind,
 judgement to the intellect. If the pure witness differs from all these, bondage is not an iron chain attached to
 a thing but a confusion of identity.
 An actor has entered a role so deeply that after leaving the stage he forgets his own name. The king's grief
 feels his, the beggar's fear his, the wounds of war his. Liberation does not destroy the role; it is the
 remembering: 'I am not the role.'
 If this remains only an intellectual sentence,
 it changes little. The senses are turbulent,
 desire keeps demanding,
 ego turns every event into its own story. For the light of discernment to become steady, balance of mind and
 discipline of character are required.
 Let the senses settle, desire cease to command,
 the intellect become transparent. Then the inner mirror trembles less, the distinction grows clearer, and the
 difference between witness and scene may become lived experience rather than merely a lesson.
 Liberation is not a place in the future—
 not the geography of heaven,
 not a ticket beyond death. If the witness is free by nature,
 freedom is true even now; when ignorance falls away, what was always so is recognised.
 In this sense liberation is not the acquisition of a new thing,
 but the ending of a mistake. A rope is mistaken for a snake and fear arises; when light comes no new rope is
 created—the error disappears and what was there becomes clear.
 Freedom is possible even while the body lives. The body may hunger,
 fall ill, grow tired;
 waves may still rise in the mind. Yet the witness need not lose its identity entirely within those waves.
 This is liberation while living: action continues,
 the body continues, the world remains before us,
 but inward grasping weakens. Pleasure and pain come and go with less demand for ownership; experience
 occurs, yet the ignorance that says 'this alone is what I am' grows thinner.
 A more radical image of final separation follows:
 when even nature's subtlest coverings have ended,
 the witness is wholly free—no cycle of birth,
 no machinery of mind, no bondage through experience.
 But a practical question immediately returns:
 how is the curtain of confusion actually cut? A theory may draw the map; walking requires another
 discipline.
 At this turning the poem reaches another threshold:
 knowledge is the map,
 practice the feet. The distinction has been seen;
 what remains is the discipline through which it becomes stable in life.
 Yet among all these ideas the loveliest image may still be the mirror. The mirror is not itself the flower, has
 neither fragrance nor colour; but when light reaches it, the flower's form becomes clear.
 The intellect is the mirror, consciousness the light,
 the world the flower set before it. When the mirror is clouded,
 colour is distorted; when it steadies,
 the image clears. But the light is neither flower nor mirror. It is simply illumination.
 All our lives we recognise ourselves through the mirror's passing images: 'I am intelligent.' 'I am foolish.' 'I
 am beautiful.' 'I am a failure.' These are forms crossing the mirror, not permanent qualities of the light.
 If for even one moment this distinction enters the body,
 insult becomes a scratch upon the mirror,
 not upon the sky; success may brighten the image,
 but it cannot increase the light.
 Then the meaning of ego can change. 'Mine' remains useful grammar,
 not the final proclamation of being. We may work,
 plan, love—without mistaking the role for the witness.
 This distinction is not escape. Nature continues according to its laws. An ill body still requires treatment,
 social injustice still calls for action. To say 'I am the witness' and turn away from suffering would not be
 discernment but a new ignorance.
 True distinction does not cancel responsibility. On the contrary,
 when confusion in the mind lessens,
 action may become cleaner: less noise from prestige,
 a more direct response to what the situation actually asks.
 The three currents rise again within us—
 clarity, motion, heaviness. Sometimes the mind is lucid,

sometimes restless, sometimes dull. These are waves of nature:
 see them, recognise them, but do not make them the final self.
 Dullness today need not become the stone sentence 'I am lazy'. Restlessness today need not become 'I am
 always like this'. Even peace will pass. The witness lies beyond the names of the waves.
 Such a view can offer a form of psychological freedom. Qualities,
 feelings, habits and thoughts are changeable;
 whatever changes need not be turned into the prison of 'my unchangeable nature'.
 And still a caution remains. If the witness is declared wholly inactive and thereby cut off from the ethical
 complexity of life, the question 'then who acts?' returns with new force.
 The greatness of philosophy lies not only in its answers but also in the questions it is willing to place beneath
 the foundations of its own house. A system that can show us its own difficulty remains more alive.
 In this house nature is immensely rich:
 primordial energy, the three currents, intellect,
 ego, mind, senses, subtle elements,
 the solid world. On the other side stand the quiet, unmoving, many witnesses.
 Between them unfolds the drama of the whole cosmos. One dances and one sees; one changes and one
 remains still; one is object, the other the possibility of pure experience.
 The poet sees the scene as a stage:
 the dancer finally grows still when the spectator recognises that the dance was displayed before him, that he
 himself was never the dance.
 The final moment of knowledge may not be applause but silence. The dancer, her work complete, disappears
 behind the curtain; the spectator remains alone—not sorrowful, not delighted, only free.
 But life is still on the stage. So clean the mirror,
 discipline the senses, keep reason awake,
 test testimony, know the limits of viewpoint,
 do not flee the difficult question.
 And whenever the word 'I' reaches the tongue,
 ask inwardly for a moment:
 this body? this feeling? this position? this memory? Or something that sees all these, yet cannot itself be made
 into an object among them?
 The answer cannot be completed in words. But the question itself loosens the fist and opens, beyond the
 mirror, the possibility of a quiet light.

A Still Sky Within the Breath

The first lesson begins with the body:

spine upright, breath listened to,
feet upon the earth. Yet the body is not the final destination. It is a doorway beyond which the mind's
ceaseless crowd slowly lowers its voice, and the sky within is heard clearly for the first time.

All day the mind runs from one object to another:

a memory, a desire, a fear, an insult,
a plan. We think that we are thinking,
yet sometimes it is as though the thoughts themselves are thinking us.

Discipline is not a whip laid across this running. At first it is only seeing: where did the mind go, after what,
and why? Then, with a hand gentle but firm, bringing it back again to a single point.

The body's steadiness can become the mind's first support. A body forever trembling with discomfort,
lethargy, or agitation gives deep attention little ground on which to stand. Posture, then, is not an
exhibition of beauty. It is preparation.

Breath is the second doorway. It moves by itself,
yet when watched with awareness it becomes a bridge between body and mind. Quick breath carries the
shadow of restlessness; deep, even breath can soften the waves within.

The senses are forever being tugged toward the marketplace outside. Colour, taste, touch, news, praise, fear
—each calls, 'Look at me.' Practice does not close the outer world. It only weakens its claim to command us
without question.

A moment comes when the ear hears sound,
yet the mind is not sound's servant. The eye sees form,
yet form does not instantly become desire. The senses continue their work, while the centre within learns to
choose its own direction.

The first stage of gathering the mind is difficult. Choose one thought—the mind runs away. Bring it back. It
runs again. Bring it back again. This is not failure. The returning itself is the true muscle of practice.

Slowly the scattered streams become a river. Attention ceases to be merely the effort to hold a point and
becomes an unbroken flow, the mind moving in one direction without the labour of being dragged back
every moment.

Yet even here a fine wall remains:

'I am meditating.' 'I am seeing.' 'I am succeeding.' The object stands before us, but the observer's awareness of
itself hangs between like a transparent curtain.

When even this curtain grows thin,
the language of experience alters. The object is no longer merely 'seen by me'; it seems to reveal itself in its
own form. For a moment, the distances among seer, seeing, and seen can begin to dissolve.

This union is not sleep. It is not unconsciousness,
not a darkness of thought. It is, rather,
an extreme clarity of waking,
in which the mind comments less and the presence of the thing itself grows brighter.

Place a clear crystal beside a red flower and it takes on redness without losing its transparency. So too a
concentrated mind may take the form of what it attends to without coating it in needless distortion.

Ordinary knowledge is woven from words, memory,
comparison, inference. This net is useful;

without it, science, language,
and practical life would collapse. Yet sometimes the net grows so dense that we see our concepts more clearly
than the thing itself.

The discipline makes a bold claim:

can the mind become so quiet that,
for a little while, the names, fears,
and desires already laid upon an object fall away, and experience approaches the first instant before concept
hardens around it?

The truth of such a claim cannot be fully settled by debate. Just as reading descriptions cannot give the whole
taste of music, knowledge of meditative states requires, at least in part, practice. A map is not the journey
made by feet.

Yet practice does not ask for blind belief. Body,
breath, mind, attention—

each stage can be tested in experience. See what is actually there. Notice what changes. If something proves
mistaken, acknowledge the error.

The search for truth is not separate from character. Violence,
falsehood, theft, limitless accumulation,
undisciplined desire—

these leave a thousand unfinished accounts within the mind, and concentration trembles like a boat upon
choppy water.

Nonviolence is not merely restraining the hand; it is also watching the mind's appetite for revenge. Truth is not only accurate speech, but honesty before one's own illusions. Non-possession is not merely owning fewer things, but loosening mental ownership—'my thought,' 'my victory.'

Cleanliness is more than bathing. It includes the cleansing of surroundings, food, speech, memory, intention. Contentment is not surrender to defeat, but a pause in the machinery of endless wanting. Discipline is not self-punishment, but steady fidelity to a chosen direction.

Without this ethical preparation, concentration can become power without wisdom. Sharp attention in the hands of greed can make deception more efficient. The technique of the mind therefore asks first: toward what kind of life is this power being trained?

Some imagine a highest ideal—perfect knowledge, perfect freedom, compassion without limit. That ideal need not be the sole maker of the universe. It may function like a northern star, reminding the seeker both of limitation and possibility.

Surrender in this sense is not slavery. It is the loosening of the ego's constant voice—'I alone am the doer'—and the willingness to stand before an ideal that exposes our incompleteness and teaches humility.

Yet the path is not reserved for the devotional. Someone may walk through discipline, attention, and discernment without imagining any supreme person at all. The techniques of liberation are not locked behind a single form of belief.

In this openness shines a distinctive generosity:

the same practice can enter different metaphysical houses. The language of the goal may change, even the final philosophy may differ, while restraint of the senses, meditation, character, and self-examination remain shared steps.

This common ground offers a lesson of its own:

disagreement about doctrine does not erase the value of practice. Some causes of human suffering can be recognised even across metaphysical boundaries.

To speak of stilling the mind's modifications can sound like harsh control. But the purpose is not to turn the mind into stone. It is to lessen enslavement to uncontrolled waves, so that consciousness may recognise its own light.

An ocean without waves is not dead. When the waves grow quiet, the ocean is seen more clearly. The mind's movements are not enemies in themselves. Trouble begins when every wave declares itself to be the whole sky.

Anger rises, and we say, 'I am angry.' Fear rises, and we come close to saying, 'I am fear.' Practice answers: see the wave, name it,

let it pass. Do not measure the entire ocean by one wave.

At the beginning, the body, breath, a symbol,

a sound, a form may serve as an anchor. Gradually the support becomes subtler, until the mind is able to observe the finest tremors of its own activity.

As concentration deepens,

the claim made by knowledge changes too. Ordinary intelligence understands outward qualities, relations, measurements, uses. Meditation suggests that some truths open not from distance, but through an intimacy of presence.

This 'nearness' is not sentimental merging. It is an attention in which fewer old interpretations are imposed upon the subject: seeing as in an impartial laboratory, except that the laboratory is consciousness itself.

Someone may ask whether such knowledge is higher than scientific knowledge. The answer need not be a simple ranking. Science works through public methods, repetition, measurement. Meditation works inwardly and depends upon training.

There is no need to turn either into a copy of the other. One investigates external structure; the other the conditions of experience. One refines instruments outside us; the other attempts to refine the instrument that is the mind itself.

But inward experience is not true merely because one says,

'I experienced it.' Illusion is possible in meditation too. Character, long practice, reasoning, comparison, teachers, tradition—all may help reduce the risk of self-deception.

Stories of extraordinary states can be seductive:

unusual perception, subtle knowledge, powers, astonishing concentration. Yet if power becomes the goal, ego returns wearing a new robe.

Along the path of freedom,

accomplishments can glitter like a market. Whoever stops there may mistake the means for the destination. The truer question is simpler: has greed diminished? Has fear diminished? Has the knot of identity loosened? Has consciousness become clearer?

In the deepest concentration even the seed of an external object may fall away. No outward subject, no chosen sign remains; consciousness approaches the limit at which it seems to become its own field of attention.

Words must move carefully here. The moment we define 'pure subjectivity' as though it were an object, we place it again upon the mind's table and turn the seer into something seen.

That is why the language of final experience often proceeds by negation: not merely this body, not this thought, not this desire, not this ego. Whatever remains is difficult to seize in the final net of concepts. Freedom here does not erase external circumstances. The body remains in the world; causes continue to work; actions bear consequences. What can be severed is the bondage of mistaken identification within. An actor plays a role yet knows inwardly that the stage is larger than the part. So life can continue while consciousness no longer mistakes itself for the whole story of body and mind. Action remains, but grasping lessens; experience remains, but servitude lessens.

Care is needed so that this 'detachment' does not become indifference. If freedom turns its eyes away from another's suffering, something has gone wrong. A quieter consciousness may offer clearer compassion, not less.

The eight streams of practice enter one river:

ethical restraint, personal discipline,
steadiness of the body, rhythm of breath,
withdrawal from the tyranny of the senses, concentration, unbroken meditation, and the transparent absorption in which self-consciousness falls silent.

These eight are not sealed rooms. Truthful speech makes meditation easier. Even breath softens anger. Less greed lightens the mind. Deep attention can, in turn, sharpen ethical awareness.

Practice is therefore a circular ascent. Each part nourishes another and is nourished in return. The human being works simultaneously upon body, ethics, psychology, and knowledge.

The same question is newly alive in our own age. Screens break attention every moment; information turns the sensory marketplace endless. Concentration is no longer only a spiritual luxury. It has become a question of mental self-rule.

If every piece of information can purchase our attention,
who owns the mind? Where advertising, anger,
fear, and entertainment continually decide our direction,
the withdrawal of attention begins to carry a political meaning as well.

Returning to the breath can become a small act of resistance:

a few moments without a screen, without reaction,
without an instant answer. The mind relearns that the arrival of stimulation does not make response compulsory.

Within that pause, freedom is born. One breath between insult and reply. One breath between desire and purchase. One breath between fear and decision.

Perhaps the whole discipline does nothing more mysterious than widen this small space: the aware interval between stimulus and action, where the mind can answer through discernment rather than habit.

Liberation may sound like a distant philosophical word,
yet its seed can be felt in a single breath—
where desire is not an order, fear is not king,
anger is not the driver.

In the end, practice is not war against the body. The body is an ally; breath is an ally; the senses are horses that can be trained; the mind is not an enemy but an astonishing instrument that needs discipline.

And consciousness—perhaps it is not the charioteer pulling at the reins, but the light by whose presence the whole journey becomes visible. When that light recognises itself, the meaning of the road changes.

One day meditation ends and the eyes open. The room is the same,
the street the same, the people the same,
the unfinished world the same. Yet there is a little more space within, a little more silence before reaction.

If practice yields only this much—
one less violent word, one less greedy decision,
one more attentive breath, one clearer act of seeing—
then philosophy has already risen from the page and entered life.

And if, at some moment,

an utterly quiet mind touches an unimagined light beyond the ordinary distance between seer and seen, the first test after returning will again be daily life.

Has the ego become lighter? Has compassion grown deeper? Has fear lessened? Has freedom increased?

If the answer is yes,

then the still sky glimpsed within the breath will not remain a private mystery. It will live on as a new rhythm in speech, action, relationship, and the world.

Each Particle Has Its Own Face

Seen from a distance,
the world may look like a cloth woven in a single colour. Move closer, and every thread has its own texture, its own touch, its own place. Beneath the appearance of sameness, multiplicity quietly endures, each thing bearing a face of its own.

There is a pot, a stone, a human being, a scent,
a movement, a memory. It is easy to pour them all into the same bag of words, but reality is a spacious city of differing things, qualities, actions, relations, and absences.

Some things seem to stand as supports in themselves,
while qualities rest upon them and actions occur through them. Redness does not float alone in the air; taste is always the taste of something; movement too is the movement of something. Qualities and actions therefore ask for some bearer, some ground.

Yet these grounds are not all of one kind. Some bodies come together, break apart, and assume other forms. A subtler imagination searches beneath them for final particles that cannot be broken further, enduring beneath visible change.

Break a stone and there are fragments;
break a fragment and there are smaller pieces;
continue, and there is dust. The mind asks:

can division continue for ever, or must there come a final point at which 'smaller still' ceases to mean anything?

If division had no end,

a mustard seed and a mountain would alike contain infinitely many pieces. How then would their difference in size be understood? From this question arises the thought of invisible, indivisible first particles.

These particles are imagined not merely as numbers,

but as bearers of qualities. The difference between water and earth does not appear from nowhere in the visible world; perhaps the seed of difference already lies at the most subtle level.

Two particles meet,

then many more. Shape arises from conjunction. Yet 'being together' and 'becoming one whole thing' are not identical. A book may rest upon a table without becoming a part of the table.

Some relations are external:

they exist today and may vanish tomorrow. Others are so intimate that, once severed, the thing itself is destroyed. The form of a pot is so bound to its parts that, when they are scattered, the pot is gone.

Relation itself may therefore belong to reality. We usually notice things and overlook the bonds between them, yet many things possess their wholeness only through relation.

A house is not a heap of bricks. A sentence is not a heap of words. A society is not a heap of persons. There is an inward connectedness without which the whole would remain only a name.

Then the question of the general and the particular opens. One horse, another horse: the two are distinct, yet one word names them both. Is the sameness only in the word, or is some shared form truly present in both?

Language sometimes groups things merely for convenience,

but at other times behind a group there seems to be a common quality that does not feel like a fiction of the mind. Yet if that common form is real, how does it abide in each individual?

'Human being' is a general name,

but every human being has a singular face. Commonality and individuality do not erase one another.

Perhaps the many-coloured texture of the world lies precisely between these two directions.

One flower resembles another and yet is not that other flower. One particle may share qualities with another and still remain numerically distinct. Final difference may therefore lie not only in differing qualities, but in the sheer fact of this thing being this very thing.

Without this 'thisness',

multiplicity would become empty counting. If everything were completely identical, on what ground could we say 'two'? Individuality here is not ego; it is the unique signature of existence.

Space too may be thought of as something real though unseen,

making direction possible. Here, there, near,

far: these are not merely words. They suggest an immeasurable expanse without which the experience of place would be incomplete.

Time likewise is more than the hand of a clock. New and old,
before and after, rest upon a deeper order. A clock measures time,
but time is not imprisoned inside a clock.

Yet we ourselves divide space and time into parts. East and west,

hour and minute are useful cuts made for human life. Infinite extension and succession need not be divided according to these human compartments in themselves.

For sound, one may imagine a subtle supporting medium;

for the mind, an inward faculty that selects among the contacts of the senses; and for self-awareness, a bearer of the experience expressed in the words, 'I am sorrowful.'

The special work of mind is selection. The eye meets the flower, the ear the music, the skin the air, all at once; yet consciousness at any moment generally rests more clearly upon one side than the others. The senses may touch their objects without knowledge arising immediately. The mind attends, filters, joins; then recognition appears as 'this red flower'. Between raw sensation and conscious knowledge there is a subtle work of ordering.

Knowledge is therefore not the work of the eye alone. Perception, mind, concept, and recognition together make an object present as 'this'. Yet the outer world is not merely an image manufactured by us; it resists independently.

We do not invent the colour of the flower. The hardness of stone answers our body in its own way. The world does not alter its form at the wish of our mind. Here the independence of reality stands firm.

Two principal doors of knowledge open:

perception and inference. What is before us,

see directly; what is not directly present,

understand through signs and relations: from a sound infer an unseen source, from direction infer place, from an effect infer a cause.

Comparison and testimony may also rest,

in the end, upon experience and inference. A statement is not true merely because someone has uttered it.

Speech needs the ground of experience; the house of knowledge tries to stand not on trust alone, but on examination.

A striking thought returns to cause and effect:

the pot does not lie hidden in wood already as a finished pot. When causes come together, an actually new wholeness may arise.

Novelty is not merely a change of name. When two particles combine,

what comes into being is not only an arithmetic addition of the two. A whole may acquire a new quality, a new relation, a new mode of existence.

On this view, creation resembles the art of rearrangement. Basic elements persist, yet a changed combination gives rise to a new thing; earlier causes together may produce an effect that none of them displayed in isolation.

Then attention turns to 'not' —

one of philosophy's most unusual acts of courage. We generally treat only what is present as real, yet when we see an empty chair we directly understand, 'No one is here.'

Absence is not mere air;

it is a real difference in experience. Before a pot is made,

there is the absence of that pot; after it is broken,

the absence returns. A chair is not a flower; a circle is not a square. Negation too is a tool for understanding the world.

But absolute nothingness never appears in experience. Whenever we say 'there is nothing', something else is still present. Negation is always the negation of something; absence depends upon an expectation of what is missing.

This thought deepens language. 'Not' is not an empty word but a form of relation. Where an expected thing is absent, that absence too can become an object of knowledge.

In life as well, absence can be powerful. The empty chair at the table, the beloved no longer in the house, the letter that never arrives: sometimes 'is not' carries more weight than 'is'.

To give absence a place in the inventory of reality is to acknowledge the subtlety of human experience. The world is made not only of things, but also of spaces between things and of negations.

Yet making an inventory is not the final aim. Thing,

quality, action, universal, particular,

relation, absence: these are the grammar of reality. The question is what such careful classification does to life.

If knowledge is only a map,

where is liberation? The answer turns again towards the ethical and spiritual. Through confusion we take body, mind, desire, and sensation to be the whole of the self.

From identification comes desire, from desire action,

from action fresh bondage. Good action bears fruit and bad action bears fruit; the web of consequences draws the person again into the cycle of becoming. The question, then, is not only how to obtain good fruit, but finally how to pass beyond action driven by attachment to fruit.

Liberation here is not the largest possible amount of pleasure. Pleasure and pain are both qualities of experience, both mutable. If bondage is rooted in craving for experience, ultimate freedom may be a peace beyond the pair.

Such peace may sound severe. 'Liberation without joy?' the mind asks. Yet the thought answers that where pain is impossible, the opposing category of pleasure may likewise no longer apply.

A bold claim follows:

consciousness itself need not be an eternal quality of the self. When the relation between body and mind

ends, the condition of experience may also end. The liberated self is imagined as bare existence, retaining its distinctness yet without sensation.

At once a serious difficulty arises. If all qualities have fallen away, how does individuality remain? If many selves are infinite and all-pervading, what distinguishes one from another?

Here the theory exposes its own limit. It wants individuality,

yet removes the qualities by which individuality is marked;

it wants infinity and multiplicity together. The two claims remain in tension.

That tension keeps philosophy alive. A system may be lucid,

but it is equally important to see the impossible turn on a lucid map. To hide contradiction is devotion; to open it and examine it is thought.

For the moral ordering of the world,

the idea of a supreme regulator also enters. The basic particles,

time, space, and selves are already there;

the supreme power does not create from nothing, but governs motion, sequence, the fruition of action, and the recombination through which the world-cycle proceeds.

Yet if the law of action is already firm,

how much work remains for the regulator? If the regulator is bound by law, what becomes of supreme power? If utterly transcendent, how does such a power come near enough to aid living beings in their suffering?

These questions are not meant to destroy faith,

but to test the reach of concepts. At times the idea of God may remain an explanatory addition, while the religious longing of the mind asks for something more intimate: love, response, nearness.

Plurality is the governing note of this vision of reality. Some would gather the whole world into one substance, others into one consciousness. Here the answer is that many kinds of realities may possess existence in their own ways.

Matter is real, mind is real, self is real;

time, space, relation are real; common form is real,

individual difference is real,

and absence too can be an object of knowledge. The world is not one note, but a difficult plural.

Plurality has an ethical meaning as well. If every thing has its own singular existence, the world is not a warehouse of interchangeable objects waiting merely for our use.

One particle differs from another,

one person from another. A shared name does not erase individuality. Difference, therefore, is not a defect; it belongs to the fundamental grammar of existence.

And shared form is necessary too. If every thing were wholly unrelated to every other, knowledge, language, and science would be impossible. We recognise likeness, form classes, seek general laws.

Reality therefore extends in two directions:

commonality and uniqueness. See only the common form and the individual disappears; see only the individual and the world breaks into unrelated grains of experience.

Relation joins the two. Some relations are accidental,

others integral to existence. Some may end while the thing remains;

some, when broken, destroy the very identity of the thing.

Our lives are like this. Some identities are clothes that can be changed; some relations are so deep that when they break, an earlier 'I' ends and another form is born.

This is why philosophical classification need not be a dry list. It can teach us to ask: what is the bearer here, what the quality, what the action, what a temporary conjunction, what a deep relation, what is shared, what unique, what absent?

These distinctions matter in suffering. At times we suffer because we take a temporary relation to be eternal.

At times we take a quality to be the whole person: 'He is angry, therefore he is anger itself.'

If a quality rests in a bearer and the bearer exceeds the quality,

then today's anger is not the entire person. Today's sorrow,

pleasure, desire are conditions,

not final existence.

This image can nourish psychological compassion. There is an immense difference between saying, 'You are like this at this moment,' and saying, 'You will always be like this.' A characteristic may describe; it need not become a prison.

Absence too can become a language of healing. 'No anger' is not merely a blank; it may become the space in which another possibility appears. Where fear is absent, calm may grow; where greed is absent, sharing may begin.

Negation can therefore have a creative side in life. When something falls away, something else may become visible: less noise, and music; less accumulation, and space; less ego, and relation.

At last the vast inventory of the world returns to a small room. A cup upon the table, water in the cup, the taste of water, the movement of a hand, space in the room, time on the clock, attention in the mind, and within it the experience of 'I'.

How many layers in a single moment. How many kinds of 'is':
qualities, actions, shared forms, singularities,
relations, absences.

Perhaps philosophy is not merely a desire to write names upon this complexity. It is a discipline of caution:
do not hurry to compress the world into one formula, for every particle has its own face, and behind every
face stands an entire city of relations.

And when we look upon another human being,
let us practise seeing, before the general name,
the singularity; before the quality,
the wider bearer; before the present action, the larger existence.

Then plural reality will no longer remain only metaphysics. It will become humility: a world in which many
kinds of 'is' live together, and the work of knowledge is not to erase any of them, but to see clearly while
preserving their differences.

The Fire Beyond the Smoke

Smoke rises from the mountain ridge,
but the fire itself is not before the eye. In that distance thought takes its first step: how may what is unseen be sought reliably through a sign that has been seen?

The search for truth must not be only an impulse of belief. Which path is sound, which reason valid, which example truly fits? The question must first be asked of the method, and only afterwards of the conclusion. Human beings often choose the answer first and look for arguments later. To avoid that reversed journey, thought examines its own feet: Why do I believe this? What is my ground? What does the opposing position actually say?

Debate has many faces. One conversation seeks to reach truth;
another seeks only victory;
a third merely tries to pull down the person standing opposite without building any house of its own.

Tricks of language too can wear the robes of reason:
shifting the meaning of a word, playing upon ambiguity,
making an irrelevant comparison,
or offering as a cause something that merely resembles one.

For this reason the ethics of thought begins with language. Hear an opponent's statement in the meaning in which it was made; do not defeat a weakened puppet of it. Victory is honourable only when truth has not been made to lose.

Beneath this way of thinking lies a firm confidence in the independence of the world. The rose is red not because I wish to see red; the qualities of things may possess an existence beyond the desires of my mind. Yet 'truth' and 'the means by which truth is tested' are not the same. What a thing is does not depend upon my success in knowing it; but when my belief about it is sound, repeated engagement with the world can confirm that belief.

If I take sand for water and try to drink,
failure exposes the illusion. If I mistake a road and walk in the wrong direction, the distance grows. Life itself can become a laboratory in which thought receives its verdict.

Four doors of knowledge open. One is direct encounter with the thing itself; one infers the unseen from a sign; one recognises the unfamiliar through likeness; one receives indirect knowledge through trustworthy testimony.

The first door, perception, seems the simplest,
yet even it is not simple. The eye receives colour,
the ear sound; but without the selecting activity of mind,
sensation may remain merely a crowd.

At first there may be only the flash of colour,
the hint of shape, the raw touch of sound. Then the mind adds name,
class, relation and recognition: 'This is red';
'this is a fruit'; 'this is the same thing I saw yesterday.'

Sensation supplies the material;
conception gives it form. Bare experience without order is a blind multitude, while conception without experience is an empty vessel.

Even so, the two stages are difficult to isolate in actual life. Wherever something is seen, there is already background, distinction and selection; the instant we say 'this', the shadow of 'not that' arrives with it.

Perception also turns inward. Desire, pain,
memory, resolve: none of these is seen by the outer eye,
yet each appears through an inner contact of mind.

Past associations can colour the present moment. At the sight of a flower the memory of fragrance may rise; at the sight of ice the feeling of cold. One sense opens a door and memory carries into the room the air of another chamber.

At times a human being also claims a kind of perception beyond the ordinary senses. Such a claim is difficult to establish by common experience, yet tradition may preserve it as an extreme possibility of human consciousness.

Then comes the mountain of inference. Smoke is seen,
fire is not; yet a repeatedly observed connection from the past allows the smoke to become a weighty sign of an unseen flame.

Inference is not merely 'it occurred to me'. A stable relation is required between the sign and that which it signifies: where there is smoke, fire; and where fire is absent, smoke of that kind absent as well. The relation must survive examination.

Examples give the argument a body. A torch in which smoke and fire are found together; a place where neither is present. Reason does not walk with a naked universal alone; the evidence of the world accompanies it.

A conclusion may follow perfectly from its premises and still fail to be true because the premises themselves are false. Valid structure and actual truth are different questions: one concerns the shape of the argument, the other whether its starting points meet the world.

From this distinction humility is born. A beautiful argument is not a guarantee of truth. Glittering language, flawless form, mathematical brilliance: all may build a palace upon bad ground.

Thought therefore returns again to the world. Look, measure, test, then examine the feet of the conclusion. A circle may be perfect on paper while the path of life bends unevenly through the field.

This tradition refuses to treat logic as a game of words alone. The form of thought and the material of the world are not separate islands; general rules grow out of the long field of experience.

To say 'all human beings are mortal' is not merely a play of symbols. It is a general understanding raised from innumerable particular experiences; from that general understanding thought returns to a conclusion about a particular human being.

Reason therefore forms a bridge from the particular to the general and from the general back to the particular. It travels neither only upward nor only downward, but moves between the two, carrying experience and form together at every step.

In this respect the method can seem close to science:

learn a rule from the world,

use the rule to understand a new event,

and if the new event challenges the rule, examine the rule again.

Comparison opens the third door. Someone has never seen an unfamiliar animal and is told: it is like a donkey, but striped. When the creature is finally encountered, likeness helps join the word to the object.

Here knowledge is knowledge of a relation between name and thing. Similarity is the bridge, but only when one bank is already known; comparing the wholly unknown with the wholly unknown reveals nothing.

The fourth door is trustworthy speech. We cannot see everything ourselves: distant countries, microscopic life, events long past, specialised knowledge. Human life necessarily depends upon testimony.

But the worth of testimony rests less upon prestige than upon trustworthiness. It must be intelligible, sincere and able to withstand examination. Speech becomes a means of knowledge only when trust does not harden into blind surrender.

Human speech remains finite and fallible. Some traditions imagine an omniscient source in order to secure an infallible word; yet even then, in practical life, reliability still demands questions of meaning, interpretation and discernment.

Behind these four doors stands a confidence:

the world is knowable. Error exists,

but the possibility of error does not abolish the possibility of truth.

Mistaking a rope for a snake is an error;

but the error does not mean that neither rope nor snake exists. Error is possible precisely because something real has been misidentified.

Doubt too is a stage of knowledge. When two possibilities rise with equal force, the mind pauses. That pause is not useless if it becomes the beginning of inquiry.

But if doubt becomes a permanent dwelling,

the journey ends. A question should open a door,

not make us sit forever upon the threshold. Decision becomes justified when valid means of knowing, reasoning and experience converge toward clarity.

The inventory of reality widens again: body,

senses, mind, sensation, desire, action,

pleasure and pain, and an inner ground regarded as the bearer of consciousness, desire and knowledge.

This self is not the body,

for bodily qualities are physical. Nor is mind itself the self,

for mind is treated as a subtle instrument. To know,

to desire, to suffer: these experiences point toward a subject to whom they occur.

Yet another startling claim appears:

consciousness itself need not be the eternal essence of that self. Consciousness manifests in the conjunction of body and mind, while in the liberated state the self is imagined as beyond even conscious qualities. The claim is difficult and deliberately so.

Here the system invites its own severe questions. If the liberated self is without qualities, how does its individuality remain? If there are many selves and each is all-pervading, by what criterion are they distinguished?

The value of philosophical honesty appears again. If a system hides its tensions, belief may win while thought loses. If questions are left open, there remains room for the next generation to think.

The story of bondage is more familiar:

mistaken identification with body and mind,

then desire; from desire action;

from action consequence; from consequence renewed birth and the revolving cycle of pleasure and pain.

Knowledge is the instrument that cuts this knot. But knowledge is not merely the reading of a book. First one hears, then understands through reasoning and experience, and finally verifies in one's own life what has been understood.

Another person's words may be a borrowed lamp,
but liberation cannot be completed in borrowed light. A moment must come when what has been understood descends into one's own experience.

For this reason intellectual discipline and contemplative practice need not be enemies. Reason clears false ideas; inward insight carries understood truth into deeper layers of existence.

Liberation is not merely a reward postponed until after death. While life continues, the knot of false identification can already loosen. If knowledge works only beyond death, its claim upon the truth of present life remains incomplete.

The idea of ending the cycle of action is austere. Not only wrongful deeds but action bound to the desire for fruit can become seeds of bondage. Complete freedom is imagined as a state beyond both pleasure and pain. Then the question of a supreme regulator enters. How do subtle particles by themselves form structures of astonishing order? How can an impersonal law of action distribute moral results to persons?

One answer imagines intelligent ordering. The basic materials already exist; the laws already exist. The supreme being is not a creator out of nothing but an arranger, director, giver of motion.

Yet this answer carries limits within it. If laws bind that regulator, how absolute is the power? If the basic elements are beginningless, the meaning of 'creation' must itself be redefined.

A religious mind may say that without grace the highest knowledge is difficult. Humility, prayer and devotion may then assist the path. But reason continues to ask: how are grace and justice, action and freedom, to be related clearly?

The beauty of the debate lies in its refusal to close the door of questioning. Reason is not a god, but it is a sentinel. Faith is not a crime, but neither is it entitled to exemption from examination.

Most importantly, the aim of thought is not merely to win disputes. Right knowledge should reduce suffering, lessen confusion and lead toward freedom from the net of action. Logic utterly disconnected from the suffering of life risks becoming an incomplete art.

That is why the ethics of debate belongs to the project of liberation. False reasons, verbal tricks, intoxication with victory: these are not merely intellectual faults, but forms of attachment, ego and ignorance.

The search for truth becomes a discipline of character. It requires patience, the courage to hear an opponent, the humility to admit error, and the freedom to change one's mind when the evidence changes.

In today's digital world this discipline is even more urgent. One picture, one clip, one viral sentence - and the conclusion arrives instantly. Yet the old questions remain: What is the source? What is actually perceived?

Where does inference begin? How trustworthy is the testimony?

A rumour rises like smoke,

but not every smoke signifies fire. Sometimes a machine makes smoke, sometimes mist obscures the view, sometimes the scene itself has been staged. The reliable relation between sign and conclusion must first be established.

Logical validity is not enough either. A perfectly valid conclusion can proceed from a false premise. The intellectual vigilance of the digital age must remember this distinction every day.

Comparison too can mislead. 'This event is like that one' - but how deep is the resemblance, and how superficial? A bad analogy gives the mind a swift conclusion while carrying it farther from truth.

The problem of testimony has become a thousand times harder. Who is truly an expert? Who is trustworthy? Who is merely confident? The farther speech travels, the greater the responsibility it carries.

The ideal of a good argument returns:

first make the claim clear, then give the reason,

then the example, then show the relation,

then draw the conclusion. Do not deceive the listener; show the road so that another person may count the steps for themselves.

Such transparency in reasoning is also a democratic virtue. One who reveals the path to a conclusion treats the listener as a fellow thinker. One who merely commands asks for belief, not understanding.

Confidence in an independent reality teaches humility as well. My desire does not alter the object; truth has no duty to please me.

To discover that I was wrong is therefore not an insult. It is an encounter with the world's independence. To say 'I was mistaken' is not the defeat of knowledge but one of its victories.

At the end the mountain stands before us again. Smoke still rises. The eye sees smoke; the mind remembers the past; reasoning tests the relation.

We infer fire, yet we also know that a conclusion deserves respect because of its method, method because of its honesty, and honesty because of its final loyalty to truth.

If fire is found, knowledge has succeeded. If it is not,

revise the conclusion, test the rule,

enlarge experience. The dignity of reason lies not in rigidity but in its capacity for self-correction.

And if, through this continuous testing,
the mind comes to experience some deeper inner ground distinct from body, thought and desire, then the
journey of knowledge may extend from the outer mountain to inward liberation.
Searching for the fire beyond smoke,
the mind finally learns to see the smoke of its own delusions as well. And perhaps the most difficult fire of
truth is the one that burns away the fog of ego.

An Unnamed Light Behind Many Names

At the first dawn, human beings looked towards the sky,
heard the thunder of clouds, felt the heat of sunlight,
received the river's bounty, breathed the scent of grain,
feared illness, waited for rain - and composed songs in order to speak with every power upon which life
seemed to depend.

Those songs were not praise alone. They carried humility,
fear, hope and gratitude in one mingled voice. Health was desired,
food, strength, children, honour, safety;
between earthly life and unseen shelter, the human being built a bridge of words.

Slowly, ritual gathered around the words - when to speak them,
how to act, what to offer. Ceremony became a discipline of memory,
a shared rhythm of the community;
and the law of action reminded each person of obligations towards people, family and other living beings.
Yet every living rite conceals a danger within itself. What was a sign can become the goal; what was an aid to
remembrance can claim ownership of holiness. Then words, emptied of living experience, may become only
repeated sound.

The hands may complete every act while the heart is absent. The voice may pronounce each syllable flawlessly
while compassion waits outside. Institutions may grow immense while the quiet question within is slowly
lost.

At such a moment the garments of religion may remain while its breath grows thin. Mechanical action gives
the reassurance, 'I have done everything required.' Yet the inner being continues to ask, 'Has anything within
you changed?'

That question leads towards the silent path of the forest. Away from the crowd, the altar and the public act,
among the rustling of leaves, the human being begins to listen for the meaning behind the outward sign.
The solitude of the forest is not emptiness. It is a laboratory beyond outer noise. There, beneath the immense
sky, beside a small fire, with the breath suddenly clear, the question changes from 'What shall I offer?' to
'What shall I know?'

From action to meaning, from meaning to insight. The symbol says:

look beyond me. Fire says: do not see only flame;

understand transformation. The forest says:

the root is not only outside - descend until you find it within.

This inward turn does not make spiritual life inactive. It does not deny the worth of outward duty. It says
only: beyond the body of an action, seek its consciousness, its intention, its truth.

Again and again the ancient songs disclose a deep order. The sun rises in its time, the seasons return, seed
becomes shoot, birth becomes growth and decline - all seem to move within an unseen rhythm.

That rhythm is not merely the mathematics of nature. To speak truth and to act justly also appear to belong
to the same wider harmony, as though the law of the sky and the law of conscience were not wholly
strangers to one another.

The belief that the world is not chaotic noise gives the mind a certain steadiness. The movement of stars, the
cycle of rain, the birth and death of living beings, and the human choice between truth and falsehood are
heard within one moral and cosmic music.

Yet the notes of that music bear many names. One name belongs to radiance, another to wind, another to
water, another to dawn. Before each power, in the moment of invocation, the human being offers the
highest reverence.

Seen from outside, this may look like a crowd of gods. Yet the poetry within whispers another possibility:
perhaps the many faces belong to one unfathomable source; each name is a window, and the sky is larger
than any window.

When the mind praises one name as complete in that moment,
it need not mean that every other form of existence has been denied. Perhaps fullness flashes for an instant
through each form.

One sun is reflected in a thousand vessels of water. One reflection is crimson, another trembling light,
another a broken line. The reflections are many; the source of illumination is one.

From such an experience,

the language of many divinities can slowly become an intimation of unity. This and that are not necessarily
rivals, but forms of one unnamed truth; the names differ, the tones differ, yet the deep silence is one.

Unity here does not command diversity to disappear. It does not ask every flower to surrender its colour and
become the same. It is the recognition of one hidden light within every colour.

Living and non-living, moving and still,

known and unknown - all belong within a wider whole. Yet the whole is not exhausted by the visible world
alone.

It pervades the world and is nevertheless more than the world. The sea is present in every wave, yet no single
wave is the sea. Air is present in every breath, yet a single breath does not mark the boundary of air.

This thought gives religious imagination a new direction. The highest is not merely a distant throne; it is present in the nearest particle, and yet exceeds the sum of every particle.

Intimate and beyond - both at once. Light within the earth,
and beyond light an unnamed depth. The world exists within it,
yet the world is not its limit.

Then the question arises:

does the highest truth possess a human-like face? Can it be wholly confined by name, form, will, gender and story? At its boldest, the old poetry answers: no. Language grows tired here.

Another question follows:

what was there in the beginning? Existence? Non-existence? Darkness? Water? Emptiness? Desire? Question opens behind question, while the throne of certainty may remain unoccupied.

To confess that no one knows for certain is not the defeat of knowledge. Before the primordial mystery of creation, 'I do not know' may be one of philosophy's highest forms of humility.

Even the final knower may become a question. If there is one who sees all, does that one fully know the mystery of the beginning? Such daring doubt does not make faith small; it makes the arrogance of faith smaller.

If the unnamed truth may lie beyond words,
every name can be useful without being final;
every form can be a sign without becoming the whole body of truth.

This insight can save religion from hard boundaries. If no name is final, why must another's name become an enemy? If forms are many, different forms of worship may still share the same underlying mystery.

But tolerance does not mean erasing difference by saying,
'Everything is the same.' Difference belongs to real experience. Unity is the capacity to perceive relation within difference, not the imposition of sameness upon it.

The seeker of the forest returns to the town. He does not announce the abolition of ritual; he returns with a demand that the soul be restored to action.

Light the lamp, but let there be light within as well. Share food,
but do not make generosity an ornament of the ego. Speak the sacred words, but let their truth descend into life.

If religion's outer form is empty of compassion,
restraint, truth and friendship,
even holy sound becomes hollow. And if ordinary life is filled with these qualities, it becomes a silent ritual in itself.

This is the true drama of transition:

the mind that once asked for divine favour slowly begins to ask about the nature of reality; devotion that sought reward slowly becomes a thirst for knowledge.

From 'What will I receive?' to 'What is truth?' From 'Which rite succeeds?' to 'What kind of life is true?' From 'Which god is highest?' to 'What is the one behind the many names?'

These questions will give birth to the philosophical forests that follow. Yet their seeds are already present in the older poetic intuition: the world has order, unity inhabits diversity, and beyond every name waits an unnamed mystery.

The cosmic relation between truth and justice remains a difficult question even now. If nature moves according to law, where does human morality belong? The older vision answers that human truthfulness is not wholly separate from the rhythm of the cosmos.

This is not a scientific equation but a moral poem. Still,
it reminds the human being that falsehood is not merely a social tactic; it is an inward disturbance of order. Justice is not only a clause in law. It is the work of sustaining harmony in a shared world. Falsehood, greed and violence ultimately tear the web of relationship.

Therefore criticism of outward ritual is not hostility to ethics. Its purpose is precisely to prevent ethics from being buried beneath ritual; let symbols remain alive, but let human beings not become servants of symbols.

For a community, ritual preserves memory. Songs carry knowledge across generations, fire becomes a centre of gathering, mantra gives discipline. All these are valuable so long as they remain means of awakening.

The difficulty begins when the means declares itself the end. 'The right words were spoken, therefore all is well' - within that confidence the door of self-examination can quietly close.

Silence then returns as a corrective. For a while,
no words, no display of action - only breath,
sky, death and question,
in a place where pretence finds it hard to survive.

Death itself is the sternest forest. Wealth,

office, ceremony, prestige and name all stop at its boundary. There the mind asks, 'What is it that does not change? What is it that is present in all this?'

The answer may not come at once. Yet the gravity of the question can alter a life. The outward reward of action grows less important; inward truth grows more so.

The vision of unity also acquires a social meaning. If innumerable forms are joined within one wider life, to despise any one of them is not only to insult that form but to wound a manifestation of the whole.

Animal, tree, river,

human being – none is merely an object for use. The sacredness of the world is not confined within a temple. The earth itself becomes an extended altar whose protection is an ethical duty.

Yet to dismiss this depth as mere nature-worship would be too small. Nature here is not simply another item in a list of gods; it is a sign of unity, an invisible relation within visible diversity.

Nor is it enough to say 'unity' and stop with the world itself as ultimate. The wider truth is within the world, yet there is also mystery beyond the world. This double direction makes the thought subtle: nearness and transcendence at once.

The words may sound difficult,

but the experience is simple. Love is present in the face of the beloved, yet love is not exhausted by one face.

Music is present in one song, yet music is not the prisoner of that song.

So the highest meaning can appear in one form without any one form becoming its entire prison.

Manifestation and transcendence need not be enemies.

Here poetry becomes philosophy's first language. Before dry definition come image, question and wonder, because what language cannot entirely grasp, poetry can still indicate.

Thus the discussion of the highest truth first rose in song before it hardened into argument. Song can hold contrary meanings together: one and many, near and beyond, named and unnamed.

Poetry can say, 'All this is That,

' and in the same breath,

'That is more than all this.' Logic immediately asks for boundaries, but experience sometimes hears one river flowing between opposite banks.

This poetic consciousness later becomes the seed of philosophy. Questions will be ordered, doctrines formed, arguments refined; yet if primal wonder disappears, philosophy will have forgotten its mother.

Knowledge may begin in astonishment. Why is there sky? Why order? Why death? Why truth? Why does unity make itself felt among countless forms?

And knowledge may mature in humility. The more we know,

the more unnamed territory opens. The sentence ends;

the sky does not.

Morning wind moves over the ashes of an old fire. The ash is cold,

yet somewhere beneath it lives a small ember. Human consciousness too has carried such an ember from outward rite towards inward questioning.

If we preserve only the ash and forget the ember,

tradition dies. If in the name of the ember we throw away ash,

history and community alike, memory breaks.

A living path lies between the two: honour the form,

seek the breath within it; preserve the memory of tradition,

and preserve also the free fire of truth.

At the end, the many names do not dissolve into the sky and lose their colours. They keep their different hues. But the mind understands that no single name marks the boundary of the sky.

The unnamed light does not reject the names. It gives them room to shine within it, as one sun enters a house through many windows and takes a different shape in each.

When the mind sees this,

prayer is no longer request alone. It becomes a mingled voice of gratitude, wonder, silence, questioning and ethical responsibility; knowledge, worship and life slowly turn towards one direction.

That direction is not towards a distant heaven,

but from outward sign towards inward truth,

from many forms towards a unity of relation,

and from every name towards unnamed mystery.

There may be no final sentence on this journey. Only an open sky,

beneath which the mind says: 'What I could say was a sign;

what remained was light.'

The Sky Within, the Sky Without

Through the night the moon wanes and waxes,
the seasons alter the threshold of the house,
a child's body becomes a youth's, leaves fall,
and a river rewrites its banks. Everything the eye sees is ceaselessly changed by the fine hand of time.

Before this changing spectacle,
a first question slowly rises: is this all - birth,
growth, decline, death, and then another form? Or is there,
behind change, something that does not itself flow in the river of change?

The idea of the unchanging is born from the very experience of change. If nothing changed, from where would the word 'still' receive its meaning? Watching the current, the mind imagines a bank; watching the wave, it asks about the depth of the sea.

The outer world is a vast fair of colours,
names, shapes, uses and relationships. Clay becomes a pot,
the pot breaks and becomes clay again;
forms change, yet the question of their ground remains. Names seem like temporary labels behind which something deeper endures.

The same substance may appear in many shapes. Differences of form matter in the practical world, but if form is taken as final, the wider reality of the ground disappears from sight.

The next step in this insight is daring:

the world and its ultimate ground are not two countries unknown to one another. What the ground is, that very ground shines as the visible world through countless names and forms.

Yet the moment we say 'ground',
we risk turning it once again into an object - something like a chair, a mountain, a person - whereas deeper reality may precede every image and be wider than every name.

Language carries us to its boundary and then stops,
out of breath. Whatever words express,
they give relations,

distinctions and qualities. Where there is no second thing, the ladder of comparison and adjective ends of itself.

So the highest truth sometimes opens less through 'It is this' than through 'Not this, not that.' No shape, no gender, no finite desire, no imprisonment within any single form of worship: with each negation, language removes an idol of its own making.

This negation is not emptiness. As a sculptor removes what is unnecessary from stone, thought removes limiting attributes so that room may be made for what cannot be fully spoken.

The wonder is that what lies beyond language is not far from life. What the eye cannot see may be the very light by which seeing occurs; what the mind cannot think may be the very possibility within which thinking arises.

What the breath cannot grasp may still be the depth in which its rhythm moves. What the world cannot enclose may yet contain the world. Distance and nearness meet like two impossible shores in the same sentence.

The outward question slowly turns inward. Open the house of the mind: memory, fear, desire, love, shame, anger, imagination - a ceaselessly changing fair. Within us too, no easy fixed object is found.

Today's thought is not tomorrow's;
feelings pass like weather. The body changes,
the mind changes, identity changes. On what deepest ground,
then, does the voice saying 'I' rest?

The ordinary ego says: this body is I,
this memory is I, this name is I. But the body's cells change,
memory forgets, and a name is given by society. If all these alter,
at what level does inward continuity abide?

Behind the question there begins to appear an experience of silent witnessing. That which knows sorrow is not sorrow alone; that which sees a thought is not merely the thought; that which watches memories come and go may be more than their total sum.

This witness is not a crown for the private ego. On the contrary,
it becomes clearer as the ego's hard boundary melts,
suggesting beyond the wall of 'I am separate,
you are separate' a wider sea of consciousness.

The depth sought within and the ground sought without now stand face to face. Are they two - one an outer foundation, the other an inward spiritual light? Or is that division itself an incompleteness in our seeing?

A deeper intuition says:

the wall between the sky within and the sky without belongs to the house, not to the sky. When the pot breaks, where does the space inside the pot remain separate from the space outside it?

This unity is not merely a conclusion of thought. If it is only the sentence 'All is one', the ego can immediately put on a new badge. True unity begins where, in conduct, another's suffering genuinely seems less alien.

One who glimpses within the same ground of light cannot easily regard another being as low, meaningless or merely useful. The ethical test of non-duality lies in compassion, not in the brilliance of its words. Yet the easy conclusion that the world of the senses is false is dangerous. Hunger is a real experience, illness is real, the tears of love are real. The question is not whether the world is 'nothing', but how final its level of truth is.

A dream dissolves on waking,
yet while it is dreamed it has effects. A rope may be mis-seen,
yet the experience of the mistake has occurred. We learn from this that an experience may be real as experience while its interpretation is not final.

The everyday world is the solid field of use,
ethics, science and relationship. Here causes work,
bodies obey their laws,
social responsibilities matter. This level is not trivial; it is the necessary ground of life.

Behind this ground, however,
lies the search for a deeper level where the triangle of knower,
knowing and known itself grows still,
where experience is no longer merely knowing an object but awakening in being.

Knowledge therefore takes on two colours. One is language,
grammar, the calculation of stars, method,
scripture, fact and reasoning;
the other is a direct knowing that cannot be borrowed from anyone else.

The first kind of knowledge enables life,
understands the world and preserves memory. The second asks:
what is the true nature of the one who knows? The first multiplies objects of knowledge; the second sheds light upon the ground of the knower.

Reading many books may increase the number of books one has read without lessening bondage. A keen intellect may win arguments without quieting fear. The measure of higher knowledge, therefore, is transformation in the life that knows.

When the noise of the senses grows quieter,
when the mind's obstinacy softens,
when there is an intense desire for truth and a cleansing of character, knowledge may begin to move from concept towards experience.

The path opens like four breaths. First,
make life clear - conduct, restraint, truth,
a measure upon desire. Before insisting on seeing the moon in muddy water, let the water become still.

Then comes listening - receiving from a living,
experienced voice, a deep sentence,
a sign that is taken not merely as information but as direction. Listening is not blind acceptance; it is the opening of a door to possibility.

Then comes reflection - question, reasoning,
doubt, reconsideration. Place what was heard in the fire of the intellect. If a belief is true, why should it fear a question? If it is false, why should it survive?

Then comes meditation - not the repetition of an idea,
but descent into the depth of life. As a river gives up its name in the sea, the knower's limited centre slowly loosens within a wider consciousness.

This experience is not a reward after death. Amid a living body,
living relationships and living action,
a human being may become free from the fundamental error of ignorance - in this very life.

Immortality, then, is not a calendar of endless years. The childish dream that the body should continue forever inside time gives way to another understanding: the real ground may lie beyond the measure of birth and death.

Birth belongs to the body, death belongs to the body;
thoughts rise and fall. If the inward depth behind them is limitless, immortality is no longer chiefly a question of 'how long', but of 'at what level'.

Living liberation does not mean abandoning the world and becoming inert. The same house, the same family, the same illness, the same work remain; what diminishes is the ignorance that says, 'I am only this limited form.'

With that altered vision, action does not cease;
grasping does. Love remains, possession lessens;
knowledge remains, pride lessens; sorrow comes,
yet it does not imprison the whole inner sky.

A liberated person need not look extraordinary by outward signs. Perhaps such a person looks more ordinary – less display, less fear, less defensiveness – because identity depends less upon signs hung outside the self. This teaching also warns against the worship of persons. The truth is more important than the name of the one who speaks it; the value of an unnamed experience is not measured by the fame of its author.

Across generations,

people may speak the same depth in different languages. Their sentences may seem opposed, their styles scattered, yet the centre of experience may repeatedly point in the same direction.

For this reason, inconsistency is not always weakness. Sometimes the same mountain is being seen from different valleys: one voice emphasises the world's change, another the soul's silence, a third unity.

Systematic philosophy often comes later;

first there is the lightning of experience. Brief sayings,

dialogues, questions and images flash suddenly in the clouds,

and generation after generation tries to confine that flash within a different map of interpretation.

But lightning is not a map. Theory follows experience;

when theory takes the place of experience,

words may once again become the old ritual – precise in form,

empty of living fire.

The path therefore requires continual self-correction. What are we holding – form or meaning? Sentence or experience? The personality of a teacher or the direction of truth?

An image of a bow rises in the mind,

but the story is renewed: the mind itself is the bow,

awareness its drawn string, purified desire the arrow;

the target is not a distant object but the wider reality beyond the limited centre.

If the arrow strikes the target yet remains separate from it,

the meeting is incomplete. True meditation is where the arrow forgets its separate ego and rests in the infinite field from which it arose.

Imagine within the heart a lotus-like chamber where nerves,

memories, breath, fear and hope meet. Sit in silence at that centre and ask: 'What is the ground of all that is experienced?'

The answer may first be a silence rather than a word. The silence is not empty but intensely awake, like the sky just before dawn, when light has not yet received a name.

One day a person stands before a mirror and sees a small,

frightened, limited self. For years the voices of society have said: this is all you are. Then, if the inner mirror clears and a deeper form is seen, the whole manner of living changes.

The new identity is not a gigantic idol of ego,

not the intoxication of 'I am supreme'. It is the melting of the limited ego's vanity and the recognition of one's place within a wider being.

Where 'I' is joined to an infinite ground,

'you' are also joined to it. If the result of this understanding is superiority, the understanding is incomplete.

Its true result is equality, compassion, fearlessness and a deeper peace before death.

Death may still bring sorrow – the absence of one who was loved,

the pain of the body. Liberation is not the insensibility of stone;

it is a deeper stability within feeling,

one that does not bind the whole self to forms that break.

There is no need to destroy names in order to approach unnamed reality. Names are the flowers of practical life; only do not mistake the flower for a final thing independent of root, soil, rain and sun.

Then the beauty of the world is not diminished but increased. Every form is a momentary expression of an infinite ground: the vein of a leaf, a child's laughter, an old person's hand – all are transient, and therefore precious.

Awareness of the unchanging does not teach hatred of change. It gives change its proper place, as the sky does not prevent clouds from moving through it, yet no cloud is the entirety of the sky.

The inner sky lets thoughts,

feelings and dreams pass. The outer sky receives seasons,

birds, clouds and dust. Seeing one reflected in the other,

the wall of the mind grows lighter.

Perhaps this is why the outer and inner searches finally meet at the same door. Asking for the ground of the world, we arrive at the ground of consciousness; asking for the ground of consciousness, the division of the world begins to change.

And whatever remains at the end becomes only the beginning again once we give it a name. A name says, 'Look here'; to mistake the pointing finger for the moon is the old error.

So the poem leaves, in its final lines,

not a doctrine but a practice: whatever you see outside,

know its change; whatever rises within,

know its passing; and whatever silent light seems to stand behind both, do not turn it into an object for the ego.

On a very clear night, open the window. Outside, the stars; within, the breath. For one moment ask: where, in truth, are the two skies separate?

If no answer comes,

do not be troubled. The deepest knowledge does not always come out as a sentence. Sometimes it changes only the gait of life - less fear, less division, more light.

Three Doors, Toward the Same Infinite

Beneath the same ancient sky,
three doors stand open. The first says:

do not trust difference as the final truth. The second says:

difference is real, but it lives within a more encompassing life. The third says: difference is the very grammar of experience; to erase it is to injure truth.

All three build their houses around the same questions:

what is the ultimate ground of this changing world? What is the deepest meaning of the word 'I'? And liberation - is it union, recognition, or relationship?

As soon as we enter the first door,

language grows quiet. Objects, qualities,
forms and names are true within ordinary life,

yet a knowledge may be possible that passes beyond these distinctions and sees a deeper reality.

Here truth is not measured only by the question 'Does it exist or not?' One experience may be corrected by another, one vision may prove shallow before a deeper vision; the highest measure of reality lies in what cannot finally be cancelled by anything further.

The truths of daily life are therefore not false. A table is a table, fire burns, illness needs medicine, justice is different from injustice. Yet these truths have limits: they live within relation, sense, intellect and time.

Dream gives way to waking;

ordinary sight is refined by science;

even science may discover its limits before a still deeper experience. Levels of truth may change, while each lower level continues to work within its proper field.

For this reason it is wrong to call the world 'nothing'. It is the field of experience, responsibility, action and love. But it is also incomplete to regard it as wholly independent, final, and self-sustaining.

Names and forms are like coloured glass. Sunlight enters the room as red, blue or green, yet the stained glass is not the original colour of light; it is light appearing under a condition.

Ignorance, then, is not mere darkness. It is the habit of mistaking the coloured pane for the sun itself.

Knowledge does not necessarily smash the glass; it recognises the light beyond it.

Whatever the mind sees, it sees with old memories,

language and expectations beside it. At times we mistake doubt for truth, shape for essence, body for the whole self. We lay an added form upon experience and then become servants of the form we ourselves have laid there.

Bondage begins when what appears under a limited condition is taken as ultimate reality. The sky inside a pot seems smaller than the sky outside; when the pot breaks, we discover that the boundary belonged to the vessel, not to the sky.

At this first door,

the distance between the self and the ultimate ground slowly disappears. The silent witness within and the unchanging depth without are not two things but two names for one reality - this is the direction of its insight.

Liberation is therefore not a reward after death. Here,

in this body, amid the work of the world,

the error of taking the limited ego as the whole truth can fall away. That is living freedom.

Such knowledge is more than the conclusion of a book;

it is a change in being. Listen, reflect,

examine, carry the insight into meditation. Where the hard distance between knower and known begins to melt, concept may become experience.

But at this door a second voice objects:

'If every distinction finally melts,

where is the beloved Thou? If quality,

relation and person belong only to a lower truth, whom does living devotion love?'

The second door opens. Here the Infinite is not a dry,

formless emptiness. It is full of consciousness,

qualities, boundlessness, compassion,

will and relationship. Unity does not devour difference; it gives difference a place within its own body.

A body is one person made of many organs. The heart is not the foot, the eye is not the hand, yet all belong to one body. Difference remains and wholeness remains: unity is not uniformity.

From this perspective,

living beings and the world are real. They are not independent kingdoms outside the Infinite, yet they are its real members, qualities and forms; erase them and the wholeness itself becomes incomplete.

Wholeness is not the enemy of its parts. A tree is roots,

trunk, leaves, flowers and fruit. The flower's uniqueness does not destroy the unity of the tree; the life of the tree flowers precisely through it.

The infinite ground is therefore not a featureless void. If it is described as without qualities in a way that empties it of living meaning, the human hunger for love, the longing of prayer and the reality of moral relationship may all seem pushed too far away.

The second door says that the qualities of the Supreme are real. Compassion is not an invention, knowledge not an accident, power not merely an appearance. To imagine the Infinite as the highest fullness of personhood gives religious life blood and pulse.

Creation here is no magic conjuring from nothing. Living beings,

matter and the infinite ground stand in an ancient relation. The world changes cyclically, contracts and expands again, yet the seeds of existence are not annihilated.

Human freedom then becomes the ground of moral responsibility. The fruits of action are not simply punishments imposed from outside; our choices help fashion body, circumstance and future.

Yet the question remains severe:

if the Supreme is all-knowing,

all-compassionate and all-powerful,

how are these three qualities to be reconciled with the immense history of suffering?

This question is not an enemy of faith. It makes the meaning of love more serious. Where innocent suffering exists, the phrase 'a compassionate God' cannot remain an easy slogan.

The second door opens one line of reply through freedom of will:

living beings possess agency,

and therefore the fault of their actions does not fall upon the Supreme. Yet nature, birth, inequality and accident are not fully explained by this answer alone.

In this tradition, bondage arises from ignorance and mistaken identification with the body. We take bodily pain, desire and ego to be the whole of ourselves; from that mistaken knot come action, repetition, and the cycle of pleasure and pain.

Action, knowledge, prayer and love may all become paths toward liberation, but finally the depth of surrender becomes central. The egoic claim 'I am complete by my own power' melts before love.

Surrender is not slavery when love is free. It is the recognition that we are part of a greater life and that our fulfilment lies not in isolation but in relationship.

Liberation here is not dissolution. Even in the utmost nearness the person keeps a voice of their own, as a lamp is not erased by the sun's radiance but seems, rather, to burn more clearly within it.

The fulfilment of love does not erase 'you' into 'I'. It is a unity in which distance ceases to be a barrier and difference ceases to be an enemy: infinite intimacy, yet the memory of personhood remains.

The first door will say: if difference remains,

where is final oneness? The second will answer:

if difference is erased,

where is the relation of love? The sky of thought flashes with lightning from both directions.

Then the third door rings a still harder bell of difference. It says: knowledge itself depends upon distinction. If knower and known are not different, what can the word 'knowing' mean?

We see a flower precisely because the flower is not ourselves. We hear a sound because ear and sound are distinct. In every act of perception, difference forms the basic grammar of experience.

From this perspective the world is wholly real and irreducibly plural. Supreme, living being and matter are three distinct orders. Their dependence is unequal - the Supreme is independent, the others dependent - but they are not the same.

Difference spreads in five directions:

between living being and Supreme,

between one living being and another,

between living being and matter, between one material thing and another, and among distinct things at the most basic level. Reality is built as a vast plural.

Unity cannot erase relation here. If everything were one, the diversity of experience would have to be called illusion;

yet the very consciousness that calls something illusion already uses difference - truth and error, knower and known.

The third door asks sharply:

'If you must use the language of difference in order to deny difference, how can difference finally be called unreal?'

Here the Supreme is complete personhood:

lord of creation, preservation and dissolution. Living beings and matter remain eternally distinct in kind, yet not independent; dependence is the basic form of relation.

Liberation comes through love and grace. Knowledge alone is not enough, because the knower does not become the Supreme. The person remains a person, rejoicing in the nearness of infinite glory without losing identity.

This vision gives devotion its highest dignity. Love requires difference - lover and beloved. If both are completely one, devotion becomes merely a stage of ignorance: this is the objection raised by the third door. Yet uncompromising difference brings its own difficult question. If the three fundamental realities are utterly unrelated, from what material can the bridge of relationship be built?

Absolute difference makes relationship hard to explain. If one existence cannot affect another, then dependence, rule, love and grace - all words of relation - lose their footing. Complete difference must therefore soften somewhere.

So the dispute among the three doors is not theology alone. It tests the logical limits of 'unity' and 'difference'. Too much unity and the person melts away; too much difference and relation breaks.

The most delicate point at the first door is the status of the world. It says: true in practice, relative before final knowledge. The world is neither nothing nor the Absolute, but a dependent manifestation.

To reduce this subtlety to 'the world is false' is misleading. Even illusion needs a ground. A shadow is on a wall; the shadow is not the sun, but without wall and light where would the shadow appear?

The second door is dissatisfied with the word 'manifestation'. It says: the flower is real, not merely a shadow of its ground. If the Infinite is complete, its diversity is truly its splendour, not a defect.

The world is like the real body of divine life. Forms change and cycles turn, yet every living being retains spiritual meaning. Creation is a field of love, not merely a curtain of ignorance.

The third door presses harder:

the word 'limb' still carries the scent of identity. The living being is not a limb of God but distinct.

Dependence is not sameness; love is nearness, not the dissolution of identity.

The three doors therefore picture liberation differently. One:

ignorance falls and one recognises one's own infinite nature. Two:

personhood remains within perfect harmony of love. Three:

the person remains forever distinct, and the highest joy is nearness through grace.

All three accept the bondage of action and the role of ignorance,

but they shift the weight of the remedy. In one,

knowledge is primary. In another,

knowledge leads into love. In the third, devotion becomes the indispensable boat.

These differences resemble three tones within the religious psychology of human beings. One mind longs for the silence of self-knowledge, another for surrender in love, another for the intimacy of service. Each fashions a different language of liberation.

One says that ultimate truth is beyond qualities,

because qualities belong to the world of relation. Another says that a qualityless truth is emptied of living religious meaning. A third refuses to accept anything less than a Supreme endowed with perfect qualities and personhood.

One treats divine form as a practical stairway;

another regards that form itself as ultimate truth;

a third dismisses the qualityless conception altogether as meaningless.

The opposition is not merely linguistic. It decides whether prayer is a final path or an intermediate aid; whether the person remains in liberation or dissolves; whether the world is a real part of the whole or a dependent manifestation.

The question of knowledge too takes three forms. One says that the highest knowledge passes beyond the distinction of knower and known. The second says that knowledge is always someone's knowledge, so personal difference remains. The third says that knowledge without distinction is impossible, and therefore complete identity contradicts itself.

Amid this dispute, ordinary experience stands like a detached witness. In love we experience difference; in meditation, unity. In science there is distance between object and knower; in compassion that distance softens. Human life itself is layered.

Perhaps different languages are fitting at different depths of the same experience: the rules of difference in daily life, unity-with-difference in love, the loosening of division in meditation. Human beings live on many levels at once.

But do not impose this reconciliation too quickly. Each of the three traditions has its own logical stake. To erase their disagreement by saying 'they all mean the same thing' would be an injustice to thought.

The first door grades the world's reality by levels. The second fills wholeness with genuinely distinct members. The third guards the independent reality of difference.

One says, 'Ultimately, there are not two.' Another says,

'There is one, but the one contains real multiplicity within itself.' The third says, 'There may be one Supreme, but the many never become that one.'

Three sentences, three universes.

A concept like illusion becomes a flame at the centre of this conflict. The first view says that through ignorance we take dependent forms as ultimate; the world is not nonexistent, but its imagined independence is an error.

The second asks: where does ignorance reside? If the living being is constituted by ignorance, how can ignorance have a proper locus there? If ignorance resides in the Supreme, does that not stain divine omniscience? The logical knot tightens.

The first replies: ignorance is not a thing that must be stored in someone's house. It is a structure of mistaken seeing. A cloud does not diminish the sun; it only interrupts the line of sight between eye and sun.

The second answers again:

'Neither real nor unreal' sounds obscure. The first responds that the two boxes of language do not measure every experience completely. Some experiences can later be cancelled without having been sheer nothingness; hence an intermediate status.

As the debate grows subtler, poetry learns something:

philosophical words are not merely definitions. They are tools fashioned to preserve fine distinctions within experience.

Even the sentence 'the world is real' can carry several meanings. Independently real? Dependently real?

Practically real? Ultimately real? Four scales may hide inside a single word.

'Unity' too is not one thing. Is it identity without difference,

a whole containing difference,

or an order under a governing centre? One word,

three philosophies.

'Liberation' too is not one thing. Recognition of one's true nature, unbroken harmony of love, or supreme nearness without loss of identity? As the goal changes, the practice changes with it.

This is why history produces commentary upon commentary. A short aphorism can hold endless interpretation; every interpreter reads with the experience, religious hunger and logical priorities of a particular age.

Do not make any one language the final owner. Wherever the Infinite is at issue, language is a signpost. If the signpost is mistaken for the destination, tradition can harden into a fortress of words.

The debate of the three doors lives inside the modern person too. A scientific mind seeks unity - one law, one ground. A biological and social mind sees complex wholeness - parts distinct, system one. A moral mind fears the erasure of the person - difference as dignity.

Its shadow falls across politics as well. Excessive unity can erase the individual; excessive individualism can sever relationship. Wholeness must find room for difference.

Outside religion, this thought can become an art of living:

where should we seek unity,

where must difference be preserved,

where is the person a member of a larger whole, and where is independent dignity indispensable?

Healthy love may pass through all three questions. It can say,

'We are one,' while honouring 'You are different.' It can say,

'We are joined,' while refusing to say,

'You are my property.'

Even the language of liberation may change with the nature of bondage. For the hardness of ego, unity may be medicine; for the fear of isolation, loving communion; for the fear of self-erasure, the dignity of personhood.

Yet the three doors of the sources remain firm in their own conclusions. The poem does not force them into agreement. It merely places a lamp in each room so that the differences can be seen clearly.

In the light of the first lamp,

the world is coloured glass and the ultimate light is one. In the second, the world is the real body of divine life. In the third, the world is a realm of many real living beings and material things whose differences endure.

At the first door, prayer may be a stairway and knowledge the summit. At the second, love is both stairway and summit. At the third, without love the gate to the summit remains closed.

At the first, the liberated person says:

what I sought was, in the deepest sense,

my own true nature. At the second:

I am its part or mode, a conscious member within its infinite body. At the third: I remain myself and the Supreme remains Supreme; nearness can be infinite, identity never one.

All three challenge the ordinary egoic 'I'. One dissolves its boundary, one subordinates it within a greater life, one makes it a humble dependent within an ultimate relationship.

All three preserve one deep ethical truth:

life in ignorance is bondage. Whether through knowledge,

love, surrender or discernment,

there is no liberation without an inward transformation.

Outer ritual, status,
birth and argument are not enough. The centre of life must change;
otherwise philosophy is only words,
devotion only display, knowledge only accumulation.

And when night grows deep,
the three doors remain open. Within one is silence,
within another song, within the third a bow of reverence;
beyond all three, the same star-filled sky.

The poem does not raise the hammer of verdict. It asks instead:
does the unity of the sky erase the difference between windows? Or without different windows, could the sky
ever enter experience as we know it?

The answer may not fit inside one sentence. Yet a mind that has walked through all three doors learns at
least this: the greater the claim we make about the Infinite, the greater the humility required.

For unity misunderstood can crush diversity. Diversity misunderstood can break relationship. Love
misunderstood can become servitude; knowledge misunderstood, pride.

Perhaps true practice means seeing the shadow cast by one's own doctrine. Whoever affirms unity must not
forget the dignity of difference. Whoever affirms difference must not sever the web of dependence and
compassion.

Whoever affirms love must not flee questions of reason. Whoever affirms knowledge must not despise the
hunger of the heart. Whoever protects the person must not sanctify the fortress of ego.

At the end, three lamps tremble in the wind but do not go out. One says: 'Look beyond difference.' The
second: 'See unity within difference.' The third: 'Honour the truth of difference.'

And the sky takes the side of no single sentence. It remains vast,
while three doors, three paths and three prayers open toward the same Infinite.

A New Dawn Waking Between Two Winds

A civilisation does not grow alone within its own house. At the frontier the wind changes; with the dust of distant feet come, at times, the sword, at times trade, at times a book, at times another cadence of prayer - and the old house begins to think again about itself.

The shock of history does not merely break walls; it also sets a mirror before us. What had seemed beyond dispute becomes a question; what had seemed natural suddenly has to explain itself: "Why are we this way, and must we remain this way?"

First a distant power arrived as rule. There was conflict, fear, authority; yet in the long river of time music,

language, architecture, food,

philosophy and prayer kept touching one another's thresholds.

One tradition encountered the simple warmth of surrender;

another heard the silent questions of an ancient depth. Their meeting was not agreement alone - sometimes resistance, sometimes attraction, sometimes an inward renewal.

Devotion was an old seed,

but new historical winds made it green again. Songs rose in the languages of ordinary people; the divine left the speech of palaces and entered the street; religion stepped down from scriptural pages and began to sing among hunger, love, tears and labour.

Then another wind came from across the sea - first ships,

then markets, then guns, offices, schools,

law and laboratories of science. With rule came a new sense of time: speed, progress, institutions, technology.

This encounter cut deeper,

because the question was no longer merely,

"Who rules?" It became: what is the measure of knowledge,

how should society be ordered, what are the rights of the individual, and where can an older world-view stand before the power of science?

At first the educated mind of the city trembled. Some shut their eyes and said, "Let no outside wind touch us." Others wanted to throw everything out of their own house and adopt the blueprint of another.

Some rejected all that came from outside in anger,

as though only war were possible between two civilisations. Yet a fourth kind of mind began, quietly, to choose: here is truth, there something useful, here something that must be reformed.

In that act of choosing,

a new form of modern consciousness was born. The old tradition saw,

perhaps for the first time,

its own injustices reflected in an external mirror; modernity from outside was, in turn, startled by the depth of inward silence, meditation and self-knowledge.

There was no victory of one direction,

but a long age of ambiguity. The new school stood beside the courtyard of the old family; the light of the laboratory and the evening lamp came to inhabit the life of the same human being.

Books crossed the sea. The fine threads of grammar,

the rigour of logic,

the discipline of mathematics and the ancient voice of self-inquiry opened as new questions upon the desks of distant readers.

From the other direction came politics, science,

social institutions, modern education,

ideas of freedom, individual rights and industrial technology. Entering the native mind, they demanded not imitation alone but argument.

From this argument comparison became a new discipline. Placing one idea beside another was no longer merely a contest of superiority; two different traditions of experience began to illuminate one another's blind corners.

Comparison was no longer a marketplace scale asking which is heavier and which lighter. It became a confluence of questions: "What is the language of your truth?" "Where are the limits of my experience?" "What kind of new human being might arise from both?"

The worst way to preserve an old inheritance is to seal it inside a glass case. A living tradition can endure questions, alter its form, receive new knowledge, and still recognise its deepest sensibility.

Modernity, too, is not complete in itself. A machine can shorten distance but not loneliness; a state can make laws but not compassion; science can prolong life, but it cannot by itself give life meaning.

Between these worlds another vision arises:

the world as, at root, a process of spiritual possibility. Stone, tree, animal and human are not wholly disconnected levels;

a deeper power may be unfolding its own potential through differing degrees of complexity.

Evolution is not merely a change in bodily form. Consciousness too may evolve: from ignorance toward knowledge, from fragmentation toward integration, from self-interest toward a wider coexistence.

The words lower and higher here are not a scale of caste or personal worth. They point to states of consciousness: from the place where reaction is automatic toward one where awareness, compassion and breadth of vision grow stronger.

The human being, in the present form,
need not be the final station. We may be an unfinished sentence,
within which the restlessness to cross our own limits beats as a force of development.

That restlessness can itself become an illness if it runs only toward outward achievement. More wealth, more power, more speed - and yet the same old fear within. The next step of development must therefore ask for a change in the quality of consciousness.

Imagine a higher mind in which knowing,
willing and doing are no longer broken apart. Thought in one direction, desire in another, action in a third - in place of such fragmentation, an integrated consciousness in which life takes on the rhythm of what it has understood to be true.

But such spirituality cannot become an excuse for the cave. To tell a hungry person only, "Know your soul," is cruel; in a society wounded by injustice, meditation is incomplete if it does not see bread and dignity.

Inner development and outer institutions must therefore be joined. Society should not grind the individual down in the mere struggle to survive; justice, freedom, education and health are not enemies of spiritual growth, but its soil.

Liberation is not a private medal for the solitary seeker. If someone finds peace within and yet remains silent before injustice outside, perhaps that peace still has too little room for society's pain.

And if the social reformer refuses to see greed,
anger and ego within,
new institutions can become old violence in new clothing. Outer revolution and inner discipline must remain critics of one another.

Individual freedom and social unity are not two horses pulling in opposite directions. A true society gives the individual room to flower, and the individual does not make that flowering the destruction of the whole garden.

The test of spiritual development is not extraordinary experience. Has life become more just? Have relationships become less violent? Does knowledge diminish arrogance? Does power turn toward service? Test the light by these questions.

One day the human being may cease to regard the self as a foreigner separated from the world. Soil, tree, animal, star - none merely a resource, but forms through which one life-force travels. Such a perception can become an environmental ethic.

If the underlying relation is spiritual,
violence against the earth is violence against one's own house. The summit of development is not greater consumption but a more attentive relationship with nature, society and the desires within oneself.
This vision has its dangers. The belief that "history is inevitably moving toward a higher consciousness" can belittle present suffering in the name of future glory.

Let the poetry of development therefore never become determinism. There is possibility, not guarantee. Human beings can rise, but the freedom to fall travels with them.

Spiritual progress is no automatic machine. Every generation decides: compassion or violence, integration or domination, knowledge or propaganda, freedom or fear.

Another modern vision says that ultimate reality is not a fixed and lifeless background. The world is its active expression; existence and power are not two separate things, but the source appearing through changing forms.

For this reason the world cannot simply be dismissed as trivial. Finite things, personalities and histories, though not ultimate, can be modes of a deeper reality in action; the practical world therefore carries meaning.

A flower is not the whole Infinite,
but without the power of the Infinite where would the flower be? A person is not the whole of reality, yet is a living expression of a wider existence. To mistake the part for the whole is error; to call the part nothing is also error.

The small "I" within is formed through experience,
thought, body and history. It is useful - for name,
work and responsibility - yet beneath it may lie a wider spiritual depth greater than limited identity.

Religious search, then,
is not self-erasure but transformation beyond the small boundary. The private chamber of ego breaks open into a wider consciousness, where the meaning of "I" becomes more inclusive.

The essence of religion cannot be imprisoned in external signs:
not ritual alone, not feeling alone,
not moral rule alone, not philosophy alone. All may be parts,
but the response of the whole human being to the whole of reality is deeper.

If religion is only inherited opinion,
it is heritage, not experience. Religion becomes living when truth happens within a person and changes the tone of conduct.

There may be moments of experience when the ordinary distance between knower and known grows thin. The sequence of time recedes for a moment, the edges of thought soften, and existence seems awake to its own depth.

The language of such experience inevitably reaches for metaphor, because the grammar of "I know this object" is inadequate where the experiencer feels transformed within a wider consciousness.

But mysticism need not become the enemy of reason. In daily life science, logic, history and criticism retain their full value; only this much is claimed: the wholeness of human experience may not end with measurement.

A healthy modern philosophy will look with both eyes open. One eye for experiment, evidence, institutional justice and social fact; the other for meditation, value, self-experience and the meaning of existence.

Close one eye and the judgement of distance falters. The spiritual eye alone may forget social fact; the outward eye alone may reduce the human being to a statistic, a consumer, a producer.

This meeting is the difficult labour of modern Indian consciousness: neither blind worship of the old nor blind imitation of the new, but critical reception and creative recombination.

History did not assign this task under easy conditions. Political subjection, economic change, cultural humiliation and new education together created a crisis of self-definition.

Some turned the past into a golden age and fled from the present. Others cut the past away as nothing but darkness. Maturity lies beyond both exaggerations - pride with criticism, reception with self-respect.

Foreign scholarship, too, was a double-edged sword. On one side, the colonial gaze sometimes turned a living tradition into a museum object; on the other, textual editing, philology and translation brought forgotten works to new readers.

The history of knowledge is not a story of clean hands. Power and curiosity can travel together; sometimes, within the institutions of empire itself, scholarship arises that challenges imperial arrogance.

And once a tradition travelled abroad, it no longer remained merely an object called "the East". Poets, thinkers and seekers on distant continents read it through their own questions; old sentences were reborn in new languages, new crises, new sensitivities.

The finest result of such exchange is not a competition of superiority. Sentences such as "our civilisation is great" and "yours is backward" close the door of knowledge.

True comparison says: we can learn from one another, because no civilisation contains the complete inventory of human possibility. Each sees some things deeply and some less clearly.

Modern science opened the subtlest mysteries of matter;
democratic thought forged a language of individual rights;
ancient self-inquiry cultivated the domains of consciousness,
non-attachment and inward insight.

The question is not: which civilisation wins? The questions are:
can science live with compassion? Can spirituality live with social justice? Can freedom live with community?
Can tradition live with criticism?

No single final sentence can answer these questions. They are written every day in schools, parliaments, families, laboratories, art, fields, hospitals, temples and streets.

The new human being is not an old mind in Western clothes, nor merely modern machinery surrounded by old symbols. Newness is a reordering of inner relations - among knowledge, power, desire and value.

If science increases power,
moral consciousness must help choose its direction;
if spirituality gives inner peace,
social conscience must test it.

If tradition gives identity,
criticism must cut through its inertia. If modernity gives freedom,
memory must restrain its reckless forgetfulness. A confluence is not an equal mixture of ingredients but a living chemistry.

When two elements meet, they do not always remain a simple sum; a new quality may be born. So the true meeting of civilisations is not a collage of imitation but the birth of new questions, new sensitivities, new institutions.

Within this new chemistry spirituality is not a fixed past. It is a possibility of the future. Human consciousness remains unfinished; tradition, therefore, is not memory alone but a source for experiments yet to come.

But beware the misuse of the word "spiritual". If it conceals social inequality, the word may be sacred while the result is unjust; if it flees from reason, there is darkness in the name of light.

True spirituality accepts the whole of human life. Body, economy, politics, love, labour, art, science - it casts none outside as impure, but seeks a finer quality of consciousness within them all.

A fair price for a farmer, dignity for a worker, freedom for a woman, education for a child - these are not outer edges of spiritual development; they are conditions of human wholeness.

If social structures keep millions in fear, hunger and humiliation, private experiences of "higher consciousness" remain ethically incomplete. A bridge must be built between personal liberation and public justice.

Yet the state cannot manufacture a soul. Law can create opportunity and reduce obstacles, but direct experience of truth, the awakening of compassion and self-discipline do not grow by command.

Society can prepare the soil; the fruit must grow through persons and communities together. Spirituality without freedom becomes obedience born of fear; freedom without community becomes a marketplace of loneliness.

The new dawn tries to avoid both extremes:

an open sky for the individual,
shared earth for society,
and between them the wind of responsibility.

The modern meaning of religion changes with this. Victory not over another sect but over the narrowness within oneself; not doctrine alone but experience; not walls but depth.

Where the boundary between knower and known loosens, another's suffering cannot remain wholly outside one's own experience. Even while remaining unique, the person feels part of a wider life.

Such experience is not a political manifesto, yet it can nourish political ethics: if each person is an expression of a wider reality, human dignity cannot be reduced to an instrument.

Peace, then, is not merely the absence of war. When the divisions within the mind, the injustices of society and the arrogance of civilisation all lessen, peace becomes deeper.

Freedom is not merely the vote or a choice in the market. It is also release from inner servitudes of fear, ignorance, propaganda, addiction and greed; outward rights and inward autonomy complete one another.

Knowledge is not information alone. Facts are necessary, reasoning is necessary, but perhaps the final measure of knowledge is also this: did it make life more truthful, compassionate and fearless?

Joy is not merely the quantity of pleasurable goods. If there is fragmentation within, accumulation outside does not suffice; in an integrated consciousness joy can become a deep assent to life.

Today the world again stands among many winds. Digital technology, artificial intelligence, biotechnology,

climate crisis and global markets are raising questions, in some ways, more intense than those of older modernity.

The old lesson may serve again: neither blind rejection nor blind acceptance, but selection, criticism, self-examination and the test of human dignity.

New technology asks: what is possible? Philosophy asks: what is right? Spiritual consciousness asks: will this enlarge greed within the human being, or freedom?

The final page of history is never written. Every invention, every struggle between justice and injustice, every cultural encounter rewrites the human definition of the self.

If tradition is truly alive, it need not fear the future. From its deeper source it can fashion new forms, relinquish what is wrong, and absorb useful elements from outside.

And if modernity is truly mature, it will not mock the past as childhood. It will admit that questions of human self-experience are older than the laboratory and still unfinished today.

Two winds need not extinguish one another. If the window is open,
 a new temperature, a new fragrance,
 a new breath can arise within the house.

One wind carries the courage to change the outer world - institutions, science, rights, historical awareness.
 The other carries the discipline to look within - meditation, self-inquiry, unity, non-attachment.
 Without either, the human being may remain half-made. The outward alone: powerful but directionless.
 The inward alone: profound, yet sometimes inactive before the suffering of the world.
 Wholeness may lie not in ending the tension between these directions but in making it creative. As the
 opposing pull of a bowstring drives the arrow forward, conscious tension between tradition and modernity
 may give the future its direction.

But toward what should the arrow fly? Not merely toward greater production, but toward a human world
 where justice, freedom, knowledge, compassion, beauty and inner peace need not be enemies.

The goal is very high,
 therefore doubt is necessary. Do not install any philosophical vision as the guaranteed future of history; let
 possibility inspire, not masquerade as prophecy.

Human spiritual capacity may be real,
 but so is the human capacity for violence;
 history bears witness to both. Hope must therefore travel with vigilance.

The new dawn will not rise by itself. It must be made through education, dialogue, just institutions, and the
 practice by which each person learns to recognise the small darknesses of ego within.

When a culture fears outside influence,
 it can harden into a shell;
 when it forgets its own values and merely imitates,
 it becomes hollow within. Living self-confidence preserves both openness and choice.

Contemporaneity, therefore,
 is not the name of a year. It is a capacity of mind:
 to converse with the past, hear the questions of the present,
 and fashion answers for the future without becoming anyone's slave.

Imagine a vast library. One shelf holds old handwritten pages,
 another modern science, a third the philosophies of the world;
 in the middle stands an empty table - our time.

On the table lies the question:
 is the human being only rational? Only religious? Economic? Political? Biological? Or a still-evolving
 consciousness more complex than all these descriptions?

No single book will answer. But if the books speak to one another,
 and the reader listens with honesty toward personal experience,
 perhaps a new sentence can be born.

That new sentence need belong neither to India alone nor to the West alone. Where the discipline of
 science, democratic dignity and deep practices of self-awareness meet, they can become a human inheritance.

The finest synthesis does not erase identity. When a river enters the sea, its history is not annihilated; it
 enters a wider water-cycle, may become cloud, and return again to its own earth.

So a culture receives and changes,
 yet its deeper sensibility may be reborn in new form. Stability that turns into an object and dies, change that
 loses memory - both are dangers.

Living tradition is change with memory. Living modernity is innovation with self-criticism. Living
 philosophy is a difficult dialogue among experience, reason, history, society and spirituality.

In the end the question returns to the individual. How many empires live within us? How many alien voices
 have we accepted without examination, how many old fears have we renamed "tradition"?

How many modern desires are merely orders from the market? How many spiritual claims are only escape?

Contemporary philosophy may begin as the courage to see these inner colonies.

As inward freedom grows, outward dialogue can become more equal:
 neither inferiority nor arrogance,
 but respect for one's own source and openness to truth in another.

Then comparison becomes hospitality rather than competition. Bring your questions, I will bring mine; let
 us place them on the same table and see how much human suffering is shared, how deep the longing.

One day the old and the new may quarrel less. "Soul" need not fear science; "science" need not smile and flee
 when asked about meaning; "justice" need not avoid meditation, nor "meditation" politics.

On that day the new dawn will not be complete - dawn is never the full day. Yet directional light is enough:
 we possess the possibility of changing, learning and deepening without erasing one another.

Two winds meet at the window. One carries moisture from a distant sea, the other the smell of earth from
 the courtyard; inside the house a new breath forms - neither a pure copy of one, nor a pure remnant of the
 other.

And the human being, who yesterday felt torn between two worlds,
 may understand today:

winds from two directions can make a new season within,
if the window remains open and the foundations of the house remain awake.

SECTION II — DREAM, WAKEFULNESS AND BLENDED TIME

Before the Dream

"The evil eye catches him,"
she says,
"the evil eye catches him."
She looks at him - he seems so beautiful today;
by evening a shadow falls across his face.
Indeed! Who has a son like mine?
Yet the instant this thought enters my mind,
even my own gaze may cast the evil eye on him.

He begins some task
and throws himself at it in one fierce rush;
until it is done
he remembers nothing else.
If someone says, "What a good son you have,"
the mother's heart gives a sudden thud,
then begins to sink.
"What does he do?
What is so beautiful about him?"
Mother keeps saying
the evil eye catches
my son at the slightest word.

On Saturdays Mother burns mustard seed and chillies.
If the smoke brings a tickle, she knows no evil eye has caught him;
if no tickle comes, she knows that it has.
For a while, when no tickle comes, Mother grows anxious:
"See? My son catches the evil eye over the smallest things..."
"The evil eye catches him... at every little word, my son..."

But just then her son feels the tickle.
A smile comes to Mother's face.
She adds a little more mustard seed and chilli to the fire...

Fortunate

Defeated -
 watching those strange creatures.
 No. No more.
 My head is splitting,
 my breath swelling.

This serpent-noose,
 these strange creatures:
 against one another, yet
 all together on the same side,
 and together against as well;
 against one another, yet.

Who is saying what,
 who will turn when,
 turn a somersault, change the face -
 and there before me appears
 the longing to remain happy,
 without dispute, carefree.
 Having lost - is there still sleep?
 So fortunate.

Discouraged,
 friends raise the spirit.
 Losing, tired,
 standing up again,
 such and such talk
 washes away the weariness;
 such and such retort,
 and it disappears.

Everyone is much the same.
 Has the face really grown dull?
 Or do they all gather
 to make one laugh,
 to begin cooking delicacies for the mind?
 They wash the head,
 and someone begins to tell
 an old saga
 of fighting,
 of moving briskly upon crutches
 when walking on both feet
 is no longer possible.

"You received a star - what is the secret?"
 We all study from him,
 and he knows more than anyone in the world.

Revelation!
 Search for one and you will find a hundred:
 more hardworking, more progressive readers,
 people able to recognise
 one tiny point buried in a hundred pages -
 yet unable to live it.

Those who put their whole life into it,
 if they see a line appearing on the face,
 one small line,
 to carry the purpose further,
 to make one laugh,
 to walk - from crutches onto both feet -

but after the crutches are gone,
where are they truly able to walk?

With such a violent jolt,
the love of people,
for which some work had been done,
granted rest.

Going, Going

Going, going, I travel
to a faraway land - so far I may never return.
Once before I turned back and came here;
then I understood:
I had gone only halfway.

So I took leave again for the faraway,
so far that I may never return;
whoever sets out to come back
will tire before even half of half the road is done.
And if one keeps going forward,
the road itself will be seen dissolving.

I shall leave no path behind,
no sign,
not even a little hope.
Beyond the halfway mark, the road lunges and breaks;
I move ahead, the road disappears,
and its work is complete.

Now another work will begin again,
among a new atmosphere and new people:
experiment after experiment.
Will it bring some astonishing result,
or push me once more into that faraway land?

And if I return,
I shall not return to the same old country -
there will be none of those old frightened people,
none of the old familiar trees and growth.
The result itself will be the proof.

This new country seems almost offended with me:
people new, trees new, everything new -
no sign, no hope, no familiar road.

I watch the mark of hope fade.
Trees on both sides
travel with the road;
their shade grows dense.
My familiar sign should surely grow firmer, and yet -
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darkness packs itself solid,
and the sign of my hope disappears.

The Kettledrum Player of the Shamil Baja

Watching the kettledrum's rising strain,
hearing the scene of emptiness -
on nature's canvas
the picture of a roaring sea,
the words of a figure
in the painting of a dark cavern.

No one will see my picture in this darkness;
will anyone at least hear
the voice of the figure's longing?

The boatman moves upon the sea's heaving swell;
he has no leisure to hear the heave.
He watches the ascent and descent of sound.
The roaring waves have no visible edge;
the sky's vastness appears to have no end.

Seas join one another
and create only a semblance of boundlessness
upon this turning, spherical earth -
a semblance of infinity
circling upon a circle.

Yet the human being keeps searching
for the circumference of this infinity;
the human being has measured the circumference.
Is the sky, too, only an extension of appearance?
Does even this infinity possess an end?
Until it is found, we must believe in its boundlessness.

In the urge to see sound,
to hear a picture,
to cross the sea,
to reckon time, age and place,
I abandoned the seeing
of the dark cavern's image;
I abandoned the hearing
of the roaring sea.

Seeing sound, hearing picture -
what kind of seeker is this,
who has become
the kettledrum player
of the Shamil Baja?

Note: In Rajasthan, among musicians playing in a band,
some genuinely play in rhythm and time;
but many merely bring an instrument to their mouths and act as though they are playing. They are
instructed not to blow into the instrument even by mistake. Such performers are called the Shamil Baja.

Mandakini in the Midst of the Sky

Mandakini in the midst of the sky -
today I saw her upon the earth.
Badrinath, vast; Kedarnath;
Alaknanda meeting Mandakini,
the two torrents roaring together -
whose dwelling is this, veiled by cloud?

Those who went to Badri
and never returned -
today their presence seemed to come along the road.
A gust of cold wind falls upon the land;
the earth has slipped beneath living creatures.
Whose abode is this, abandoned to snow?

The heart stands still before the current.
Here the ranges of mountains have no end;
far below their sharp-cut sides runs the stream.
Mountains rise on either bank -
Alaknanda, this beauty is yours.

Mandakini in the midst of the sky -
today I saw her upon the earth.
How she roars, how foaming;
clear and pure, amid the habitations of humankind.
Today she gave the eye a new way of seeing -
this creation washed by the cold wind.

The New Order

The Human Being of the New Order

Economics makes the company a human being,
and turns the human being into a mournful face.
The taste of hatred, and the pleasure taken in hatred.

No longer does one enter Amrapali's house;
politics, money-politics,
have entered this tourism-policy!
Amrapali, wearing spectacles, drives a vehicle;
the hero of Mricchakatika has become a hotel businessman,
a priest of the new caste order;
Amrapali has become the Shakuntala of an anuloma order.

The Dalit of the New Order

Yellow and red turn
the lights at the crossroads.
Wiping the windows of slowing cars,
selling newspapers and magazines -
the Dalit of the new order.

A row of little girls and boys,
a young beggar-woman with a child in her lap,
helpless eyes, a crippled foot,
moving forward on that crippled foot;
and there at the crossroads, all the same,
a troop of Bal-Govins begs with dignity -
not beggars, but givers of blessings.

Better, perhaps, than the worker
turned into a black ghost
by the smoke of the coal kiln.

The Priest of the New Order

The owner of a small industry,
a house like the houses of kings,
drunk on liquor.
Yet the government is determined
to make small industry prosperous -
small industry, or the priest of small industry?

Form a company, take a government loan,
then close the company.
I am not the owner of the company - I am the director.
If the company suffers a loss,
the workers die;
nothing happens to the director.
The company is dying.
Economics makes the company a human being,
and turns the human being into a mournful face.

The Marketplace of the New and Old Orders

How could I sell vegetables in the market at Bhairavsthan?
 So I went to the markets of Delhi and Mumbai,
 to the markets of vegetables and fish;
 became a cook in a hotel.

In the marriages of sons and daughters,
 caste becomes secondary in both;
 widow-remarriage becomes pardonable.
 But when these same people return to the village,
 washed in blue and Tinopal, the Dalit of the new order
 becomes a traveller of the old order.

The vegetable-seller becomes Jaibar;
 the black idol of the industrial quarter
 scrubs the skin with soap
 and becomes a respectable man of the village!
 The hotel cook becomes Soit;
 Sardarji's clerk becomes Kayastha;
 Paswanji becomes
 Dalit.

And while returning, there in the train again,
 all together
 make a reconciliation
 between the new order and the old.
 The train is witness
 to this doubleness of mind -
 to the sunken eyes of an abstract order,
 to the anguish of the ravaged sari,
 to the young widow Amrapali,
 to Charudatta, hero of Mricchakatika,
 and to Vasantasena.

The taste of hatred, and the pleasure taken in hatred.

When Machine and Cat Both Think Me Dead

O Bhishma,
your tale
of suffering -
lying upon the bed
of arrows -
yet I never understood this:
why, Father, did you choose death at will?

The tale of terror is no small one:
hunger, oppression heaped upon the poor,
your Kshatriya expansion,
the circumference of conflict
between power and wealth;
the Ghoshani Brahmins too
the same,
rote-learned knowledge, again the same!

Then...
leaving the kingdom
to a single Yudhishtira,
how did you, Bhishma,
let out your last breath?

Our Yudhishtiras number
five hundred and forty-three,
wearing pure khadi and silk;
and the problem is the same.
The old circumference of conflict broke,
the definition changed,
a new circumference was made.

From kharjura
came Khajuraho;
vrischika means
kharjura;
on the thigh of an apsara
the mark of kharjura,
climbing
higher along the thigh;
and in the roofless Yogini
temple,
within the circle made by fifty-six Yoginis, Shiva.

Soaked through in drops of rain, scorched in the sun,
the people of the country grant death-at-will
to their own feelings and desires,
leaving every duty
to their democratic Yudhishtiras.

Stepping aside - I understand you now, Bhishma:
did death-at-will
bring you nirvana?
Giving death-at-will to my own feelings and desires,
stepping aside -
but how can I step aside?

I become joined to this world when I rise from sleep.
In dream as well, and after waking too,
I remain joined.

In that dreamless depth of sleep, when machine and cat both think me dead,
 the cat comes and sits beside my head,
 thinking me dead.
 The mongoose too had sat beside my head,
 before it a cobra cut into four pieces;
 and when I wake it grows happy and raises its tail.

I understand myself as a human being, the cat as a cat,
 and the mongoose as a mongoose;
 but the cat understands itself and me as cat,
 the mongoose itself and me as mongoose.

Leaving that dreamless depth of sleep, O Bhishma,
 where can I place myself apart?

That dreamless depth of sleep,
 when machine and cat both think me dead,
 and the mongoose guards me from the cobra;
 and in sleep,
 where the speed of time grows slowly, slowly less
 and repeatedly comes to a halt in weariness,
 where space comes to an end
 and the two merge into one another,
 and time begins to turn back,
 and a white hole is born,
 while a surge rises from the black hole,
 swallowing everything that falls within it -
 time and space, everything.

And then
 the speed of time grows slowly, slowly less
 and comes to a halt in weariness;
 space ends,
 and when nothing is anywhere,
 earth, universe, creation - everything is swallowed.
 Time and space merge into one another.
 Space grows smaller, but heavier;
 a point smaller still, yet heavier than this universe and creation,
 because it is made by crushing together this universe and creation;
 the crushed point becomes smaller still
 and then disappears,
 yet remains as heavy as the entire universe and creation.

And this black hole - at first, in a sudden rush,
 larger than creation and the universe,
 and the next moment smaller than the point of a needle -
 then each swallowing the other,
 the crushed point smaller still,
 and then gone.

And a word emerges as time and space merge;
 time begins to turn back,
 a white hole is born,
 and space begins to form.

Is the word eternal, or not?
 Sound has both beginning and end.
 Shall we break it apart and understand language,
 or hear music like a wave?
 But is it only the sound that I can hear?
 What of the sound beyond the range of my hearing?

In dream I keep falling
below the horizon of that creation,
where space has its boundary
and time becomes still, standing upright;
space grows smaller
but bends inward
and begins to collapse.

The horizon of that creation surrounds the black hole;
from the burning ring of that round horizon I fall
into the very middle of this creation,
where I have fallen so many times in dream
and vanish before waking.

In that sky, the roofless Yogini temple,
under the light of night, Shiva among fifty-six Yoginis -
what were they searching for in this creation and universe,
gazing at the stars,
and gazing at the stars?

No illness, no disease, no death;
and if there is death,
it is death-at-will.

Leaving that dreamless depth of sleep, O Bhishma,
where can I place myself apart?

Alas, Kumarila!!

The train was late.
 How was I to reach Delhi
 to be admitted to the hospital ward?
 The train was late.
 Somehow I reached Delhi,
 but here the doctor is busy -
 a government doctor of Delhi.

Come today, tomorrow, the day after;
 I was worn out.
 For him too, Delhi lies far away.
 For him too, Delhi lies far away.
 Tughlaq's Delhi lies far away.
 The age changed, the republic came,
 but the train to Delhi is late
 and the government doctor - gone!

The doctor in the hospital
 boasts of free treatment
 for patients;
 every resident pays
 tax on soap and oil.
 Ask why the hospital latrine is dirty
 and the nurse glares in anger:
 "A partisan of Apollo Hospital, are you?
 Go to Apollo if dirt troubles you.
 Pay the expense - then you will understand.
 As for taxes, go
 and explain them to the Finance Minister."

Delhi is still far away.
 For him too, Delhi lies far away.
 For him too, Delhi lies far away.

People cry, "God, God" -
 some believing Him embodied, some bodiless.
 If He is bodiless, why should He have a desire
 to bring my suffering to an end?
 And if He is embodied, then He too must have been made,
 for before Him there would have been nothing in the world!

Alas, Kumarila!!
 So God has an eternal body
 and all of us bodies that are not eternal!
 Then let me take the doctor as the god of this little world;
 busy as he is, at least sooner or later he sees me.
 Perhaps that is why God has not yet come -
 He must be so very busy.

But from what substance did He make so vast a world?
 Alas, Kumarila!
 Like a spider weaving a web without any material.
 Badarayana is no less - now what will Kumarila say?
 But the spider weaves its web from the substance within it,
 substance that came from eating insects.
 Alas, Kumarila.

Just then the god of this tiny world - my doctor - arrives.
 He places the stethoscope, pierces with the needle;
 the network of nerves in my body, like this universe -
 as many stars in the universe, as many nerves in my body.

The god of this tiny world, my doctor, probes it.

Forging a New Truth on the Strength of Reason

The Fire of Aspiration

I shall fan it and keep it blazing, tend my fire;
but when I poke it, the flame will fall upon a heap of leaves
and begin to spread -
the fire of aspiration.
And desire - is it the fulfilment of aspiration?
And what aspiration?
No surrender, no continuity;
continuity is only the same repeated act:
eating fine delicacies, lingering over beauty.
Intensity of feeling, tamas, tears!

Beyond the Index and Table of Contents

The bangora of the baang,
how this bangthi dries;
the bangor drawn out by boiling,
beaten, then separated into tufts,
fluffed by the dhunki,
the sound of the larni striking the stretched thread,
the takuri spinning as it cuts.
It scatters beyond what has been written,
beyond the index and table of contents,
twisting the loose fibre,
spinning the thread.
This too is education;
this is craft-knowledge.
It scatters beyond what has been written,
beyond the index and table of contents.
My fire of aspiration grows
standing amid the joys and sorrows of people,
a life lived by the reckonings of family, neighbourhood, village and council.

Practical and Theoretical

With the pelni, lifting makhana,
 with the guri, removing the husk;
 an old woman in a nangilat, before her the mistress in a fine nannhasut sari,
 an ornament strung from kalbattu coins lives in the mind;
 kirmichi silver washed with a silver sheen, yet copper underneath.
 The theoretical teacher and the practical worker:
 one carries refinement, the other exhaustion -
 but what if the two should merge in one?
 Like Lakhiya the sheep going first,
 the flock bleating on arrival and crowding on departure;
 a line of twenty sheep, a baag of a hundred,
 a gahed of four or five hundred;
 shearing the sheep, the fleece rolling into tur,
 the old man in a worn mirzai beside the tethering peg.
 The theoretical teacher and the practical worker:
 one carries refinement, the other exhaustion -
 but what if the two should merge in one!
 A paag or maur, large and conical,
 the projecting fold at the front of a patterned paag -
 was this too born of my fire of aspiration?
 Chiratan, thikri, lahariya and janglati prints;
 now my fire of aspiration asks for
 pator, gulbadna, nilambari, the soiri cloth,
 stiffened with starch until its identity holds firm;
 tur-faha, pokharia, lahariya, badami, chanpankha -
 you will turn the cloth and pass the needle
 through my fire of aspiration.
 Life moving with the crowd of people,
 laughing and weeping with that same crowd,
 thinking as the crowd thinks, accepting the council's judgement.
 Then what should I do - simply keep moving like that?
 Or at some turning,
 at some turning, become alone and choose that turn,
 and on the strength of my own reason forge a new truth?
 If the council reaches a decision I find immoral,
 shall I refuse even to laugh the crowd's laughter?

Air Enters the Bellows of My Body

Air enters the bellows of my body.
This old iron clutter, this iron mass -
when the air enters the bellows,
I shall work them and kindle the fire;
take chisel and engraving tool, sharpen the sarauta upon the chakarsan.
Air enters the bellows of my body.
My fire of aspiration glows.
Then shall I forge God,
the form of the soul,
and the relation between the two,
and become the arbitrator in the council between them!

The Tune Rising from the Kabiraha's Kansi

The tune rising from the Kabiraha's kansi
looks upon the chased, ornamented vessel; and then I
hammer the brass into shape - the kalgaiya lota,
the Niranjani lamp, the jaldhari;
then set the lamp upon the lamp-stand;
wear tinkling ornaments, gobariyav gold, jokathi and daskalam,
a chanpkali upon me,
carrying halumani for the grandson;
wearing pathrauti, a pavitri tied to the sacred thread,
like the kanchan-purush of a shraddha.
I raise the tune upon the Kabiraha's kansi.
My fire of aspiration -
I have understood; I have forged soul and God.
But what am I to do? I have understood - but what am I to do?
I must still perform the same conduct, the same work as the crowd,
the crowd's enactment, the crowd's side of truth, the truth of its institutions.
Only if I can cross beyond the crowd's truth - only then?

Stirring the Fire of Aspiration with the Bhujanathi

Like grain roasting in the kansari's pan,
the vessel set upon the daba,
sand heated in the hollow of the hearth -
with the bhujanathi I stir
the fire of aspiration.

Gluttony

A life lives inside my dream,
many parasites within me -
that too is a truth.
Waking from the dream, my chest pounds;
a frightening figure frightens me,
and behind it -
gluttony.
Makhani of maize,
earthy, crisp, delicious -
but now my fire of aspiration itself has become gluttonous.

Bhaisath

Heat the water already set to boil;
parboil, pound, make rice for murhi;
moisten the korai with salt-water, tie the dal in its cloth-knot;
thin mamuri from un-set jaggery crust;
scrape layer from layer and draw out malida.
Tebasi is good, but stale;
thick bhaisath and thin turri curd.
Let the fire keep burning,
press oil from the kernels and make it flare.
My fire of aspiration.

Dhenuar Ghani

Soak it and carry it to the oil-house;
 pay the oilman his bahatauni, set the press and draw the dhenuar oil.
 The press runs; the residue of the oilseed becomes khari.
 White reh appears;
 nonthara comes from the store-room;
 water dripping from the panar, the remaining sitthi heaped upon salt-land;
 foam skimmed from alkaline liquor becomes kharia salt -
 pure.
 Then the residue is thrown back: in the second batch kahi saltpetre,
 and pakwa salt; in the third, telha saltpetre;
 and the neem residue, jarathi.
 Jarathi mixed with sitthi,
 bechua dried in the sun - jarua saltpetre, abi saltpetre;
 raw saltpetre purified into crystalline kalmi saltpetre -
 pure.
 Pure - my fire of aspiration.

Reciting the Charm, I Shall Set the Chhatta

Salt - ramras; less salty - madhnon.
Honey placed in the katiya;
nar-sar for taking birds;
the tube inserted into the gua, the upper head of the nar and the bharu below;
the thin switches of the sar, the bird-clamp for catching.
Reciting the charm, I shall set the chhatta.
The bijji, guardian, guardian of the family,
cut the cobra into four pieces,
protecting both children of the wandering mother.
The bijji keeps watch beside the children's heads;
the hunter has come to call that bijji with a tunkaari,
a snake hanging from his shoulder.
My fire of aspiration will recite the charm and set the chhatta;
it will call the bijji with a tunkaari; the bijji will survive
and keep its watch.
The cobra-charm:
"Four snake-women, twelve-spotted ganda, aini meni khapari teni."
My fire of aspiration will keep reciting the charm.

Playing Bakchhuchharu with Bhikhu

Vishvakarma of bamboo-work -
 split the bamboo tube,
 hollow it and take out
 the white medicine, vanshlochan.
 Koniya basket, winnowing tray, hakra, pathiya -
 yet bound within the khajuria binding
 are present and future,
 playing bakchhuchharu.
 On the embankment of the pond beside the Doma settlement,
 a herd of pigs roots its snouts into the earth.
 Bhikhu's brother is now a government officer;
 another brother a hospital ward-boy;
 and Bhikhu is still in the Doma quarter,
 living with the present, searching for the future,
 standing fixed in the same place.
 At dusky evening, lilidali in hand, comes the brother who became an officer,
 but the village -
 understand it as already left behind.
 Even his marriage was held
 in a grand household.
 The other brother still comes to the village:
 better clothes, better covering - but the work remains the same.
 "Nothing occurs to me - what should I do? The future looks just like that.
 You have come; tell me what work you need."
 Bhikhu's face lit up.
 At that dusky hour I stayed silent,
 standing near the jhandi tree,
 beside the standing deadwood.
 Bhikhu spoke up: "But the work -
 the work -
 my officer brother himself
 will not do it;
 but for you
 I shall certainly speak."
 And I say, "No, Bhikhu,
 the officer will surely get the work done;
 but this work is at the hospital.
 My father
 is admitted there,
 where your brother
 works.
 It has been many days since he was admitted,
 but the date of the operation keeps becoming today, tomorrow, then another day -
 keeps being moved onward."
 Bhikhu's face flashed bright
 in the dusky evening.
 Yes. Yes.
 There is a satisfaction in being able to say it,
 a self-contentment in being able to help -
 from that.
 From Bhikhu, Vishvakarma of bamboo-work, from his vanshlochan,
 I too am satisfied.

Fish and I Floating in the Light

In that dusky evening,
flickering, flickering -
my fire of aspiration is, is not, going out.
Fish and I float in the light.
This long nammad-haggi;
the machhar in the bidai
has stopped in the Dakahi pond.
The Dakahi pond is now covered with makhana leaves,
but here in the bidai the fish-hunt continues.
Kachchha-chhop; kabai swimming.
The kabai sees
the killer, the maker and the swimmer -
everyone except the one who eats it.
Kahi circles.
I stand beside the fruiting kauathutthi tree,
near the kabai-jalla;
I come in,
pull the phirchai and hold it,
letting the net spread.
Then I begin to circle;
then stamp the tapi,
and stand still.
Fish float in the light.
Then I leave the net
and hunt fish with sahad.
Now
ichhain is everywhere.
Ichhain becomes my fire of aspiration.
As the net spreads,
the circling begins;
thought enters.
Does the smell of ichhain become destiny,
the disposition of life?
I begin to float with the fish.
It seems that while the net is being cast, someone is binding me;
it seems someone enters my chest carrying honey.
Thought enters.
Will the smell of ichhain become my destiny?
The disposition of my life?
This long nammad-haggi -
ichhain becomes my fire of aspiration.

I Read the Standing Vine

I read the standing vine.
 I see the kharahi buried beside the root of the betel plant,
 and upon it I read the standing vine.
 My delight is tied with clumps of radi grass and moss,
 like a vine climbing a clump of sarpat grass.
 Like the vine, I find myself;
 I have become the betel bundle tied to the support.
 The folded leaves are stitched with siki,
 threaded on thin bamboo splints.
 A creeping branch comes out along the edge;
 ichari supports the rising plant.
 I have become the chharra vine of betel, knot after knot, a chharra creeper.
 Cut the tip of the vine, make the chhapta.
 Four or five leaves near the root are like grass;
 four or five above become koot-khoot, then kachlewari;
 the leaves upon the tip become murwari.
 At plucking time, one or two hard tajji leaves of the koot
 are left for a while.
 From root to tip, dupanna and lewar everywhere.
 With jhalma disease, the betel turns bitter;
 with phutta disease, I wander alone like a rotted leaf,
 drowning; with telgagara I shed, with badhti the growing tip falls.
 By turning the leaves I postpone death for a while - only for a while!
 I have become chauthaiya, dholi, lesa, bhira;
 a bhiri tied in leaves, prepared like a pataura, trembling to go to market;
 loose betel with its stem, set aside for worship;
 I have become market-goods stuffed into shining foil like a tabak.
 And then
 I look at the kharahi buried beside the root of the betel plant,
 and upon it I read the standing vine
 that is my fire of aspiration.

Let the Shraddha Not Go to Waste

One death, then another death - the young father, then the uncle.
The elder uncle had been forceful in public custom;
the younger brother was anxious.
When a second death comes during the shraddha period,
the second shraddha precedes the first;
one shraddha will go to waste - both brothers were worried.
The priest too will not stand with the weak, whatever the scripture may say.
Send word to the maternal village: let Father's shraddha not go to waste.

Shalatur Village

Turning the pages of Taxila's history:
 the wheel turned; a broken spoke stood upright.
 Xuanzang's account -
 teachers of grammar in Shalatur village,
 situated at the confluence of the Kabul and the Sindhu streams;
 the village that was Panini's, and the maternal village - today's Lahur village.
 Now the image of the Buddha is being broken at Bamiyan;
 Panini's descendants, Yusufzai Pathans;
 history and the journey toward the daksh country.
 From the turning wheel of history -
 the wheel turned,
 the broken spoke stood upright.
 It is well that the kin is near,
 and has set up the obstruction;
 on that pretext I remain alert,
 continually making ready.
 Until 1962 the Himalaya was thought a wall,
 as the sea was until 1498;
 only the Khyber Pass seemed to open the door.
 Neighbours too were attacked;
 tyrants came from far away.
 The wheel turned; my country broke;
 the kinsman raised the barrier.
 Well then - the kinsman has made the barrier
 for which I keep preparing.

The Great Six-Lane Road

Mother!
Mother, beside the paddy field
a great road
has been built,
six lanes wide -
three for coming, three for going.
Today there was such a fine red car there,
and upon it
a red flag flying.
Its window was not open;
it was shut.
I saw it today while I was selling birds.
A child
grew insistent,
had the car window opened,
and bought
all my birds.
There was moisture on that child's face,
a ruddy face;
when the window opened,
cold air came out
from the car's A.C.
The car was red,
and upon it
a red flag flew.
Mother!

Mother, this great road
beside the paddy field,
six lanes wide,
for cars of every colour -
three coming and three going -
is right there.
Mother!
This is our own village road, is it not?
Yet everyone from our village
has gone,
gone away
for earnings in Delhi and Punjab.
In the village are mud houses,
four walls of thatch and tile;
but beside the paddy field
this great road
is concrete,
smooth, more beautiful than the houses.
I saw it there today,
Mother!

I hear it was built
with some World Bank fund -
a paved, sleek, shining road,
six lanes wide,
glittering like glass!
Mother!
Last year Uncle's house,
Uncle's concrete house,
was the sort that leaks,
and it fell down in only a few days.
That too had been built from some government fund!
It never shone like glass;
people were afraid even while living in it.

Well, it collapsed.
 Perhaps it was built from some counterfeit fund.
 But today I saw the splendour of that car
 on our village's six-lane road
 built with World Bank funds!
 Mother!

This World Bank fund must be a very good fund!
 Can houses not be built with such a good fund?
 If this good fund gave food and work,
 why would people run to Delhi and Punjab?
 Why would they have to hear Raj Thackeray's abuse?
 Why would they go to Assam to be bloodied?
 I hear that even when they go to study
 people curse them as "Bihari".
 Mother!

If houses and courtyards in our village
 were built with this good World Bank fund,
 would they be like those leaking concrete rooms?
 No - they would be beautiful, smooth as glass, solid,
 like this six-lane road beside the paddy fields.
 And if that fund also brought work,
 people too would remain at home;
 village houses would not stand hollow and deserted as they do now.
 There would be bustle in our own village,
 and then the splendour of our village would be worth seeing!
 And the splendour of this six-lane road too!
 We too would have clothes upon our bodies
 like the clothes worn by the child
 sitting in the red car with the red flag.
 Mother!

I used to feel that
 this road of our own village
 was closer to us than that red foreigner's
 red car with the red flag.
 Now both seem foreign.
 The vehicles rush past,
 crushing villagers and chickens from the settlements around.
 Today it seemed to me
 that even the cold air coming out of that red car
 was not our air.
 It felt as though that air and that car
 had become untouchable to me,
 untouchable by my touch.

Our village is a peacock,
 the six-lane road its plume,
 and we are the peacock's feet.
 Though the road belongs to our own village,
 it feels like a foreigner,
 Mother!
 Every day, while grazing goats,
 I keep watching the splendour
 of our village road,
 six lanes wide!

The Concrete Jaith

The pond-bank burns, a wall of noon;
weary trees and vegetation, warm water soaking the margins.
Everyone sets a wooden jaith;
this is the first one made of concrete.
The dark growth clinging to it is a sign of antiquity.
The pond in the other hamlet is no pond at all, only a puddle;
without a jaith it seems its sacred-thread rite was never performed.
The reason is the same:
I hear its owner was not twice-born
and departed before the pond's upanayana.
When money came, he fancied having a pond dug -
but how does one gain fame by digging only a puddle, a shallow tank?
Look at the concrete jaith of our own hamlet.
I hear concrete grows harder the longer it remains in water,
not like a wooden jaith,
whose life is short.

I Don't Know Whether I'll Return, or...

I do not know whether I shall return
or vanish here,
dying and dissolving far from home.

I would sweep the house and courtyard,
come to the doorway,
give durva grass to the cow,
light the household fire.

And yet here in Punjab
tea tasted so good;
even after a whole day's labour
I did not feel tired, friend.
Now I hear opium used to be mixed into the tea.
Then, when a hornet's nest fell before a child,
I remembered the village.
"Come back home," the country called.
The smell of Mithila's soil -
mango season has come;
leaves must be falling from the trees;
lajbijji plants must have spread
around their roots.

Here I have made neither a tree's root
nor a single step of a pond-ghat my own.
Hardy grass and thorn are all I find;
even the stars are no longer seen.
What pollution is it here
that has stopped Uncle Moon
from coming down into our plate?
And these people call us "Bihari".
Someone,
take me back
home.
My heart does not settle here.

Mother's tin utensils -
when they were first bought,
how we laughed!
All the brothers, delighted,
ate from that plate by turns.
Here in the city of Delhi there are steel utensils,
but where is the taste of that tin plate
from which we ate, savouring every mouthful?

I do not know whether I shall return
or vanish here,
dying and dissolving.

Goats and sheep rustle among fallen dry leaves
on the pond-bank;
babul thorns,
white, pale, poisonous -
but not as poisonous
as the pale people of this city of Delhi:
poison in the words,
and more deadly still, the hate in their eyes,
amid the cry, "Bihari! Bihari!"

I sell
combs, papad,

massagers.
Winter night;
I shiver.
This wind too is just as
chandala-cold.

On a tree before me are six wounds;
from them flows a sap
white-red,
which then becomes a thick solid gum.
Dried in winter,
scorched in summer,
this tree and its leaves
teach me how to remain alone,
in one place,
without growing weary,
year after year.

Grandmother used to offer arghya to the Sun;
behind her the water would fall with a splash.
I - the little boy -
would stamp my feet and jump:
splash, splash.

I do not know whether I shall return
or vanish here,
dying and dissolving.

Ghazal

Bahr-e-Mutaqarib: eight feet; fa-ulun repeated four times.

You take me for a gambler, needlessly;
why set apart another seat for living, needlessly?

I raised a clamour, I sang my sadness;
why does the showman keep provoking me, needlessly?

However many navari and chhabari rot away,
no sutari will turn them back, needlessly.

Hungry at home, disappointed outside,
famine cries out, helplessly, needlessly.

We carry the cot onward on this hope;
yet the cremation-ground comes into view, needlessly.

Nature, Purusha

Nature - anger.
With kusa grass, sesame and water,
becoming a widow;
what difference from a married woman?
Durva, unbroken rice, water.
(Tanka / Waka)

With karavira,
house, tree, mountain -
all enclosed.
(Haiku)

The builder-person:
the house drain
cannot find an outlet.
(Senryu)

Uproot the karahad and eat it; bring Nature into the house;
make a flower garden; take a photograph of the mountain and hang it on the wall. Then become a lover of Nature.
Bring the village into the city through painting, artistry and cleverness.

Let me play under the black canopy of sky.
Where will I find a one-track road now? Even four lanes are considered too narrow: six lanes, eight lanes.
The sky is smudged, the green of the trees is smudged, the mind is smudged. But the roads and houses are sleek and gleaming like photographs.
I draw with pictures
the plan of a house today -
I am entangled.
(Haibun)

Searching for Nature,
I crossed beyond the search -
a dry leaf.
(Haiku)

This flower, this fruit,
as I climb farther onward,
grows smaller.
I turn and look again:
nearby is small, far away larger.
(Tanka / Waka)

Colour abandoned -
mountain and tree,
but life.
(Senryu)

How dazzling are these colours, so many shades! Nature, flower,
leaf, road and sky shine brighter than a child's book. And leave all that aside - this snow, a desert indeed, only snow instead of sand. There is no oxygen, no flower, no leaf. Yet look at its grandeur too. The road by which I came did not shine like this. When I was close to that Nature, how could I have contemplated its form? Someone looking from afar may have been able to contemplate me too; in the midst of Nature, I too must have become Nature. But now, upon this summit, how beautiful Nature appears.

The tree has become
a lonely child;
the leaf has become
Nature's toy,
seen from the summit.

Yet now that I have reached this summit,
it seems I came here for nothing. Seen from down there, how beautiful this summit appeared. But after reaching it, now the village itself seems better. Comparison is possible only when I can look at the village's Nature from the summit: summit from village, village from summit. Ah, what a hunger to see! Now I move to the far side of the summit and look at the people and society there. From a distance the villages on both sides look beautiful, terraced one above another. Yet from that village too the summit must look as beautiful as it does from this side.

Do not stand still;
come, let us return.
I am a traveller-trader;
I am among people;
I go, I return.
(Haibun)

The tat has spread, the woven screen trails - tear off the jhora and eat.
This lightning spreads like the veins of a root.
Sprouting from the root, this crackling force spreads direction after direction and will cover everything.
There is no reason to admit defeat, no pride in victory.
People underground, craft in the sky overturned - world, people,
cosmos, thought, all reversed.
A world of water: beneath the sea, astonishing colours.
Without turmeric, Chanakya's poisonous maiden - that vishakanya.
Without turmeric she became poisonous, the vishakanya raised without turmeric.

Turmeric: virtue upon virtue. Catch cold? Put milk and turmeric together,
close your eyes and gulp it down. Hurt yourself? Mix lime into turmeric and apply it. Without turmeric
neither dal nor khichri will look yellow; khichri becomes pale and dal turns dull. The plant looks almost
like a vaijayanti flower, though it grows in the garden, not on the pond-bank like vaijayanti. Turmeric plant
/hiding in its root /its own virtue. (Haibun)

There is hope:
panisokha has risen -
come, let us move on.
(Haiku)

It has grown late;
panisokha has risen.
I set to work,
leave the house -
the road has appeared.
(Tanka)

This panisokha
has risen in the sky -
up, ever upward!
(Senryu)

Ah, now it will be late. Panisokha has risen,
the road has opened. The labourer leaves for trade;
the farmer goes to pull seedlings for transplanting;
and I leave for some useless work that may become useful, upon an endless road, toward a directionless
crossroads where I have paused.

Watching the road,
I look toward the sky -
a strange illusion:
as though this panisokha,
rising, will open the road.

Then I shall look again, search for my equal,
and keep walking until the rains come. But if I say I shall keep walking until the rain, is that not some kind

of escape? Panisokha has already risen, the road has already opened, and still I am watching the road for the rain that is to come?

Rainbow-coloured

is this hope.

Hope rises;

the sky meant for sinking

has become terror.

(Haibun - two prose passages and two tanka)

Haiku / Senryu / Tanka

Green glass / red-and-white specks / gathered in the heart
 No oasis / an island in a world of water / no sand, only water
 That blue cloud / leaving sea and earth / became sky
 Leaf and bird / each like the other / in skin-colour
 Sky-water / through the sky of water / cleaves a road
 This snowfall / a snow-like sky / earth and trees
 The sun in the east / a ray of hope / yet blood-red
 Nature's water / after the uproar / calm, profoundly calm
 An anxious bird / a bare drying tree / struck with wonder
 Nature's dance / live with nature / become nature
 Love of nature / live with nature / become nature
 My spirit rises / with sudden delight / seeing it again
 Amarlatti vine / like panisokha perhaps / touching the sky
 Darkening / this tree of the sky / with the clouds
 The gods descend / from the sky / toward the earth
 Dusty Sawan / then Bhado again / an ocean of sand
 Kachauabandh / the village's desire / struck down
 Trees and shrubs / among little birds / I keep feeding
 A gathered night / day like night / and night, night
 Far horizon / everyone turning faces / to their own side
 Far horizon / no end to the circle / nearness is a disguise
 A ladder of clouds / a scaffold of sky / strewn with snow
 Darkness and light / made radiant / by inward light
 Saladh now / what follows Ariya-crossing / the condition beyond
 If unfallen / neither fall nor rise / remain there
 The snake coils / reaches the summit / the road is made
 Jalpaibedhi / bonath, dhamaur / uprooted
 Not dalbah / panjiyar, bhagta / nor bhagaitiya
 Banana's tender spear / do a little work / eat the shoot
 A winding turn / becoming a crossroads / brings hope
 Water falls / becomes a current / moves onward
 For your rising / kusa, sesame, unbroken rice / and for your setting too
 A flock of sheep / I shall herd it / even in foreign lands
 This burden of culture / has risen again / shall I move on?
 Kathakiya or ghardekhiya / no one at all / comes here
 From high above / I see myself become / Brahma and Mahesh
 Rise and descent / no narha-faujdar / nature is what we need
 Earth's end / now the beginning begins / with sky
 Neither people nor trees / this beauty of the eye / exists because of them
 This long way / descending southward / I am Agahan
 A path in the sky / of a thousand floods / the heavens wheel
 Nature as though / a kingfisher seated / on cold steps
 Like a circle / earth and nature round / infinity made plain
 The colour of shadow / in so many kinds / layered
 A sandy hollow / beyond it there / water and sky
 The flood seems / calm as the sea / yet this is lightning
 Panidudduraddu / become panichhata / a land of floods
 Fields turning / serpentine like a road / the form of nature
 A frog in a well / the well is vast, the frog too / has either any limit?
 River-dolphin whistle / if it does not strike / it is finished
 The rising moon / moonlight of the moon / the setting moon
 I am ashalubdhi / I am jaharmohara / not delikhongi
 Blue sea / whose shadow is it? / the blue sky
 Dibarakhauku / a crowd of dibaras / yet I stand
 Above the clouds / circling, bubbling / I thunder
 The sun's shadow / has left a vast stain / upon the heart
 Lion and lioness / bare their teeth / demanding their share
 The hare is swift / runs, hides away / making a burrow
 Parba wings / I call aloud / yes, ti ti ti
 The parrot speaks / I stand silent / the parrot speaks
 A water-island / fathomless, yet / it says there is no stone

The moon's form / darkness on the full moon / truth seen nearby
 With its crest unfurled / nature's flowerpot / hold back the fall
 I am the shepherd / urging the sheep onward / it goes / Lakhia sheep in front / no wolf-stampede
 Standing I watch / sheep coming and going / out to graze / those leaving I khabhau / those returning I bathanau
 Nature's dance / in Hamsya-hasta / nature as Rambha
 Standing above / between earth and sky / swaying
 Svastika-hasta / Khatakamukha-hasta / Makara-hasta
 Nature wraps itself / in a blanket of grass / and looks at the sky
 Giving ahara / the giver's fulfilment / is what it shows
 Goraha mound / I am the dung-scraper / making gonaur / or a drum of dung-cakes / rising upward
 Tart and sweet / green and red / together
 A one-foot path / pressed down and collapsing / becomes a road
 Taking a knock / Kalidasa struggles / upon the twig
 A fish's home / braid the sahath and bring / our own home
 Sea and land / meet in the sky / become Trishanku
 Nature's mirror / this flying scene / the mirror of the mind
 The lower slope / the upper climb / both simple
 Horse dung / the colour of the horse / and its form too
 My house / like a stack of nar / does not fly away
 Holding longing / I stand even after death / to see the day
 Pigeon-dance / Gajadanta formed / I stand before it
 It collides / with uproar / and breaks apart
 Amarlatti vine / strangling the tree / killing it / becoming itself / the amarlatti
 Clouds thunder / lightning flashes / nature dances
 Seeing lightning / I remember the love / never received / these clouds surge / into the heart
 I drag hope / a boat over ice / without effort / between the mind's buoyancy / and hope's labour
 Acid rain / the namchuruk / has given it / even the suddah,
 becoming / a rain of death
 Life-rain / rain gives life / acid rain / in disguise / becomes death-rain
 Burnt away / yet still it stands / sulking
 Without living beings / a creationless world / I stand alone / did art still die? / did dance still cease?
 Makhana and betel / identity found till daybreak / now in a trader's hand / being sold
 This is ahara / this fruit of pirar / belongs to the poor
 Night's zhōjh / is the night itself / insects and birds / is the air quiet / or haunted?
 In Bauachauri / four bellies hang from grazing / go home now / the herdsman looks / how lean it is
 Boundless / the wonder / of a mother's tenderness
 Seasonal fragrance / blossom-lured / foliage vanished
 Ghodan chhatta / sand-scraped khurchan / a shock of moustache
 Koili-pikki / the jackal's nirait / Rakshas shrine
 Midday / the haunted grove / holding its breath
 Sarahi fruit / grafted mango grove / keeping watch
 Kolpati and / a heap of chaff / gachh-pakkuta
 Pole-broken / buried usargi / grandfather's sara
 The game of titi / satghariya move / Ashoka seed
 Kansupati / a ball of oidhak / and Jur-Shital
 Mara abaar / Dakahi's fishing / burning the odha
 Kabai sanna / chali, bokari soil / woodpecker
 Porcupine flesh / even its thorn / no use for piercing

Kundaliya

Know the difference between truth and falsehood; hold nothing back.
 Do not quarrel in vain: what is destined has already entered the reckoning.
 What is written - how could it become otherwise?
 Truth will prevail, if we do not twist our own conduct.
 With fear of falsehood, break the fear lodged in the heart.
 Understand Airavata: this, too, is the truth hidden within untruth.

The hive whirled from the fold of cloth; daylight itself grew dark.
 When the day was spent I turned homeward; time had become terrible.
 Terrible time - every pore of the body shivers.
 Who will listen to a question? Speech itself is bridled.
 Airavata is helpless; where has the spoken word disappeared?
 Time wheels back and enters the very heart of the hornets' hive.

If victory comes without pride, understand that as good.
 Do not panic when defeated; understand this, my friend.
 Understand this, my friend: if some entanglement arises,
 accept the loss and move forward; do not begin the quarrel again.
 Where the work is done and leaves gladness, that alone is good.
 Make the mind Airavata, and look steadily at defeat and victory.

Let speech be good; understand before you speak.
 Sometimes silence alone is right when the net is long.
 If the net is long, it may swallow everything within
 and turn into clamour when the moment is not right.
 Listen to this of mine: a word can be beyond price.
 Airavata says as he goes - do not speak words
 like lumps thrown without thought.

Flag Song of Mithila

Mithila's flag
will fly
across the world.

Mother - angered, adorned, stained -
I have seen you so;
I grow restless,
the mind itself begins to drift.

From this land
of learning, enterprise and labour,
your children will rise again
after having fallen behind.

By intelligence, resourcefulness
and courage of hand,
toward victory -
do not doubt it.

If Maithili has grown faint of breath,
we shall speak its conjunct sounds in full;
at our touch
its letters will burst again into voice.

The flag
will not fall -
O Mother Mithila.

Among Dreams Breaking as They Arrive

Jyoti, I Fell Deep into Thought

My mind went numb.
Jyoti,
I fell deep into thought.

Every matter here and there
had been ploughed over;
evening came, the ox was lost.
I looked all around -
to whom could I tell this?
They would only laugh on hearing it.

The mind itself has gone blunt.
Today, brother - O brother -

I Forgot Again - A Tiny Form of Karna's Death

I go on firmly resolved
that today I shall not forget.
Thought after thought
moves through the mind,
and all artificiality
begins to collapse.

Then, when the hour for the work comes,
I cannot remember.
Little by little the mind recalls
that tiny form
of Karna's death -
and afterwards,
squeezed by regret,
I remain silent.

Katihari

There is a knife-edge chill in the wind;
 this cold will enter the bones.
 The post-mortem body lies
 upon seven thick stone slabs;
 in a little while it too will burn.
 The chief mourner has brought fire in a dung-cake,
 set it below,
 dipped himself in the shivering water,
 taken flame from the dung-cake fire,
 and, to give the body its passage and final passage,
 has surrendered it to fire
 with grass, wood and ghee.

Everyone will return,
 crossing and touching iron, stone, fire and water;
 they return home,
 leaving the mother
 with a month-and-a-half-old child in her lap.

At dawn after the last night
 of the first decade of the twenty-first century,
 nothing has changed -
 leave clothing and male privilege aside -
 the condition of women
 is harsher than this cutting wind,
 entering deeper into the bone.

Not on the bank of the Kamala, but on the Yamuna,
 a thousand miles from the village,
 the village's white cloth merges with another shore.
 The same story as sixty years ago,
 the same society;
 only the clothing has changed,
 only the river-current has changed.

The body upon seven stone slabs -
 fire devours it,
 the flame makes it pure.

A family will form again,
 and thirty years later
 we shall see its result.
 Until then this cold will remain lodged in the bones,
 colder by far
 than the chill of this wind.

Gopichanan, gangaut, garland,
 fresh white cloth;
 a tulsi leaf in the mouth,
 a fragment of gold, Ganga water;
 kusa grass spread upon the earth
 beside the tulsi plant,
 the head turned north.

The post-mortem body.
 The chief mourner too wears new white cloth,
 sacred thread and uttariya;
 with water in a new earthen vessel
 he faces east, reads the mantra,
 sprinkles the dead with kusa-water,
 holds the uk in his left hand

and kindles it from the dung-cake fire.

Three times he circles the dead;
then fire is offered to the mouth.
Cotton, wood, ghee, incense, camphor, sandalwood.
The dead one in the dress of a dove.

Each person lays down five pieces of wood.
When the burnt remains have become
a lump of flesh like the charred body of a dove,
the mourner takes the satkathiya,
circles seven times,
splits the uk into seven pieces with the axe,
cuts all seven bonds,
throws all seven satkathiyas into the fire,
puts children and elders in front,
and, guarding heel and step,
they go to bathe.

Tilanjali with muda, sesame and water,
the body left unwiped.
Then at the courtyard of the dead,
at the doorway, in order:
iron, stone, fire and water.
Touch them,
and return home.

Shatananda, the priest.
Agahan Shukla, Vivaha Panchami -
the finest day for marriage.
Priest Shatananda
performed the wedding of Rama and Sita.
His own marriage too
was held on Vivaha Panchami.
The priest, too, must have been a great scholar.

How much suffering Sita Dai endured!
Mithila paintings covered the wedding pavilion;
parichhan, Naina-Jogin - everything was done,
just as it had been
at Sita Dai's wedding.
The wedding day too was the finest of days.
Songs of Naina-Jogin and jog -
what could any of it save?

My friend tells me this
whenever he takes his widowed sister-in-law
to Danapur Cantonment for her pension.
Seeing his widowed bhauji,
he keeps weeping inwardly.

He once told his father
that widows should be allowed to remarry.
His father rose and beat him again and again:
"So this lineage has produced
a very capable man indeed!"

Yet I know
the father too keeps groaning.
He carries on his shoulders
the bad custom of society.
What other way does he believe he has?

To see the result
 we may have to live through many ages.
 Until then this cold will remain lodged in the bones,
 colder by far
 than the chill of this wind.

The matter was not even complete -
 yet within three days
 it had already become old news.

A bomb blast.
 A bomb left in a dustbin explodes.
 People, vehicles, objects fly apart;
 fresh red blood pours in streams.
 The story grows old;
 the blood clots,
 turns black.

And over here - Breaking News:
 "The city is back on track!"
 "This is the city of large-hearted people!"

But in the house
 where the breadwinner has died,
 can the train of life
 come back upon the rails
 in a day or two -
 or even in a whole lifetime?

Perhaps in the next birth,
 perhaps the next generation
 will see the result.
 Until then this cold will remain lodged in the bones,
 colder by far
 than the chill of this wind.

A Witching Afternoon

The life of sleep is strange.
In the fierce sunlight
of a witching afternoon
I dream the monstrous form
of Sahasrabadhani.

He pounces upon his beloved,
twists her throat.
The lover seizes
Sahasrabadhani's hair
and hurls him into the pond.

But the hair coils round the lover's feet:
the long-haired panidummi of the pond,
Sahasrabadhani's beloved.
Escaping the sorcerer Sahasrabadhani's zhōjh,
she is caught in the whirl
of the long-haired water-spirit.

The lover spends his own life
to save the beloved.

I wake in that mantra-and-tantra afternoon.
The dream, still humming with gun-dhuni,
becomes the swiftest runner,
the nimblest wrestler in the akhara.

The panting master's voice
breaks his solitude.
Sleep painted dark as Karikh -
night itself.

The Unsteady Pillar Stands

The broken, arriving, broken sequence
of sleep and dream
will bring the problem to an end;
the drum of justice will resound,
problem and compromise will meet.

Enduring the death-blow,
winning, surviving,
sleep still comes;
yet the fulfilment of deep sleep
keeps slipping away.

All the friends together
slowly mixed poison into sleep
and made the life of sleep strange.

Invisible walls of many colours in the mind
keep falling;
walls of feeling keep falling.
The unsteady pillar stands.

The granary of aspiration is full,
standing as a symbol:
the Himalayan-wood shrine kept inside the house,
or the tulsi plant on the veranda -
symbols only of fellow-feeling.

They remind the mind
of the bank of the well and pond.
The blue wall of a swimming pool
makes the water blue.

The invisible wall
of the mind's own colour
keeps falling.
The unsteady pillar stands.
And flows.

On the Far Side of Sleep

Night ties its black band
over the eyes.
Beside the sleeping body
time sits quietly.
At dawn, the familiar inward footfall
can be heard again.

And this is the heaviest sorrow:
loss of memory -
momentary, endless.

A strip of film:
a chain of still images.
Turn it in sequence
and it gives the illusion of motion.
Yet motion does exist:
a creature of slower motion
before a creature of faster motion,
seeing its own figure
in mirrors ahead and behind -
figure behind figure
to infinity.

Does that mean
whatever has others
has no end?
Or is all this only one inference,
then another inference?

Is consciousness too
like a strip of still frames?
Does the spinning reel
produce awareness?

That which wakes by day or night
dreams after sleeping
by day or night.
But dreamless, dense sleep -
is this a form of death?
Or of life?

Cells of the body break and form;
between the birth and death of cells
the creature lives.
Consciousness moves onward
like a wave
breaking and remaking itself.

The tick of a watch
does not reach every creature's pocket.
I look at time strapped to my wrist
and ask:
do I fit wholly
inside this measure?

Beneath the dense foliage of the Amazon
countless beings
spend the day in their own ways.
My afternoon may be another's night;
my silence may be news to another.

Even one whose body moves
 may have desire suppressed.
 Under the weight of command
 human beings are made alike.
 By taking away someone's power to hear,
 we make smaller
 the meaning of that person's being alive.

There, on the corner of a leaf,
 a caterpillar moves;
 before it too
 a whole world of its own lies open.
 Why should my measure
 be imposed upon it?

Sometimes I count the distance of a road;
 sometimes the time spent upon it.
 But when I approach
 the infinitely minute
 or the infinitely vast,
 both measuring cords become knotted.

Where did an event occur
 and when did it occur -
 how can the answers
 be kept completely apart?

As the earth seems to move away
 beneath the feet,
 my body too
 moves forward with it.
 Among these many rhythms of motion
 there rises the experience
 of one still moment:
 the silent presence
 of what is now.

And the past is momentary.
 And the future is momentary.
 And the present too is momentary.

Then one person sows the crop
 and another harvests it.
 And then -
 the Gita's doctrine of karma?

And again:
 if the numerals are erased from the clock,
 what remains?

Earth, body, stars -
 all keep changing form.
 Somewhere life is visible;
 somewhere a new shoot breaks through.
 There is no final account
 for this exchange of the world.

Moment by moment.

Yet memory remains
 after the death of each present night,

like memory of a previous birth,
like a copy.

Across innumerable lives
of unknown people,
memory too is only a copy;
however distinct it may be,
it remains a copy.

Dreamless Void

Beside the Village Pond

Beside the village pond,
beside the village pond,
I cast the fishing line
and try to catch.

The winged horse of aspiration,
submerged in the formula of success;
an endless waiting,
the soundless silence.

The water's surface
stands as a still controller.
The movement of a tiny insect
raises a minute ripple -
an image
of hope and trust.

I stand with the line cast,
trying to catch.
From the edge of faith
toward science;
the mass of knowledge
has been sunk beneath the water.

The waiting ends.
Serene peace.

Sons and kachhu;
water emptied of harkachhu.
Disease brought to an end
the maker's making.

Planting tiny seed-fry,
I dared again
to cast the line
and try to catch.

The horse of aspiration.
The formula of success.
A mass of knowledge,
the maker's creation
within its own sensory share.

Standing in the very middle
of the endless sky,
mechanical
in the middle of endless extension:
silent, serene, wordless -
the human being.

And when the tiniest feeling
raises a ripple,
it overwhelms
the human being
who had seemed
empty and dry.

On the Seashore

At the Mahabalipuram seashore,
beside the immeasurable sea,
the heart filled with exhilaration.

I saw
the Sun Temple,
the Pandava chariots,
and the sky-lamp.

When salt water
entered my mouth,
I was astonished.
I swam.
I struck
the wall of waves;
every limb
shivered and shivered.

I forgot
all that had been seen and heard,
forgot the talk of the sea;
mind and body
took breath.

Then Mani the guide
told this story:
foreigners came
and opened this truth -
this was the gift
of the Pallava dynasty.

The people of India
had forgotten.
The moment passed;
Angkor Wat came to mind:
the king gone,
the people forgetting -
hari, hari -
the thread of history broken.

When decline comes
so quietly.

Temples beneath the waters
of the Caspian Sea,
built by Indian traders -
and today
this is our condition.

The village boring and pump-set:
charity from an American engineer.

Enough -
where have I drifted again?

I returned to laughter,
laughing and laughing.
In laughter I forget
and throw away all my grief;
with grief,

all my ambitions.

Possibility gives inspiration.
Self-confidence arrives
with quickness.
The fulfilment of desire
makes aspiration grow.

When the eyes of the mind meet,
worry recedes just so -
as waves at the seashore
carry away leaves
and scraps of food,
cleaning the shore.

All anxieties flow away;
the shore of the mind
becomes calm and clean.

Forgetting oneself
in the mind's eye,
with affection -
only this much
can bring
so many possibilities
and so many results.

But its opposite...

Omniscience

Knowledge is incomplete,
but that is hidden.
Doubt too is incomplete,
and that too is hidden.

Neither knowledge is complete,
nor doubt.

Each has its own truth:
the song and music of human beings,
the song and music of nature,
the music of honeybees,
the pigeon's nest -
all held in sequence.

A human being
may survive without building a house;
a pigeon cannot.

Deeper and deeper
the distinction is hidden.
A great truth
needs a finder of secrets.

If you have not seen,
then at least have heard it all.
If not heard,
then at least have experienced.
Have lived
that greater truth.

The greater the truth,
the greater its mystery.

But for the finder
who has seen everything,
everything becomes one.

To counter one inference,
another inference;
for seeing itself
is also an act of inference.

And behind it
spreads silence.
If we come out of hush upon hush
and speak,
that too is inference.

Life itself
is inference.

Inward, outward;
this side, that side;
inside, outside -
something appears,
something does not.
Something is experienced,
something is not.

What appears
may become experience;
yet it need not.

What does not appear -
can that never be experienced?
And the moment it is experienced,
how could it have been
non-experience?
How could it have remained unseen?

And if the unseen
becomes seen,
then the seen itself
may become unseen.

At the innermost core of mystery:
empty space,
and yet
completely filled.

Keep stripping away the coverings,
cutting layer after layer,
until it becomes invisible
yet shining -
that which everything touches
and then turns,
leaps,
moves.

As though speed itself increased:
to fall through empty space
and whirl with motion
means that something
has filled it.

Something neither inside
nor outside;
not what was seen,
not what was heard,
not what was thought.

And the Gita's doctrine of karma
is a system of justice:
what you sow,
you reap.

This is the stage
where actions arrive
from every direction.

Some things
are as they appear;
some things
are not as they appear.

We are
what we think,
what we say,
what we do.

And knowledge is

to become free,
to be released from bondage.
This is the direct encounter with truth;
this itself
is the doctrine of karma:

by thought, word or deed,
harm no one.

Ancient as a child,
new as a child.

And revelation occurs
when every covering
has been cast away,
the thinnest of coverings too.

Then there emerges
mind -
that which keeps startling me,
that which had kept flashing.

The covering, growing thinner,
became an atom;
when it breaks,
it rains fire;
when it joins,
it becomes utterly silent.

And from that silence
mind emerges;
and from this
the universe comes forth.

But this too
is an inference.
How then
did it become proof?

The Gita's knowledge says:
existence cannot arise from nothing;
being cannot come out of non-being.

But consciousness?

Colour, form -
all these are public.
Consciousness
belongs separately to each.

Yet in epilepsy
it seems to separate from the body;
in dreamless sleep
it seems to separate from the body.

And how then
does memory remain?
Some people we forget;
some remain in mind.

So omniscience too
is only an inference.

Beyond the Dreamless Void

In the Trench of Hatred

A trench of hatred.
A trench of love?
No.

Win over hatred and jealousy
with a smile.

A trench of hatred was dug;
love was poured into that trench.
With the strength of hatred,
smiling and laughing,
the plea was made.

However much labour
went into making that trench,
I would say:
dig a pond instead -
so that in the rainy months
the water of love
may fill it,
and remain full.

Dig the earth
that deep.
Let love swim there,
keep swimming.

Let hatred and jealousy
flow away,
sink.
Let them drown
and let the panidummi
catch them
and carry them off.

As Long as I Remain

As long as I remain,
no one will be able to touch
the child of love -
filled with strength,
filled with energy.

Yet all around
stands a barricade
raised from the swallowing walls
of coarse love.
That alone is the worry.

And on the day I am no longer here,
everyone will learn something.
Separation will make them
harder, sharper,
more unyielding
against the enemies of love.

They will try
to break that barricade.
Friends who practise coarse love
will not let them succeed.

The journey will not stop.
Madness need not increase.

If you want to kill me,
then kill me.
But remember:
many other things
will die with me.

Still there will remain
pairs of seekers
devoted to coarse love.

And all around
the barricade built
from the swallowing walls
of coarse love
will still stand.

That alone
is the worry.

Chaturahasta

The first paired dance.
Through the movement of hands:
Chaturahasta.

The mind
filled with joy.

Truth, falsehood,
and the decision between them.

For that decision,
take the daf-khajuri
covered with the hide of a monitor lizard;
let the vibrating string
bring forth sound:
gumki -
the sound of that khajuri.

Gumki,
gum... gum... gumki...

And then
the second dance begins:
the dance of the Raktabijis.

Shikhara-hasta.
Like a mountain peak.

The Old Witch

A field filled with
lotus stalks, lotus leaves, lotus seeds, bisandh -
the Old Witch.

Such a field
became a lotus-lake of love.
This Old Witch.

Again the same matter.

In self-defence,
in opposition,
the thief spoke again:
"Stealing the joy of creation?
Putting your own name upon it?
Giving it your own name,
suppressing,
plotting,
drinking bhang
and conspiring beneath the ghur?"

We shall cut your finger
so that writing stops;
break your back,
cut your leg,
pluck out your eyes,
put you beneath the roller,
grind you
and lift away the meal.

To gain the joy of creation,
one must bear at least this much."

Lose.
Leave it.

Desire - or jealousy?

Resolve:
to turn the current.
Jealousy
that cannot turn the current
will keep flowing just so -

why just so?
More terrible than before.

Ah, then let us lose
in such a way
that people see!
Let the age see!

Let resolve and desire
lose like that -
standing directly
before that terrible, unruly current.

After every attempt
to bend the current,
let it grow more terrible,

return to the old line
after rushing forward,
continue on
more tyrannical than before.

Let people become afraid
and never again dare
to stand before
the unruly, oppressive current.

Let them take the road of falling away;
let the very hearing of it
send trembling
into the heart.

But the seeds of blood
that fall -
every single drop -
will become seed.

Sahasrabadhani,
long-haired,
the Old Witch.

In the field
where the trench of hatred was dug,
lotus stalks, lotus leaves, lotus seeds and bisandh
have filled the earth.
The lotus of love
has flowered.

While she lived
we cursed the Old Witch.
Now red hibiscus,
red as her blood,
has covered everything around.

Long-haired
like Sahasrabadhani -
the Old Witch.

Even after death
she made the flower of love bloom -
she whom we kept calling
the Old Witch.

Our Old Witch.

And Then, the Decision Will Be Made

And then
the decision will be made -
when
people turn over,
speech turns over,
lips curl and change
from moment to moment;
the sweetness of speech,
the very tongue of speech,
changes
and becomes poison.

With gobar-jhar
I scour memory bright,
and hatred will grow afraid
remembering
that from the blood-seeds
of these Sahasrabadhanis
born again of Raktabija,
the seed's descendants
will multiply still further
under attack.

Resolve and desire -
these are all
the frenzy that has seized
the effort to stop the current,
the one you call
your Old Witch.

The one you used to call so.

If I Put My Trust in You, in This Nature

If I put my trust in you,
in this nature -
if I accept
that all of this
is my Old Witch -
then the search for truth
becomes child's play.

Whatever the Old Witch says,
I shall accept,
because she has given assurance.

But the assurance
vanishes at the slightest testing.
Doubt begins to surround me.
Everything flickers.
Memory stands bewildered
among question and counter-question.

And that which had been truth
takes one form, then another;
it is not even stable.

So I shall strip away its covering
and show everyone:
if this alone is truth -
for my Old Witch
has assured me of it.

And she herself
begins to peel away the coverings
and begins to show the truth.
When one covering comes off,
what appears
looks almost exactly the same.

Then it settles.

Then come other coverings,
thinner than the ones before.
Old and new scenes
begin to move
along their own axes;
they meet -
or say rather, they cut across one another -
and begin to give birth
to truth after new truth
at every crossing
and every slope.

For a while the flickering stops.
Everything seems clear.

But then
the circles of the growing, cutting axes
keep widening.
Like a boatman swept away
in the roaring confluence,
the mind begins again
to search within

for the axis
of each truth.

Ghari Puja

In Dharmaraj's Bhagavati-room,
after eating
we wash our hands
and bury what remains;
nothing is to go outside.

Ghari Puja.

Not yajna - yoga.
Not Mimamsa - logic.
Sankhya before Vedanta.
Buddhism behind Brahmanism.
Beyond faith - austerity.
In place of Brahman - the self.
Not rishi - muni.
Not deity - guru.

The Ghari festival.
The leaf-plate of Bhagavati.
No naivedya may leave the Bhagavati-room.
Banana leaf and all the ainth-kuinth
are buried there.

How many generations
has the Ghari festival
come down through?

Its name is Bhagavati-room,
yet the place belongs
to Dharmaraj Baba.

Ghari festival:
in Sawan,
after Madhushravani,
on the Wednesday that falls thereafter.
Then again
Ghari festival in Ashadh.

New vessels.
A new hearth.
Kheer.
Puris filled with dal.
Motichur laddus.
An anchal.
And in the Bhagavati-room
Bhagavati's hanging maur.

The round marani of Dharmaraj,
made by the mali of Kothiya.
A sacred thread hangs
from the marani.

All fourteen dewans
in the Bhagavati-room;
the dwelling
of all fourteen dewans.

Fourteen leaf-plates
of kheer and puri,
covered with laddus

and dalipuri
of khesari or pea dal.

Then the Bhagavati-room
is closed.
Then, with clapping,
it is opened.

After children and family
eat the prasad,
everything is buried
in earth dug
inside the Bhagavati-room.

In our house
there is also a worship
in the courtyard:
a pit is dug,
the dheka opened;
Bala Pir is worshipped
with kheer and puri,
with incense and lamp;
and the earth
is plastered smooth again.

Bala Pir...

Vish or jana.
From jana, janaka;
the father of jana.

And here in Mehath -
Bala Pir in my courtyard!
And there...
in Mandala:

the manifestation day
of Guru Bala Pir Sahib,
Vaishakh Shukla Purnima;
Sadguru Kabir Sahib,
the chant of Satnam,
Guru Mahima recitation,
Poonam Mahatma recitation,
satsang, bhajan,
samadhi-darshan,
meeting, vandana,
bhandara,
chauka-arati.

And near Basni,
in village Kumhari:
Hasan Shahid Bala Pir.
A three-day Urs fair.
After the Fajr prayer,
the rite of ghusl
at the blessed mazar
inside the dargah;
a chadar is offered,
flowers of devotion laid down,
Quran-khwani.

From Nagaur to Kumhari,

from Basni to Kumhari,
the place of Bala Pir.

When Bala Pir comes,
fragrance spreads.

And in Siwan,
toward Kaithal-Patiala,
the dargah of Bala Pir:
a chadar brought
with drum and music,
the chadar offered,
bhandara.

And in Mehath,
in the courtyard of our house too,
a pit is dug,
the dheka opened;
Bala Pir is worshipped
with kheer and puri,
incense and lamp;
the earth is plastered over again.

Bala Pir...

At Nandesari village
on Ahmedabad-Mumbai Highway Number Eight:
the dargah of Bala Pir.
An offering of a clock
in honour of the Baba!

Ghari Puja...

What worship?

Not puja - yajna.
Not yajna - yoga.

Not Brahmin - Vratya:
a turban knotted on the head,
pena-bow in hand,
rainbow, panisokha,
blue belly,
red-crimson back;
the dwelling of science,
logic and intellect.

Black hair,
vajra, earrings,
black clothing,
a silver hansuli at the neck,
black-and-white sheepskin
around the waist,
a red border,
no fold in the anchal,
bare feet.

Mounted
upon the chariot of the mind;
Kshanaprabha
is its whip.

The bow-bearing Vratya,
bearer of the Sankhya stream.

The Brahmin's soma,
the Vratya's sura!

I am Vratya.
Kikata,
the wondrous Brahmin of Videha.

Shadvimsha.

The image of the deity
laughing, crying, dancing;
the pipani falling,
shaking;
the temple trembling;
the divine image breaking.

Ghari Puja -
what puja?

Not yajna - yoga.

Yajna means
invocation, surrender.
Yoga, however,
is capacity.

Mimamsa goes
layer after layer,
but the answer
comes through reasoning.

Not Vedanta's 'falsehood',
but Sankhya's
sattva, rajas, tamas.

Buddhism behind Brahmanism.

What can faith alone accomplish?
For attainment, austerity.

What is gained
by leaving everything to Brahman?
The whole responsibility
belongs to the self.

What use
is the knowledge of the rishi
who lives like a bear
in a mountain cave?

The muni,
free from attachment, aversion and tamas,
prefers to live
among people.

No deity
unseen and not understood.
A guru is needed -
someone with whom

one can speak.

I am Vratya.

You may keep searching
for the deity's image
laughing, crying, dancing;
for the pipani to fall and shake;
for the temple to tremble;
for the divine image to break.

I am searching
for the mystery.

Bala Pir in my courtyard -
in the courtyard...
a pit dug,
the dheka opened...
why is Bala Pir worshipped
with kheer and puri,
with incense and lamp,
and the earth
plastered over again?

I search
for the reason
for Ghari Puja.

Ghari festival.
Bhagavati's leaf-plate.
Why does naivedya
never leave
the Bhagavati-room?

Why are banana leaf
and all the ainth-kuinth
buried there?

Narashamsi

Beneath the standing tikar
of the korwah,
earth pounded fine and fine;
this human figure
made of siloh.

Pink-fired
like chholgarhiya,
yet this time -
who knows why -
it remained under-baked.

Days passed.
Chhathihari:
the sixth day.

The poet's poem
swims intoxicated
in the rasa of metre.

And the Vishvedevas grow afraid:
if the rasa of verse
spills and splashes,
it will spread
throughout the world
with Gayatri
and Narashamsi.

So they keep
the poet's poem
within the rasa of metre.

They sacrifice it.

A sacrifice
of the metrical rasa
of the poet's poem.

And they sing
Narashamsi.

The fire of aspiration
travels from earth
toward the luminous world;
the fire in Mother Earth's heart.

Dyau, Father,
Earth's son -
or brother.

This blue sky
radiant with light;
this earth
made luminous
by the churning of aranis.

The harsh voice
of the Bajri parrot.

There, near the river-bank,

at the confluence of two currents,
the boatman
swept into the roaring water
somehow came out;
yet as he moves forward -
will he advance,
or sink?

Will the jhankhi-jhajhiya
keep this world safe?

Dah-boh has come -
why this?

Ekarnava:
a lake, a water-world,
covering the kanbah.

Sitting upon one mangi
of the khedha-pauti boat,
he casts the baser net;
sitting upon the other mangi,
he draws it in,
fixing its direction,
making kanher.

Around the net
the thakthakiya sounds,
driving the fish
toward the mesh.

Tussa.

The groves
of saril-wood have vanished;
across the river
the fields have become baburbanna.

Kamala's sand.
People wrapped in badaha.

These trees and shrubs
still stand,
green -
yet as though
sorrowing, hurt.

Whose bhalasari tree
is this
beside the road?

When soil is filled around it,
it becomes hollow
not in the trunk
but at the root.

And now
it too has come
onto the road.

It no longer belongs
to the village.

It has become
government property.

Again:
the saril-wood groves vanished;
the field beyond
became baburbanna;
Kamala's sand;
people wearing badaha;
trees and shrubs
standing green
yet as though
sorrowing, hurt.

The emergence of a tussa
as though
the arrival of some misfortune;
Kamala's sand
spread everywhere,
and in its midst
the tussa appears -
yet perhaps
it is a sign of hope.

And just then
comes the sweet voice
of the karar parrot,
red-marked at the throat,
the Amrit-Bhela parrot.

Its voice arrives
and becomes Narashamsi.

Gayatri
became a bird
and departed
for the Gandharva world
to bring soma.

In that rasa
these songs,
these poems,
swim intoxicated.

None understood
grammar,
metre.

On Trayodashi
a tiger killed Panini.

Who taught
on Trayodashi
when the grammarian
had closed instruction?

On Trayodashi
grammar is neither studied
nor taught.

And on Trayodashi
Gayatri used to come

in the form of a bird.

Who gave instruction
on Trayodashi?

Gayatri, become bird,
gave instruction,
singing Narashamsi.

Gayatri, as bird,
merges in the luminous world
with the gods.

This radiant blue sky.
This earth
lit by the churning of aranis.
The cloud's descent of power,
lit by lightning.

Within the body,
thousands upon thousands
of channels;
the crooked, snake-like course
of blood.

The mind runs
between the channels
of this inner world
and the body,
more swiftly
than the lightning
of the outer world.

The four-footed Purusha,
or Brahman -
yet this world
is but one foot.

The awakener
of the inner mind.

Asuric Vritra.
Rakshasi Pani.

The bodily system
of channels and transmission.

Come, toward the sea:
our nervous network,
rising and sinking
in its waves.

From lived reality
I brought out honey
to offer
into that sea.

And then
the body's river-stream
dives intoxicated
into the current of mind,
sinks into the waves

and rejoices.

Speech emerging
from the waking mind,
like the veins
of a pipal leaf.

Ila, Sarasvati and Bharati
prepare food
for the child of lightning.

I am a seeker of light.

Let Sandipana-kuta
be radiant with grace:
thousand-branched lightning,
golden;
thousand-victorious,
unceasing,
inward-turning.

And
Ritam Brihat.

Vararuchi,
teacher of Vikramaditya's daughter.

The princess committed
some insolence,
and so he brought her
a foolish husband.

He used to remain
under a vow of silence.

The princess gave him
some book
for correction,
for copying again.

With a nail-cutter
he erased
dots, bikari
and vowel-marks.

Something like that.

The poet's poem
swims intoxicated
in the rasa of metre;
and the Vishvedevas, afraid
that if the rasa of verse
spills
it will spread through the world
with Gayatri and Narashamsi,
keep the poet's poem
inside the rasa of metre.

They sacrifice it:
the sacrifice
of the metrical rasa
of the poet's poem.

And they sing
Narashamsi.

Nigadati Kusumapure'bhyarchitam Jnanam

Before and after Chandrayaan,
Aryabhata's proclamation
returns to mind:

"Here in Kusumapura
I describe knowledge."

He measured
the diameters
of Earth, Sun and Moon.

The Earth is not motionless;
this earth moves.

Bha -
the stars -
are what appear fixed.

An eclipse
is not Rahu's swallowing;
it is only shadow.

Come, congratulations
for Chandrayaan
to the scientists of ISRO.

Even if it has come
fifteen hundred years
after Aryabhata -
so what?

For the people
of that same country
it is not too late.

Even after reading Lilavati,
they could not count the stars.

Kusumapura
is Sriharikota.

Aryabhatas tv iha nigadati
Kusumapure'bhyarchitam jnanam -

from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre
at Sriharikota.

Dream

A dream?

It frightened me deeply,
breaking sleep,
stealing from the eyes
the desire to sleep.

Whenever the mind
was uprooted and afraid -
the limits
of country and time,
the delusions
of the ancestors -
yet the disguise
of the first seed-man
would not leave
the mind's confusion.

The child's heart and mind
thudded and thudded,
searching
for the birth of the world.

Finding no answer
to any question,
we left the eternal matter
to God.

Yet the knot
of God's mind
and eternal form
did not straighten.
It lay tangled.

The pounding
of heart and mind
only increased.

No dream now.

Even so,
if sleep comes more deeply,
this too is a riddle
for enduring the world.

Without solving the problem,
we smile,
laugh,
make Fate-Raja
supreme.

We do everything ourselves
and still say:
we are puppets
of Fate-Raja.

God's play?

It plays
with mind and heart,

and with the physical heart too,
whose pounding
it makes stronger.

Neither beautiful dream
nor frightening dream
comes now.

Silence Has Its Own Speech

The throat grew tired
taking the name of truth
again and again,
yet I did not reach
that turn in my own sorrow
where another person's pain
would awaken me.

Self, world, liberation -
all three words
are laid before me;
touch any one of them,
the inner knot
does not open.

I want to hear
something
that has never been spoken.

All the worry gathered
through the day
comes at night
to the ochre cloth;
even with eyes closed
its weight does not lift.

Sometimes sleep
takes me so deep
that even my own name
is left behind.

At that hour
silence strips away
all my identities.

When I rise from dream,
some image comes with me;
when I rise from dreamless sleep,
the palm is empty.

From this emptiness
I return every day.

The fear of the end
is no longer
what it once was.

The question
of choosing life's end
by one's own will
also arises;
but the arising of a question
is not the finding of an answer.

For now
this waking breath
is with me.

And for a while
I shall remain silent

in order to hear it.

Memory-Fear

In the civic clamour
of the city
I forgot
so many memories;
and with them
fear began to attach itself -
fear upon fear.

Was it the lack of time
for discipleship and socialisation?
Or merely the falsehood
of being busy?

Memory-fear -
or surrendering
before the problem,
moving away from memory,
aside from fear,
separate from socialisation,
purely familial?

But after an age
time has come again.
I have grown older.

Again I lifted
the karachik-pen
to write what must be written.

But the ink
has dried in the inkwell.

An age passed.
Memory was forgotten.

I became solitary,
like Sahasrabadhani:
monstrous
amid the tangled net
of events.

Breath swelled;
I rose in haste.

And laughter returned.

Dream-Discipline

I stumbled,
yet did not fall
with a thud.

I have grown up.

Where was dream-discipline
in childhood?
I would fall
and keep falling,
from blood
into blood.

Rising from sleep
I would be drenched
in sweat.

I found no edge
to memory-fear.

The clamour of the universe:
bound by gravity,
circling;
millions upon millions of miles away
the Sun,
and beyond it
many other suns.

Who is the maker and master
of all these?
And if there is someone,
who is that maker's maker?

Oh!
No end was found.

I made a decision:
I shall read philosophy,
but I shall not think.

I broke
the karachik-pen
and the inkwell.

Who is this Sahasrabadhani
moving in a circle -
a cursed demon,
or some rishi
searching for the end
of the problem?

And the problem
is still the same:
who made whom,
where is the final end,
who is whose master,
who is master of all,
and who is master
even of that master?

Dream-discipline was found;
word-discipline broke.

The solution
must be sought.

Do not fall with a thud;
seek the edge.

Near doubt and solution
my trust in myself
began to stagger,
as though some fear,
some misfortune,
had increased

the pounding in the chest.

Or is this
a recurrence
of childhood?
The mystery
of birth after birth -
a thread of the self?

Or fermentation?

And science
created the universe?

The idea
of nectar and poison.

Tastes:
bitter, astringent, saline, sour, pungent, sweet.

Voices rising
in the empty forest:
shadja, rishabha, gandhara,
madhyama, panchama, dhaivata, nishada.

Atri, Angiras, Marichi
set out in search,
taking with them
Pulaha, Kratu, Pulastya and Vashishtha,
to obtain
the eight siddhis:
anima,
mahima,
garima,
laghima,
prakamya,
ishitva,
or vashitva.

The seven rishis,
the eight siddhis.

The search
for the nine treasures:
Padma, Mahapadma, Shankha,
Makara, Kachchhapa, Mukunda,
Kunda, Nila and Kharva.

These became
the basis
of the ten avatars.

The Fish avatar
saved the Vedas
and the seven rishis,
along with Manu's family.

With the Tortoise avatar,
Mandara-Meru;
and Vasuki the serpent
brought forth
the store of nectar.

The Boar avatar
brought Earth out.

The four oceans
were hard;
Hiranyaksha cast the noose.

Narasimha
saved Prahlada
and killed Hiranyakashipu.

Vamana defeated Bali,
measured Earth
in two steps,
and in the third
the Daitya king.

Parashurama, Rama and Krishna
destroyed the asuras;
Buddha changed their thought.

And what of the descendants
of Devadatta
who brought down
his image?

No one could stop
Bamiyan.

Neither Kalki
nor Maitreya.

Come quickly,
mounted on the white Saindhava,
to bring
the yug-kaladhauta
of fourteen worlds
and thirteen universes.

In the clamour
of the ocean
childhood used to go
in fear.
But now
science interrupted the mind:

this is the principle
of fermentation.

The ten avatars themselves
are a modern theory
of emergence:
Fish,
Tortoise,
then Boar,
then Man-Lion,
then Dwarf -
one link
to the next.

They had gone out

searching
for the colour and form
of the human being,
and gave
the name avatar.

The chain broke
while searching for Kalki.

Is that why
Maitreya did not arrive?

It seems
we are nearing
the thread that was found.

And I had been frightened
for nothing,
preparing shodashopachara.

Veda, Purana,
Mahabharata, Ramayana,
Arthashastra,
Aryabhatiya, Lilavati, Bhamati;
the complete character
of politics, mathematics, physics.

The teaching of karma
went flying away.

Where philosophy
remained unanswered,
science gave
some solution.

Where science
remained unanswered,
philosophy gave
some solution.

Let go of clutching;
move the problem-question
a little farther away.

The circumference
may be small,
but if we enlarge it,
then again
the contractors of philosophy
will turn philosophy
into religion,
and religion
into varieties
of hell and heaven.

They turned physics
and astronomy
into astrology.

When neti-neti
becomes the answer,
let the question

remain unanswered.

Everyone went forward,
but I went backward -
in Lilavati
and in Bhanumati.

Vyasa wrote
in praise
of Ekalavya,
yet no one
carried the work forward.

A thousand-year interval
gave only applause.

Science and art.
Hunger and food.

Will they leave them
free?

The Bhagirathi current
of art and science
was stopped.

It met
Rahu's swallowing:
solar science transformed,
the calculation of eclipses.

The Ramayana
as defence science.

When did spirituality
teach cowardice?

Vyasa's lesson
of Karna, Ekalavya and Krishna
is still alive.

Why did learning dry up,
becoming like
the vanished Sarasvati stream?

The moment
the goddess of learning left,
she dried
without water.

Without intellect,
will she return
again
in another disguise
to our country?
The lesson
of Yudhishtira and Shakuni:
one-two-five-six.

Shakuni will turn
a raw twelve
into a fixed twelve

and make
his own lucky twelve.

Three dice.
Four colours.
Sixteen counters.

Will they construct fate?

Four wings of chaupar;
twenty-four houses
in each wing.

Will this
break the house?

Whatever bears
the name Lalchhari
keeps coming
and kicks us down.

Satghariya.
Ti-ti.

These games
of mango season.

We played dice too,
until bharphori
after dviragamana.

Memory-fear
broke its tune.

With the staff
of memory-dream
we shall strike
and churn
with ringing blows.

At every village doorway,
with the strength
of our arms,
we shall open
shut intellect
and discrimination.

Or
Buddha's city
will settle
in the village:
a song
of new philosophy.

For its own philosophy
the village
was sent into exile.

A thousand-year chaupar:
four -
four yugas.

What is unknown,
that too
we shall seek, father.

But what is known -
let that at least
render its account.

God's creation
without any limit
or binding?

Then on what basis
did He build
that house?

And if He had no freedom
to choose the basis,
what law
did He make
for this universe?

Then when Sun, Moon
and stars die,
will that creator-God
also die
under that same law?

And if not,
then what need
did God have
to create the universe?

This self-made creation.

Vishvedevas.

And the mind
of its God.

What thought
has entered
that mind?

This universe
filled with blue lotuses
and suns;
in its midst
our Sun,
only an ordinary star.

Within its creation
we are creatures
of a tiny satellite,
thinking:
with weapons
we shall destroy
this creation?

And in that God's mind
does a dream too
keep running?

And within that dream,
innumerable
tiny dreams?

When the Support of Argument Loses Meaning

Standing before a terrible winter night,
clouds roar in fury;
Indra, slayer of Vritra, cleaves the cloud,
a streak of lightning inside it.

The rik of Kavasha Ailusha.
Ailusha, my poet, is singing.

Like a boatman swept into the roaring confluence
of two currents in the sky,
fire - the lightning-line within the cloud -
is like the Amrit-Bhela parrot
with its red mark at the throat.

On one side it travels
from earth toward the luminous world;
on the other,
the harsh Bajri parrot
sings the rik of Kavasha Ailusha
and descends from the luminous world toward earth.

Take the support of argument
and go toward the luminous world
like the Amrit-Bhela parrot -
or return to earth
with the Bajri parrot,
leaving argument's support behind.

For the support of argument
becomes meaningless
inside social convention,
when confronted
by hunger
on a monstrous winter night.

Every dawn
one bagra-measure of flesh
keeps diminishing,
and slowly, slowly
vanishes.

When Dreams Merge

The Unfathomable Edge of the Moment

I write of what is happening now;
by the time the writing is complete,
it has already become the past.

Thought runs toward it,
yet still falls behind.

The stone lying before me is silent;
in its silence
I hear my own question.

Sometimes the body is filled
with the energy to work;
sometimes there is not even
the wish to rise.

Does knowing the name of a force
mean that we understand its home?

The brain adds and subtracts endlessly,
yet experience remains
outside the account.

Seeing a form,
we give it a name;
taking the name,
we look again for the form.

In this coming and going,
what remains unsaid
stays in its own place.

A gust lifted a fallen leaf upward;
for a moment I thought
it had returned to its branch.

When the wind withdrew,
the leaf came down
and settled in the courtyard.

I saw it rise;
I saw it fall.
Between the two,
I held back my conclusion.

The Book of Miracles

The meeting of the self, the brain
and the organs of knowledge
brings consciousness.

Only the number "one"
can be seen directly before us;
all other numbers
are inference.

Consciousness matures gradually
as this knowledge of number increases.

One Supreme Self,
and innumerable individual selves -
each with its own truth.

I fill page after page with reasoning,
yet not one experience
comes down whole into it.

I set out to see
the very one who sees;
the gaze returns
and leaves a question beside me.

For some, this witness
existed even before birth;
for others,
it is an idea made by the mind.

I hear both voices,
and between them
the sound of my own breathing.

Noise rises outside,
then settles again;
in the stillness between,
even a small courtyard
seems immeasurable.

How many forms
reach my senses?
How many are lost
before they arrive?

Shall I call
everything I have understood
the whole world?
Or shall I also recognise
the limits of my understanding?

On the stage, someone stands
telling the story
of an astonishing power;
applause follows every claim
of the impossible.

Before our eyes, every day,
new leaves break from buds;
no one has time

to look at them.

Even our own being alive
seems ordinary,
yet talk of unseen miracles
never stops.

Sometimes a colour
awakens the memory of a heard raga;
sometimes a scent
brings back a vanished scene.

The roads of experience
touch one another;
I do not make that
proof that I know the whole.

A Pause in Thought

When the conversation of the mind
paused for a moment,
the true sound of sorrow
could be heard.

Poetry can sit nearby there -
sometimes consoling,
sometimes waking a wound
that had fallen asleep.

What I understand
also carries my shadow;
in trying to move the shadow aside,
the sight grows a little clearer.

The light of night
reaches me very late;
some stars bring news
from before the first human story.

At my feet, grass moves
in the air of this very moment.

That ancient light from far away
and this trembling close at hand
enter my eyes at the same time.

A face changes;
the meaning of a smile changes too.
How can thought be kept apart
from the one who gave birth to it?

And if the self
is held to be beyond time,
how can the counting of births
be applied to it?

Let the clock keep recording
the body's passing time;
the question of the witness within
remains open.

Fear Loosens Its Grip

At the sound of death's name,
something within contracts;
today I do not move away from it.

Accepting the instability
of this body,
I sit beside that fear
for a while.

If self-knowledge means
only a new word,
how could this trembling
be quieted by it?

I seek an experience
in whose trust
the mind can look at itself -
not a declaration.

Between the seer
and what is seen,
a little space appears;
the breath opens.

I do not know
the date of the end;
but the bondage
of imagining it
has loosened a little now.

The Practice of Conflict

Was there ever a dawn
when no one
had a grievance against anyone?

History does not remain silent;
the mind too
does not forget
its quarrels within.

A bird pecks grain
in the courtyard;
something else moves
through a minute opening in the earth.

The life of what I cannot even see
must also be surrounded
by obstacles of its own.

I place an unknowing foot,
and someone's entire dwelling
is destroyed.

The easy movement of the large
becomes disaster for the small;
how much do I know
of this proportion?

Conflict does not disappear
merely by stopping someone else;
one must look
at the habits of one's own conduct.

The peaceful face of the Buddha
comes to mind;
but hanging a picture
does not change the mind.

Let me recognise
my own hardness
in the small acts of the day,
and next time
perhaps stop myself
from repeating it.

Forms are many;
the urgencies of life are many.
Within these differences
we must learn
to see relationship.

The Empty Space in My Identity

At the end of the day
I look over the list of tasks;
not one question
written for myself
is there.

My name, position,
and home address are there;
but if all of these are removed,
who will I remain?

A stranger comes to the veranda
and asks for water;
I recognise the stranger's weariness.

That life is not my life,
yet at the place of thirst
there is no strangeness.

If the mind does not forget
this recognition
before hurting someone,
the meaning of victory
will begin to change.

The gun fell silent;
people returned home.
How can that alone
make us certain of peace?

If humiliation
has been preserved inside,
the preparation
for the next quarrel
is still underway.

Peace asks for the labour
of abandoning that preparation.

For affection,
it is not necessary
to make everyone
like oneself.

Let the other live
in another way;
let another's happiness
not make me smaller -
how difficult
even this much is to practise.

If I carry
the measure of my own sorrow
outward,
another's cry
will no longer remain unheard.

The habit of holding tight
will lessen;
slowly,

a place for sharing
will appear.

I open the day's list again.
How many unnecessary tasks
I had written down
as necessary!

Moments passed
placing tick after tick beside them,
yet the room of my own identity
is still empty.

It has been said:
thought lives in the head,
affection in the chest.
When sorrow comes,
both grow heavy together.

Setting up two courts inside
did not make judgement easier;
instead, I kept fighting
myself with my own words.

Whatever name people gave me,
I put it on.
When praise came,
I made that name taller;
when blame came,
I began defending it.

Did I ever allow
the breathing one
inside this costume
to remain without fear?

Today I am in no hurry
to fill the empty space of identity
with another title.

If desire keeps running
while discernment pants behind,
the journey will certainly wound us.

The two must be seated
beside the same task:
what I desire,
and the result of that desire.

If I open a genealogy
before affection,
what kind of affection is that?

Before asking the caste
of one who has crossed the threshold,
we need the courage
to hear what lives in that person's mind.

To mould someone
in the cast of my preference
is not to accept them.

There is natural warmth
in the desire of the body;
force makes it hard.

Let the other's desire be heard;
let there be room
for disagreement.
Only then
does closeness become
the happiness of trust.

As possession over one another lessens,
two lives receive
their own room to expand.

Responsibility is the care
of that openness;
love is the daily effort
to sustain it.

The Outer Rim of the Clock

Listening to tick after tick,
a question rises:
where did this measure begin?

Books hold many maps of answers;
something remains
outside every map.

From event to event
I stretch a cord
and call it duration.

But the one holding the cord
is bound inside it too.

Who can place
the whole of time
before themselves
and see it?

The words of the rishis
turn toward an experience
beyond time.

No instrument is found
with which to measure it;
what is found instead
is the limit
of our own measure.

The hand counting moments
pauses a little;
the question of the infinite
rises new again.

Search Here

Waiting for a sacred day,
ordinary days passed away.

Today, within the ordinary,
I shall do my work well:
listen completely
when someone speaks;
fulfil the responsibility
I have taken.

The imagination of heaven
may find a little meaning
here itself.

Someone speaks
of ultimate truth
in a grave voice;
I do not agree
merely because of
the weight of that voice.

I ask:
how far is what I seek
from the way I live?

If I accept
the presence of God,
how can I ignore
the life close at hand?

Compassion within
and the call from outside
ask me to stand
in the same place.

The Testimony of Life

Hearing talk
of the animal-machine,
I look toward
an injured creature
in the courtyard.

No philosophical definition
answers its suffering;
it needs help.

A human being
who writes special rights
for the self
how easily makes
another life's voice smaller.

Convenience in taking service
cannot determine
the high and low
of life.

Imagination carries me
outside my own place;
it shows the form
of what does not yet exist.

The labour needed
to reach that form
is another matter,
but the first place
is made in the mind itself.

When talk turns
to Atman and Brahman,
I again begin to doubt
my familiar boundary.

That which is held
to be without limit -
how can I cut out
a portion of it
and set it aside?

Shabdashastram

A child speaks
someone's name
for the first time;
one corner of the house
becomes familiar.

The sound existed before;
when relationship joined it,
it became speech.

"In the beginning of creation
there was speech" -
such an idea
places a question
before the mind.

Did the world come into being
because it was named?
Or did we begin
to recognise the world already made
through names?

As Om is uttered,
the breath grows long;
its resonance reaches
into silence.

Within that resonance,
someone seeks
an experience of wholeness;
someone else hears
only the vibration of sound.

The idea of Shabda-Brahman
gives language
a place greater
than an ordinary tool.

Yet the question remains
of the existence
of an experience
that could not fit into speech.

Before My Own Claim

While telling
the story of my own greatness,
I suppress news
of my own errors.

The same hand
offers support;
the same hand
causes harm.

To see this contradiction
is not a matter for shame.

Admitting my ignorance
opens the first place
for correction.

Maya-Avidya

The veil over the eyes
does not cover
only the outer scene.

The face of my own greed
is hidden beneath it too;
another person's need
appears to me as an obstacle.

When the veil moves a little,
I can see:
that person too worries
for a child;
that person too wants
one lamp in the house
to keep burning.

Once that anxiety is recognised,
it becomes difficult
to see my gain
in another's defeat.

Anger will rise;
differences will remain.

Yet the urge
to destroy
can be abandoned.

Peace lives
in such daily decisions,
not merely
in ceremonial speeches.

The Thinker

Why is there
this world filled with things
instead of emptiness?

I carried the question
to many people.
One told me
a story of the beginning;
another opened a book.

The stories ended.
My question did not.

One thinker listened
and remained silent.

Then he asked:
"What do you want
from the answer?"

The first date
of the event?
Or the meaning
of your being here?"

If both questions
are pressed
into the same answer,
dissatisfaction
will remain.

The search for outer sequence
has its own road;
the practice of inward experience
has its own.

Without understanding this distinction,
we keep placing
the measure of one
upon the other.

I closed my eyes.
Behind the question
I heard impatience.

For a while,
the haste to demand an answer
lessened.

The unknown too
was able to remain quietly
before me.

I ask for an address
after death;
where is my own news
from before birth?

The imagination
of coming and going

keeps making
the present day smaller.

The thinker rose
and walked with me
to the threshold.

Outside, life
was engaged
in its many tasks.

I returned
carrying the question with me;
but this day itself
was not empty
merely because
the question had no answer.

With the Passing Day

Marks of years
remain on the walls
of the old house;
children still play
in that courtyard today.

Between beginning and ending,
life is not merely
the interval between dates.

Every day adds its touch;
some memory remains,
some is forgotten.

The traveller's name changes;
the address of the road
keeps changing too.

Beyond this changing identity,
I search
for the meaning
of being.

For someone, in self-knowledge,
the grip of time loosens;
for me, that experience
is still a search.

Let questions
of before birth
and after the end
not steal
the breath of now.

Let me work.
Let me sustain relationships.
Let me not treat
the joy of a moment
as guilt.

One day
the account of the journey
will close.

Today,
let me live completely
the life that exists
in walking.

The Threshold of the Body

When the feet touch earth,
I understand its hardness;
when air touches the skin,
I receive news of the season.

From these reports of the body
my world is made,
yet I usually remember the body
only when pain rises.

When the mind is glad,
even hunger tastes good;
when there is anxiety,
taste itself changes.

In this traffic
between within and without,
the body keeps giving support.

How can it be neglected
in the name of spiritual practice?

Rest, food, walking, affection -
these small forms of care
have their own importance.

The search for awakening
stands upon
this living foundation.

To Recognise and to Understand

We have known one another for years,
yet I do not understand
why you fall silent.

At the sound of your name
your face comes to mind;
is that much recognition enough?

The same happens
with the world.

What I had always heard
I took to be proof;
when I asked,
I was told:
"It has always been this way."

To be old
and to be true
are not the same thing.

I turn over
a small stone
that has fallen into my hand;
how many stories
of its becoming
are unknown to me.

Inside this small familiarity
I see my ignorance;
there the desire
to understand is born.

Past experience
and expectation of what comes next
colour today's sight.

If I can recognise that colour,
perhaps what I see
will receive
a little more justice.

No one will come
to give liberation;
the knots of one's own beliefs
must be opened
by oneself.

Dih

The feet of the ancestors
once touched this soil;
now the threshold
of my house stands here.

When I light a lamp
at the place of the village deity,
I do not recognise
only a plot of land.

Food rises
from this earth;
here labour and memory
make a home.

If I bow
saying Bhagavati,
let me also remember
her water and soil.

From the homestead
to the earth itself,
this relation is fearless;
only then
does the meaning of worship
enter life.

Human Being

You have kept
the highest seat
for yourself,
and you gesture
for all of us
to sit below.

I do not speak your language,
yet I recognise
hunger, fear and comfort.

Must the proof
of my experience
be written in your book?

The same earth
nourishes my body;
in the same air
my breath moves.

As soon as this relation
is accepted,
your seat may come
a little lower,
and the place
for my life
may become
a little larger.

Birth in a respected house,
wealth, learning, strength
and a healthy body -
all may become
means of happiness,
but not complete happiness.

An achievement
enclosed only around oneself
must be guarded in fear.

When another life too
becomes good,
joy moves outside
its own boundary.

The burden of keeping down
grows lighter;
this lightness
teaches a new meaning
of victory.

The Question of the End, Today's Day

The pages of the calendar
will keep turning;
one day
my hand will no longer
be engaged in this work.

That thought
does not release me
from today's responsibility;
the effect of what is done
remains in another person's day.

The idea
that one's true nature
may be beyond time
offers another way
of looking at death.

Reflecting on that thought,
I do not turn my face
away from this life.

The day is limited;
within this day
I can choose
the meaning
of my conduct.

When Dreams Merge

And this is how it was in the dream -
so lucid there,
yet if I call it a matter of the present,
it will not return to mind.

When dreams merge,
everything keeps merging.

While I am describing some event,
now and then someone asks:
"No - where was I in all this?"

Then I lay on a gumki,
for how am I to explain
that he too was there -
but can I say
that the event happened in a dream?

And how much do I remember now?
The two have merged.

Searching for axes -
two axes.
The latitude and longitude of vision
extend toward infinity,
and they are not parallel.
They must cut across one another;
there is no other way.
Either they cross and go on widening apart,
or they become barren.

And the moment they intersect,
I rise in a start.

Does a dream too acquire dimension?

When the dream breaks,
it feels as though I have awakened.
Never before, in dream,
had there seemed to be
a dimension with two axes.

What we call waking
is not merely a two-axis dimension;
it seems to persist
through more time,
through more places.

Between dream and waking
it sometimes feels
as though one has awakened;
and here and there,
when the dimension breaks,
I jot the experience down
so I may tell it
to nature clothed in dimensions.

And can one even imagine
a dimension
with more than two axes?

Harishchandra,
son of King Vedhas
of the Ikshvaku line,
had a hundred wives.

Two rishis, Parvata and Narada,
lived in his house.

At Narada's direction
he said to Varuna:
"Give me a child,
so that I may perform your sacrifice."

Meaning -
the sacrifice of the child?

A son named Rohita was born.

Harishchandra asked Varuna
for ten days' time
before sacrificing the child
in Varuna's yajna.

Then he asked for time
until the teeth appeared;
then until the milk-teeth fell;
then until the new teeth came;
then until the boy
was able to bear arms.

When Rohita became armed,
Harishchandra told him
of the yajna for Varuna,
of the promise
that Rohita would be sacrificed.

But Rohita took bow and arrow
and went toward the forest.
He refused.

A year later
Varuna seized Harishchandra.
Varuna is the god of waters,
and Harishchandra's belly swelled.

Indra returned in human form
and said:
"By remaining among human beings,
even the good can become bad.

Wander for a year.
By wandering,
your feet will flower.
Fruit comes forth from the self,
and the self gathers it.

For one year:
fate stands when you stand,
sits when you sit,
sleeps when you sleep.
So wander for a year.

Kali lies asleep;
Dvapara moves;
Treta stands;
so you, like Satya,
wander for a year.

The Sun never tires of wandering.
You will find honey
and the sweet fruit of the udumbara.
Wander for a year."

Then the family of Ajigarta,
son of Rishi Suyavasha:
a hungry wife,
three sons -
Shunahpuchchha, Shunahshepa, Shunolangula.

Shunahpuchchha was the father's beloved;
Shunolangula the mother's.

So for a hundred cows
Harishchandra bought Shunahshepa,
who was dear neither to mother
nor to father.

The Rajasuya yajna began.
Vishvamitra, versed in the Rigveda,
was Hotri;
Jamadagni, versed in the Yajurveda,
was Adhvaryu;
Ayasya, versed in the Samaveda,
was Udgatri;
and Vasishtha was Brahma.

Who would bind the victim?

"Another hundred cows,"
Ajigarta demanded.

Invocation of Agni,
circumambulation.

Now who would perform the killing?

"Give another hundred cows,"
Ajigarta demanded,
sharpening the sword.

Shunahshepa invoked Prajapati.
Prajapati said:
"Go to Agni."

Shunahshepa invoked Agni.
Agni said:
"Go to Savita."

Savita said:
"Go to Varuna."

Varuna said:
"Go again to Agni."

Agni said:
"Go to the Vishvedevas."

Shunahshepa invoked the Vishvedevas.
They said:
"Go to Indra."

Shunahshepa invoked Indra.
"Go to the Ashvins."

He invoked both Ashvins.
"Go to Ushas."

He invoked Ushas.

As he recited mantra after mantra,
Shunahshepa's bonds kept opening.

The swollen belly
of Ikshvaku Harishchandra
became well.

Then Shunahshepa,
now a ritual priest,
joined the yajna.

By the special Anja-Sava rite
they extracted soma
and placed it
in the drona-kalasha.

Then svaha.
Then the final rite.

Afterwards Shunahshepa
sat in the lap
of Hotri Vishvamitra.

Ajigarta said:
"Vishvamitra, give me my son."

Vishvamitra said:
"No.
Shunahshepa is now
Devarata Vishvamitra."

Shunahshepa, son of Ajigarta, said:
"O Ajigarta -
are three hundred cows
greater than I?"

Vishvamitra said:
"O sons -
Madhuchhanda, Rishabha, Renu, Ashtaka -
Shunahshepa is now your eldest."

Fifty elder brothers of Madhuchhanda
did not like this.
Vishvamitra abandoned them all.

And now the time has come

to renounce:
fear,
greed,
food.

And the time has also come
to accept
the very thing
I had kept hidden,
held back,
for so many years.

I fold my hands:
do not trouble me,
or he will understand.

He respects me greatly -
this Vishvamitra.

If he realises
that you are insulting me,
then he will not obey even me.

For now I stand here
with folded hands, pleading.
Later you will plead
when he begins Narashamsi.

So far
I have told you only one story.
And you ask:
what does it have to do
with this matter?

Today I shall make
the connection clear.

Was Shunahshepa
given a death sentence,
or was this a sacrifice?

Answer.

I am the questioner.
Having told you the story,
I have prepared
the first question of the examination.

Your answer will determine
how much you understand.

Only then
shall I ask nine more questions
from this same story -
or perhaps tell you
an entirely new story
if I feel
there is no point
in asking nine more from this one.

Was Shunahshepa
given a death sentence,

or was this a sacrifice?

And speak softly,
because he holds me
in very high regard.

If he senses
the least cruelty toward me
in your conduct,
he will not tolerate it.
Even if I try to restrain him,
he will not be able
to restrain himself.

So answer softly:
was Shunahshepa
given a death sentence,
or was this a sacrifice?

Who is this person
who respects you so much?
He has never appeared before us.

Are you not both
the same person -
what psychiatrists nowadays call
"split personality" -
this Vishvamitra?

Do not question the questioner,
or next I shall tell you
that you too are I.

Then listen.

To say
that Ajigarta sold Shunahshepa
for three hundred cows
is not the truth.

Look first:
Harishchandra asks Varuna
for a son
in order to sacrifice him.

If he intended to sacrifice
the very thing he had begged for,
why did he ask for it?

And why did Varuna
give it
only to demand it back?

Open the mystery.

First ten days;
then until the teeth came;
then until the milk-teeth fell;
then until the new teeth came.

But why did Harishchandra ask
for time

until Rohita could bear arms?

And why did Varuna
grant that delay?

This is not the story
in which Harishchandra,
as Dom-king,
would refuse to burn Rohita
without payment.

This story is about
making Rohita capable of bearing arms.

This story is about Rohita's decision:
to take bow and arrow
and go into the forest.

But the true move
was made by Shunahshepa.

He was dear neither to father
nor to mother;
so he was sold
for a hundred cows.

Another hundred
for binding him,
another hundred
for killing him.

Yet do not call this
a death sentence.

He was loved
neither by mother
nor by father.

Was that his fault?

Punishment is given
for fault.

So it was not
a death sentence.

And sacrifice?

No.
In sacrifice
consent is asked.

The unwilling
cannot be sacrificed.

That is why
Shunahshepa's bonds
kept opening.

This was no goat-sacrifice.

Indra returned in human form

and said:
"By remaining among human beings,
even the good can become bad."

But if Harishchandra
had sacrificed Rohita,
then indeed
he would have become bad.

Rohita might have been sacrificed
while he still had milk-teeth;
once he could bear arms,
sacrifice without consent
was no longer possible.

The question concerned Shunahshepa,
but I gave the answer
for Rohita.

The story of Shunahshepa
is a story of tapas.

And if he had been
his mother's beloved son,
could he have performed
so much tapas?

He could neither be sacrificed
nor be given a death sentence.

But why am I telling you
this riddle-story?

Is someone asking
for your sacrifice too?

I too love you
when you are awake.
If someone speaks to you with contempt,
I too will not tolerate it.

And hear one thing
that even you do not understand:

the one who sleeps
wakes when you sleep,
and sleeps
after waking me
when you wake.

So whatever is to be said
must be said to me,
because he will rise
only when you have fallen asleep.

Ajigarta was a sign of famine.

In famine
anyone can become
a killer of his own son.

So do not blacken him further.

He is already spat upon enough.

I keep remembering
story after riddle-story.

But the essence of them all
is one:
no one is guilty,
and everyone is guilty.

All of it is cycling machinery.
All of it is programming.

Even we ourselves
do not understand the outcome.

Years and years later
the question is asked of me too.
I too am declared guilty,
like Ajigarta.

But you alone
are the one
who declared it famine -
Ariya-famine!

And if you had not done so,
I would have broken.

I have come to believe
that you too
are one who loves me.

Then listen.

I thought
I was merely doing
what my own mind wanted.

Now it seems
I was doing programming.

Some good things came out.
Some viruses were prepared too.

But you both
remained my companions.

I meet him only in sleep,
only in dreams.

But you
are my companion
after waking.

And now
everything is merging.

Between dream and waking
it sometimes feels
as though one has awakened;
and here and there,

when the dimension breaks,
I jot down the experience
so I may tell it
to nature clothed in dimensions.

While describing some event,
people sometimes ask:
"No - where was I in all this?"

Then I lay on a gumki.

How am I to explain
that you too were there -
but that the event happened
in a dream after waking,
or happened between dream and waking?

If I say so,
then perhaps you will understand.

And this is how it was in the dream -
so lucid there,
yet if I call it a matter of the present,
it will not return to mind.

And how much do I remember now?

Dream, waking,
and the state between dream and waking -
all of it
has merged.

Truth Settling into Steady Wisdom!

I remember the deaths of the labourers,
reeling and falling
into the water below.

Of fifty deaths,
only ten were reported.

The compensation for forty
was swallowed
by leaders, contractors and officers.

The engineer of that murderous bridge
used to say:
"They are all honest -
how could they ever have taken bribes?"

Watching, pondering all this -
O Government -
there had been hope:
renounce untruth always;
let everyone prosper
among noble thoughts;
let the final wish
of one who gives life for duty
be that duty itself.

Yet I saw
that people do not understand.

They do not understand
the price of truth
or the meaning of prosperity.

Freedom and duty
have no value
before self-interest.

Then should I change
the meaning of my own teaching?

Abandon the road,
yet keep the same goal -
and the road itself
stubborn, unyielding?

But what comes of speaking?

Keep doing.
Let the person before you
understand what they believe they understand.

Let them understand;
let them glorify the villain.
Let the wrongdoer
be regarded as glorious and powerful
until that very understanding
is defeated.

If I had already seen
this truth settling

into steady wisdom,
then even then
I had understood:
renunciation would not have been made.

This road
is the stubborn one.

And now it seems
that what I had taken
for settling into composure
was humility.

This Life Is Not Bad at All

A new raga
upon a sheet of paper.

The heart's struggle
after delay -
running without sequence,
without purpose,
without predicate.

It did what it did,
and still it goes on.

Now perhaps
it has found
the note of life.

Bah!
Who would go back
along that road?

This life
is not bad at all.

After losing,
he turned your words over
and looked at them.

This life too
is not bad at all.

Like that chicken
everyone shoos away
and yet still throws
a few scraps to -
something like that.

Just like that,
this life
is not bad at all.

Ambition

This flying kite -
like his ambition.

Its manjha
coated with ground glass,
like a competitor's
paper and pen.

The severed picture-kite
shows the ground of reality:
it ends
where it began.

And between -
the memory of flight,
the memory of rising.

But what
of the falling?

When You See Him Laugh and Tears Come to Your Eyes

When you see him laughing
and tears come to your eyes,
how many times will you explain to him
that everything is all right?

You were the one
who kept telling him
to move ahead,
to forget everything.

And he did not listen to you.

Now, when at last
he has listened to you,
and after all that has happened
he is still laughing,
still moving forward -
why have your eyes filled with tears?

Why does it seem to you
that his laughter
is a sign of defeat?

People laugh after winning.
They do laugh.

You claim
that you know him.

He has accepted your words
so quickly now;
therefore this laughter
must be his defeat?

Then listen.

He knows
that he has lost.

But he left
not a single effort undone.
There was no dishonesty
in his effort.

Yet he lost -
he did lose.

The one who won
is frightened too,
even now;
that much is true.

But he lost -
he did lose.

And this laughter
is for you.

He too feels like crying.

But if his laughter
brings your tears out,
what would his weeping
do to you?

So let it remain like this.

Let him go on ahead,
as you had wanted.

And do not think yourself guilty.

He did not lose
because of you.

He did not make
any smaller effort
to move ahead.

You feel
that because he listened to you
he lost.

But that is not so.

All those who are frightened
stand behind his defeat.

Had his victory come,
would they have remained frightened?

Was that not
what you yourself kept saying?

But what would that experience mean
after defeat?

So let him laugh.

He has set you free.

Not only you -
all of you.

He used to tell you so much.

Now he will listen
to all you have to say.

You have the habit
of cutting into a conversation;
for a few days
it will feel awkward
simply to keep listening -
to keep listening to him
without interruption.

SECTION III — DEW, THRESHOLD AND THE AFFECTION OF HOME

Beyond the Threshold

Dawn came.
I set a bare foot on the dew-wet threshold
and shivered.
All night I had been inside my sleep,
while the durva grass stayed awake in its greenness;
the earth, waiting for none of my dreams,
held its roots safely in her lap.

I closed my eyes; the tree did not disappear,
only my seeing stopped.
The rustle of leaves reached my ears;
the wind was no guest inside me.
It passed through the garden on its own road,
and I filled with the touch of it.

The red of the flower
and the gladness of the heart
sat beside one another.
How could I call the redness gladness?
How could I break gladness from the branch?
One petal gathered sunlight;
another spread across my chest.

You went far away; the road lengthened,
the low stool on the threshold remained where it was.
Distance drew out its thread,
and in that thread was a knot of affection;
yet you are not merely distance,
nor am I merely a pair of waiting eyes.

Evening came; I returned and touched the threshold.
The dust of the whole day clung to my feet.
I did not find the end of every question,
yet I had not forgotten the road home.
I lifted a handful of earth;
its solidity stayed quietly with me.

Affection at an Unknown Ghat

In your letter there was a ghat
where my feet had never fallen.
Water glimmered between the letters;
a distant ripple sounded in my ear.
The smooth mud of an unknown bank
came into the mind and made a road.

Sitting on the steps of my own pond,
I dipped a finger into the water.
The coolness here entered my body;
the ghat there remained in your letter.
One world was known by touch,
another opened through your words.

A ripple broke; brightness scattered;
every fragment held the colour of evening.
I took the brightness for the moon,
though the moon had not yet risen.
The water was true in its own place;
the error was in what I added to it.

Yesterday's ripple did not return today,
yet its old rhythm remained in the ear.
Will it come again the day after tomorrow?
The pond gave no promise.
I untied the boat of hope
and left the bamboo of doubt upon the bank.

Night deepened; I folded the letter.
The distant ghat grew distant again.
The smell of water stayed in my palm,
your voice stayed in my mind;
along the road made between the two
I walked into the next dawn.

The Bird of Speech

A child drew a tiny boat on the wall,
a blue line of current beneath it.
Beside the line, two dots;
above the dots, a little house.
Moving the boat away from the house,
the child told the story of its journey.

I saw that in that meeting of colours
there was room for a journey never made.
The boat did not sink,
the house did not get wet,
yet a ripple rose in the mind.
Opening the silence of the wall,
I found a form for saying something.

The moment it entered the courtyard, speech flew;
the frame of the picture became too small.
"Come," I said, and a guest sat down.
"Come," said the mother and drew the child close.
The same word ran in play;
the same word became a plea at evening.

Someone said "water" and asked for the lota;
someone heard "Water!" and ran toward the roof.
So many flights for a single bird,
so many nests for a single sound.
Meaning did not remain upon the lips;
it kept travelling from hand to hand.

After evening, all talk ceased.
The little one slept close beside me.
I laid a palm upon the child's head;
no sentence had to be made.
The bird of speech folded its wings;
affection remained awake in its own place.

Footprints of the Cloud

Did it rain in the night, or did it not?
 At dawn I went to ask the courtyard.
 Hollows made by drops in the raw earth,
 pearls caught at the edges of leaves;
 the dripping roof spoke softly:
 night existed outside sleep as well.

Far away in the sky there was a grey cloud;
 I did not see its feet.
 From the wet traces left here
 I recognised the road it had taken.
 Where no trace appeared,
 I stopped the work of inference.

Today too the east wind blew the same way;
 yet who will promise rain?
 The sacks of seed waited on the veranda;
 I too kept watching the road to the field.
 The eye of hope remained open;
 I did not fill the granary with certainty.

"Beautiful!" cried the little daughter
 and forgot to count the pearls upon the leaves.
 Laughter flashed in her voice;
 her pupils danced.
 Her word was not a count of drops,
 but the heart's delight at meeting dew.

Seeing a drenched bird tremble,
 the daughter spread her anchal.
 In "save it" her heart beat quickly;
 on hearing her, my hand reached out.
 A tested fact had its own light;
 a call had its own warmth.

A Song Dwelling in the Fingers

Mother was weaving a basket of sikki;
sunlight sat upon her fingers.
One blade above, another below,
a row of colours turning round and round.
I kept searching for where the mind was;
in her care I kept finding it.

She opened no chamber in her chest
to show me the mind.
She straightened the rim when it went crooked,
joined again a straw that slipped loose;
whenever I grew irritated,
she laughed and steadied my fingers.

I knew where sikki grew
and when it was cut.
Yet when I tied the first circle,
all the blades slipped from my fist.
For two cold days I sat beside her;
then my fingers found the road.

I did not think out every move beforehand,
yet the weaving grew better.
At a mistake the hand stopped;
when it came right, it moved again.
Learning entered the body silently,
as roots spread through a field.

Today Mother is not sitting beside me.
The half-woven basket lies in my lap.
A child scatters the blades;
I laugh and gather them again.
Mother's mind is hidden nowhere;
her song lives in my patience.

Beyond the Eyelids

Night took down its black shawl from the peg
and went away,
yet the fear sitting in the corner of my eye
did not rise with dawn.
I sat beside it;
slowly it looked into my face.

How many words spoken by others
have I repeated under my own name?
How many old footsteps have I chased
without ever looking?
Today I stopped and asked:
whose are these trembling feet?

The village that drowned in dream
stood in the courtyard when I woke.
The heaviness I carried all day -
where was its weight in sleep?
Amid so much passing back and forth,
who kept listening to my silence?

No answer beat a drum
or set a crown upon my head.
Only a tightly held knot
loosened beneath my fingers.
I looked outward with my own eyes -
the threshold had been open all along.

Beyond the Cupped Hands

A child sitting beside the pond
lifted the sky in cupped hands.
Walking home, the child saw
water leaking through the fingers.
Then the hands opened;
the sky was still full where it had always been.

I too added up the accounts of the day,
even counted the stars.
The more I filled my granary,
the more new hunger woke.
One small question remained:
where is fulfilment inside all this fullness?

I called to you and thought
a voice would return from the distant road.
But it was my own chest that trembled;
someone inside had been listening.
Searching for your address,
I forgot my own hardness.

I will no longer say I know everything,
nor drive away what I do not recognise.
Where my understanding comes to a halt,
I will give affection a seat.
Today I keep my cupped hands empty;
dawn can enter them.

The Feet's Own Road

Wearing Father's old shoes,
I went far away for the first time.
The road was the same, the trees were the same,
but my heels kept blistering.
I took off the shoes and carried them;
the earth understood the measure of my feet.

At the village square people said,
"Go where everyone goes."
I saw an injured bird
fluttering in the middle of the road.
My road turned there;
my palm became a nest.

At noon I reached distant water
and found only sand.
The thorn of thirst did not disappear,
nor did the weariness of walking become false.
Sitting in the shade, I thought:
the eye too keeps learning.

By evening there was no flag,
no declaration of victory.
The bird had flown from my palm;
earth clung to my feet.
When I returned home I understood:
a road opens inward as well.

Wind Within Speech

Mother called from afar - "Come."
In that single word:
the smell of rice,
the warmth of a dried anchal,
the waiting of a whole day.
I kept counting letters;
home had already entered my chest.

I put my ear to the cracks
of a broken bamboo
and found no song.
When breath touched it,
the empty spaces became notes.
What was absent from each single hole
sounded when they came together.

In the dark I thought
someone stood at the corner of the doorway.
When I went closer,
wet cloth was moving softly in the wind.
The face of fear fell away;
the peg remained where it was.

Now, when I begin to say something,
I pause before speech.
For whatever does not fit inside my sentence,
I leave some room.
Your eyes understand
the remaining fragrance of my silence.

A Place in the Row for Everyone

The dining row was laid in the courtyard;
someone remained standing at the threshold.
Steam rose from the rice,
while hunger shivered outside.
I gathered my leaf-plate and stood,
and extended the row to the doorway.

Whose palm was fair, whose dark?
How high was whose lineage?
The rice asked no question;
the water practised no untouchability.
When the dry throat was cooled,
the courtyard's face was washed clean.

I had thought I would go far away
and escape these troubles.
But the neighbour's roof
was leaking in the rain that night.
Leaving my dry bedding,
I went out to hold the bamboo support.

By dawn my hands were blistered,
yet there was coolness within the mind.
What could not be said
stood inside the wet pillar.
If room remained for everyone,
my own home became complete.

A House Made of Mist

Across the river, at early dawn,
a white palace rose.
The wind blew and the roof flew away;
a bird flew and the walls broke.
I sat on the bank watching;
the water kept moving in its own way.

The house where I had been king
opened its door in sleep.
The village where I had wept
left no earth upon my pillow.
Yet the corners of my eyes were wet;
the sorrow within stayed awake.

Nothing stood alone:
the roof held to the bamboo,
the bamboo drank moisture from the earth,
the earth waited for the cloud.
The small thread of my breath
was held by how many unseen hands.

The palace vanished, the river did not;
the kingdom vanished, dawn did not.
My grip loosened
on what I had clutched as mine.
Within emptiness I heard
how many lives were flowing close by.

How Many Leaves in One Name

A child laid out ten leaves
and gave them all one name.
One was cut along the edge;
in another an insect had made its home.
The name remained with them all;
different stories ran through every vein.

Say "tree" and a tree is understood,
but which tree remains unopened.
Somewhere the sweet waiting of mango,
somewhere the bitter affection of neem.
Within the small shade of one word
how many seasons sat together.

When I began to insist on my own words
and cut off another's,
the child lifted a leaf
and placed it in my palm.
At the sharp point of my argument
soft greenness trembled.

Now, if I count, I will count differences too;
if I see kinship, I will also see form.
I will not erase all by calling all one,
nor push them away by calling them separate.
Beneath the shade of one tree
how much belonging moves.

The Threshold Recognised Again

After years I returned to the village.
The pond seemed smaller.
The tree I had once feared
had bent a branch toward me.
Had I grown, or had the road shrunk?
The threshold asked in silence.

From within I heard the same cough,
though the current of the throat had changed.
The black river of hair had dried;
the water in the eyes remained the same.
What could a name alone recognise?
The moment a hand reached out, distance melted.

The house of memory
and the courtyard of the eyes
were meeting one another.
What was yesterday was not today,
yet not everything had become unfamiliar.
Between the two times, affection drew a knotless thread.

I touched the earth of the doorway to my forehead;
the fragrance had not grown old.
The child who lived inside me
ran into the house first.
I followed behind,
recognising myself again.

The Half-Open Door

I opened one door;
another courtyard appeared ahead.
I thought that courtyard had an end,
but a lane went out from there.
The map of the world I understood
kept widening at its edges every day.

What I have not seen
I will not say cannot exist.
And around what I have seen,
how much unseen still remains.
I counted dew upon the leaves;
the thirst of the roots remained uncounted.

From your side the sun was setting;
from mine it was caught in the branches.
Both of us kept taking
our own eyes for the whole sky.
When we changed places, we laughed:
one fire, so many forms.

Now I shall hold the hand of the question
and walk slowly.
If silence comes, I shall sit beside it;
I will not invent a false answer.
Through the crack of the half-open door,
dawn is still entering.

The Courtyard Open to All Directions

A tune came from the west,
the fragrance of paddy from the east;
the warmth of a shawl from the north,
rain-filled clouds from the south.
Listening to footsteps from all four directions,
my courtyard grew larger.

Someone's speech was unlike mine,
someone's dress seemed strange.
Yet tired feet
needed the same lota of water for washing.
I did not divide the hearth-fire;
the bread baked together for all.

Light your lamp in your own way;
celebrate evening in your own tune.
Only do not throw an ember
into a neighbour's sleep.
The hand that joins in greeting
must not break another's door.

When night deepened, I understood:
not everyone's silence has one colour.
One holds memory, another prayer,
another a sleeping child.
If shade remains for all these,
my courtyard becomes sky.

Dawn in a Child's Speech

The child asked in the child's own speech:
"Grandmother, why does the shadow move?"
Grandmother rose smiling
and stood in the middle of the courtyard.
With one small question
the whole house came outside.

What had sat upon a high seat
came down to the earthen stool.
Mother stopped the ladle and listened;
Father set down the hoe and spoke.
The closed room of speech opened;
thought became everyone's breath.

A stir in a distant market
shook the price of our paddy.
A broken embankment in another village
wet our bedding.
I shut my door,
yet worry still entered.

At dawn I opened the door again.
How long can anyone survive alone?
I will come to raise your pillar;
you will put a hand upon my roof.
The child built a house from earth -
all the roads led toward it.

The Shadow of an Empty Peg

There was no shawl on the peg.
I said, "There is nothing."
Grandmother laughed
and placed her hand on the cold body of the wall.
An empty place is still a place;
the memory of what has gone remains.

Saying "no" does not erase everything.
If not here, it may exist somewhere;
if not today, it may have been yesterday;
there may remain a road of return.
How can so vast a world
fit inside one small negation of mine?

At evening neither day was complete
nor had night's black roof settled.
Birds were taking the road home;
the colour of the sky kept changing.
I sat with two boxes;
evening fitted into neither.

The peg is empty even today;
the shawl is drying in the sun.
Within the grief of not finding,
a place for finding again remains.
I have left a crack open
in the door of my speech.

From the Other Eye's Place

From my side the field had dried;
from yours clouds were gathering.
I said, "There is no hope."
You opened the packet of seeds.
We sat together on the field-ridge;
the wind came from both directions.

Before listening to you
I lowered the noise of my own words.
I saw that beyond the obstruction of my eye
canal-water was moving.
No one had lost;
the small green field had won.

On the road I saw a row of ants.
My foot rose, then stopped.
I was in a hurry,
but they too had grain to carry home.
The earth was not mine alone;
that knowledge reached the sole of my foot.

If I do not hear another's pain,
my understanding will remain incomplete.
If I silence another's voice,
my own song will go out of tune.
Come, let us exchange places for a little while -
I shall look through your eyes.

Wings Within the Earth

Inside the black shell of a seed
green wings were folded.
I thought it lifeless;
silently it kept listening to the seasons.
The first beat of rain fell;
the earth broke open from within.

The root went downward toward darkness,
the leaf opened toward light.
Two journeys in one body
held one another.
The desire to rise upward
did not sever the earth's affection.

The branch broken by yesterday's storm
still bears a raw wound.
I will not deceive it by calling the wound a flower;
sorrow has its own truth.
Beside the wound a new bud opened;
life did not sit down in defeat.

Inside me too, half a view
keeps mistaking itself for the whole world.
Now I want to step beyond my little window.
All hands together will raise the pillar;
beneath the new roof, everyone will fit.

The Unspoken Voice of Colour

The fingers making an aripan stopped;
one dot went crooked.

The child turned that place into a bird;
the courtyard suddenly began to fly.
What looked to me like a mistake
became the bend of a new wing.

In every white line of rice-paste,
Mother forgot the day's weariness.
Old eyes sitting silently
saw some distant wedding.
Inside one form,
how many separate times awoke.

I set apart the words of the song
and tried to hold the tune separately.
It was neither the trembling throat
nor the wave rising in the chest.
When all sounded together again,
even forgotten sorrow found a voice.

Beauty was not only a flower,
nor a wall adorned with colour.
It was a hand
moving slowly toward unspoken pain.
Watching, I came to know:
another heart, too, is close to mine.

The Still Place Within

I arranged things in a room:
ladle, sieve, lota, plate;
round things apart, long things apart,
broken apart from whole.
Everything found a place -
where would the one who sees them sit?

All day the red wind of anger
kept circling inside me.
By evening a stone of sorrow
settled in the middle of my chest.
I watched both arrive;
I watched both go.

I am not the whole redness of anger;
I am not the whole weight of grief.
Laughter came and passed;
fear came and faded.
Behind all the seasons that arrive and depart,
one still place remained.

That place has no enclosure
and forbids no one to sit.
When I closed my eyes,
silence too showed its form.
The counting of all things was complete;
the light by which they were seen remained uncounted.

Awake Even Beyond Sleep

At night in a dream I became a boat
and kept flowing without water.
What was near ran behind;
what was distant came close.
Suddenly I heard someone's voice;
dawn was sitting on the bed.

By day I told the story.
Everyone laughed; I laughed too.
But during that fear inside the dream,
where had laughter been?
What seemed true in one state
another state changed.

In deep sleep there was no road,
nor the boat's tireless movement.
I woke and said, "I slept well."
Who had kept this peace safe?
When there was no story,
there was no sense of anyone being absent.

Now I will see day as day
and let dream remain dream.
What I have seen I will test;
I will not sell the very place of seeing.
On both sides of the eyelids
there is the same unnamed belonging.

The Greenery of a Crooked Road

On paper I drew a straight road,
a small calculation for reaching the village.
On earth there was a pond,
a thicket of bamboo, a plate of mud.
I turned my feet and understood:
a road learns from the earth.

Yesterday's question returned today,
but its hunger had changed.
What had first been worry for my own belly
became a question of everyone's share.
The same seed in another field
opened its leaves differently.

Sometimes before moving forward
I turned and looked back.
A tool left at a forgotten bend
became useful for the work ahead.
What had been left behind was not useless;
what was new was not alone.

At every turn of the crooked road
I met someone's voice, someone's shade.
I had thought I was late,
but the heart grew along the road.
What did not fit inside a straight line
walked beside life.

The Bird That Flew from the Throat

The bird that flew from Grandmother's throat
sat down in Mother's evening.
Mother fed it grain;
in my sleep it made a nest.
The paper was still empty,
while the song travelled from house to house.

One day the fingers took up a pen
and touched the wing of the flying voice.
It came to rest in ink,
yet the desire to fly remained.
Whoever read it
felt a new wind again in the throat.

I counted years, counted pages;
how many voices went uncounted.
Some disappeared in the smoke of the hearth;
some survived from ear to ear.
Beside the thick book
unwritten life kept speaking.

I will not bind that bird,
nor pluck away its old wings.
In the open sky of its own time
I will listen to its new flight.
Tomorrow, when a child sings,
the song will leave the house again.

SECTION IV — MEANING, LANGUAGE AND THE LIGHT OF FOLK LIFE

New Leaves from the Root

In the hollow of an old tree
a drop of dew flashed into light.
Someone took it for the tears of days gone by,
someone for the first smile of a new dawn.

I stroked the cracks in the bark;
sap was still moving within.
The root listened to the story of the earth;
the topmost twig conversed with distant wind.

The leaf that fell became soil;
the leaf that was born became song.
Though the tree stood in its own place,
season after season moved beyond the past.

I sat within its shade,
a new seed in my hand.
Preservation has meaning only
when room to grow is kept alive.

Yesterday's Seed

Opening the mouth of the granary, Grandmother
placed a fistful of paddy in my hand.
On every grain her palm had left
some invisible writing.

She said: keep it dry,
but do not let it rot in sealed darkness.
When the season comes, scatter it in the field;
make a road for water too.

I looked at seed from other villages
without forgetting the smell of my own soil.
I learned some things, tested some again,
and left some for the next season.

Greater than the pleasure of a full granary
was the pleasure of a green field.
The inheritance placed in my hand
had its future in my labour.

Between Two Roads

From one courtyard two roads went out:
one toward the field, the other toward the forest.
Dust rose beneath feet on the first;
deep silence spread along the second.

The road to the field said, move your hands,
the furnace of hunger is burning today.
The forest road said, look within,
the mind is caught in its own net.

Both kept telling what each had seen;
neither held the whole sky.
Standing upon the ridge between them,
I listened to both voices.

At evening grain came from the field,
and cool wind came from the forest.
The courtyard opened its threshold:
one place for different voices.

One Water, Many Waves

The moon fell upon the pond
and trembled into a hundred fragments.
I reached out and touched one fragment;
the whole brightness shivered.

The grasses on the bank were different;
the scent of dew was one in them all.
With what stick can I cut
a line between things already joined?

If all are one, whom shall I call?
If all are separate, where will the voice go?
I breathe within my own chest,
yet the air has come through everyone's door.

The moon survives in the water's ripples;
the water survives in the moon's light.
I sat upon the edge of difference,
my feet touching the same current.

The Empty Low Stool

He did not come, yet at the doorway
his low wooden stool remained visible.
Wood, weave and sunlight were all there;
absence itself filled the place.

What we call home
is not an abandoned field.
Around the name live
so many things that were never said.

From the north the tree leaned;
from the south it seemed straight.
Keeping both views alive,
I stayed awake in the shade between them.

Not everything fits within one glance;
nor is an absence ever merely empty.
I laid a hand upon the stool and understood:
not-being-there also says something.

The Question Beyond the Feet

The road said: walk and see.
The feet said: we are already walking.
The mind drew a line between:
first one half, then another half.

The day passed in halves and halves;
the village still seemed ahead.
On paper the journey stood still;
the body was drenched in sweat.

I sat down to loosen the knot in the mind.
It was not only greed for a destination.
Within what had seemed correct,
a question had awakened.

The feet kept their experience;
the mind did not abandon its wonder.
In the tension between the two,
the mouth of a new road opened.

The Far Shore of the Mind

All day I gathered the body's work;
at night the mind's work rose.
I baked the bread and put out the hearth;
another fire burned within.

The body said: remain here -
bed, water and shade are enough.
The mind asked: within this staying,
whose search is so restless?

I caught the tune of an old song;
it too turned into a new question.
Within the silence of people long gone
came the footsteps of a life still to come.

I did not build a house in some far direction,
nor abandon my own courtyard.
Toward the far shore within,
I launched a boat from this very life.

The Hunger Beyond Bread

The first morsel went to the body,
the second to tired labour.
As the third came near my mouth,
a question rose quietly in the mind.

The field was measured, the load of paddy measured,
the day's earnings measured too.
That which asks from within -
where shall I find a measure for it?

The skin knows the meaning of heat;
tired feet know the meaning of shade.
The one who asks, 'Why am I?'
does not sleep merely because the stomach is full.

I washed the plate and set it upside down;
in the water I saw my own face.
At the quiet shore of a satisfied body
I heard the song of an unfathomable thirst.

A New Flower on the Loom

Mother's old pattern
lay in a fold of the chest.
A red border, white in the middle -
the light of many years resting there.

I set the warp upon the loom;
outside, rain poured steadily.
The rhythm of drops entering my ears
slowly entered the weft.

The row of old flowers remained,
but the turn of the leaves changed.
With the colours of a new season
the fragrance of my own village opened.

Mother looked and said nothing;
she passed her palm over the anchal.
A new identity within the old
became a smile upon her face.

To Sprout Again

The leaf that fell in autumn
was found again in the smell of earth.
What yesterday I took for an ending
became food for the root today.

Scattering the seeds of my actions,
I think of seasons still unseen.
The thorn of one harsh word -
how many days do we keep carrying it?

One kindness quietly given
became shade in another hand.
How many times the affection I had let go
circled back and found me again.

If I sprout again upon this earth,
let at least this remembrance remain:
outside the circle of my own desire,
I will lighten someone's sorrow.

The Open Eyes of Dawn

In the night dream the house was swept away;
I kept weeping up to the roof.
When I woke, the body was dry,
but tears lay upon the pillow.

What was not there shook the heart;
what was there I had failed to see.
Fear stretched out a sky in its own colour,
and I lived beneath it.

The light of dawn spread slowly;
I recognised the wooden pillar again.
Yet even in the joy of seeing
I noticed the imprint of my own gaze.

When the curtain lifted, the house did not vanish;
an unfamiliar form of it opened.
As fear loosened its grip,
a little more room appeared in life.

The Speaking Courtyard

The house was not only walls;
forms of address sounded within it.
Even in the creak of the door
lived the hope that someone might arrive.

The pond was not only water;
afternoons spent upon its bank lived there.
The moment one lota was filled,
the fragrance of the whole village rose.

I listened to the one who drew water;
she listened to what I did not say.
In the pause between two people
a new world took shape.

A place opened when it was named;
a leaf of meaning opened when it was heard.
The courtyard of my solitary life
filled with everyone's voices.

Touching the Earth

On the map this was a small pond,
a little quantity of water in numbers.
But the moment I placed a foot upon its bank,
childhood came down barefoot.

Here once I sank a boat;
here I first defeated fear.
Here an unfamiliar hand reached out,
and I found a trust larger than water.

I cannot reject measurement,
but measurement is not everything.
Within the water lie
countless lights from days actually lived.

I touched the grass of the bank gently;
its modest greenness remained.
A place made sacred by living
must be protected by hands.

Beyond the Map

You made a map of the village;
I searched within it for my home.
I found the walls, I found the road,
but nowhere found Mother's laughter.

I wrote the name of laughter;
the paper trembled lightly.
The name brought the face into view,
but the warmth of the voice remained beyond it.

Speech sometimes becomes a picture,
sometimes a knock upon the door.
Sometimes it says only this:
"Sit down; the night has grown very late."

I folded the map and put it in my pocket;
it brought me as far as the house.
I crossed the threshold and went inside;
there I found what had never been drawn.

The Shape of Desire

There are many rooms inside the mind:
one for grain, one for song.
In one, for another person's sorrow,
a place has been kept of its own.

An empty hand touches the air,
and from that a form is born.
The desire that was still formless
slowly begins to build a house.

I counted the steps of that house,
thinking about high and low.
Not every happiness seemed equal;
some happiness grew larger when shared.

Desire was refined within desire;
a gaze opened within the gaze.
The lamp I lit for myself
cast its light as far as my neighbour.

A Bridge of Voice

I said, "I need water."
You extended the lota.
Within that ordinary sentence
how much meeting happened silently.

You could not drink my thirst,
yet you understood its weight.
The moment you heard the tremor in my voice,
your hand was ready.

It was not only the name of an object that travelled;
the heat of the request travelled with it.
The meaning that did not fully leave the mouth
I read close to the eyes.

We remained two separate banks,
yet a road opened for water.
Through so small an address
a long loneliness broke.

The Stairway of Happiness

At first, only when sweets arrived
did I understand there was a festival.
In the small piece upon my own palm
all happiness seemed to fit.

One day my little sister kept watching;
I gave her half.
The sweetness in the mouth became a little less;
the sweetness in the heart kept growing.

Then I held someone's hand
when that person stumbled and fell.
At that moment I received no object,
yet something priceless came to me.

I climbed the stairway of happiness this way
without breaking the steps behind me.
Beyond my own laughter
I looked for a home in another's laughter.

The Doorway of Alpana

Grandmother ground rice and dipped her finger,
drawing a line upon the damp earth.
From the line came leaves, from leaves a courtyard,
from the courtyard, welcome was born.

Within that white enclosure
there was not merely a coating of rice paste.
For loved ones living far away
it became a form of waiting.

I drew one line a little beyond the border;
there appeared the feet of a bird.
For the guest who had not yet arrived,
a place too remained open.

The empty threshold filled with meaning;
the longing of the house became visible.
In the small curve of a single finger
an unseen relationship flashed.

An Equal Plate

When the feast began in the middle of the courtyard,
I laid out a row of plates.
The serving hand stopped:
who first, who later?

On one face was a line of weariness;
in another eye, hesitation.
One stomach's hunger spoke aloud;
another suffered silently.

I moved my own seat a little
and called those standing outside the row.
Leaving the high platform of charity,
we sat upon the same earth.

Justice is not only the measure of grain;
it must satisfy the hunger for dignity too.
If I offer a plate, I will meet the eyes;
I will never lower the hand.

The Craft of Living

I was not given a finished form;
I was born like raw clay.
With hunger, trust and error beside me,
I kept shaping my own form.

One day the lure of profit called;
another day a road of affection opened.
What I chose hardened in my hands;
what I left behind became a question.

The village's sorrow came as far as my home;
the home's happiness I carried outside.
In the long work of becoming myself
I found the share of others too.

The evening clay is still soft;
the wheel is still turning.
We keep making the meaning of living
as long as touch remains in the hands.

The Eye and the Palm

The eye said, "The flower is beautiful,"
the hand reached out to pluck it.
The branch trembled, pollen fell,
and the mind stopped to look at itself.

The pleasure of seeing, the wish to possess -
both lived in the same body.
Yet in that very moment I could also see
the flower's brief life.

I did not renounce my enchantment with colour;
I only opened my fist.
In the flower still joined to its branch
I found another kind of joy.

The eye's light travelled to the hand;
the hand's restraint travelled to the mind.
I sat close to beauty,
and my own being changed a little.

I Am Watching

Sunlight was falling upon the wall;
I sat within that same sunlight.
The wall was warm, my body warm too,
yet I was aware of the warmth.

A bird settled on the roof;
my gaze followed it.
Then suddenly I became aware
of where my gaze had gone.

Returning from the thing seen, the mind
began to touch its own seeing.
In still water another light
began to rise from within.

The body's warmth remained with me;
the bird's call was not lost either.
In this wonder of remaining aware,
I arrived once more beside myself.

I Like It

You said, "Clouds are gathering,"
and I looked toward the sky.
You said, "The evening is beautiful,"
and I stopped to listen to evening.

The eye tested the first statement;
the second knocked upon the mind's door.
The same spread of colour lay before us,
yet a different light lived in each of us.

I loved the grey edge;
you loved the thin rim of crimson.
Taste required no rebuke;
the wish to look together was boundless.

I said what pleased me;
you kept your smile.
Within the wide anchal of one evening
two experiences found room.

Will It Surely Happen?

Rain has come every year;
that is why I preserve the seed.
Yet at times the sky's stubborn silence
puts hope itself to the test.

Two grains in each of two fists
make four when brought together.
But this addition and the coming of clouds
do not carry the same certainty.

My desire had great force,
yet it did not pull the clouds toward me.
Raising the voice of hope
did not increase the measure of truth.

What I know, I will preserve;
what I do not know, I will say I do not know.
I will keep the seed and watch the road,
and also make provision for water.

The Shade of the Priceless

Brass was weighed in the market;
earthen vessels were given a price.
A voice stopped
when it tried to ask the price of an old woman's song.

That song produced no grain,
yet it ended a famine of the mind.
There is no accounting for the affection
that strokes a tired head.

Some things are useful;
some are beloved in themselves.
The unsullied grace of certain acts
lessens another person's pain.

I returned home from the evening market
with a few purchased things in my bag.
What was priceless walked home with me;
it had asked for no price.

The Colour of Labour

His face was red from the kiln's fire;
black dust lay in the lines of his hands.
He was shaping the belly of a vessel,
laying dawn upon it.

The buyer watched the shine;
I watched his fingers.
In every turn of the smooth curve
I read the pressure of a life.

Beauty is no one person's private wealth;
sunlight keeps no closed account.
The hands that lift burdens all day
dream of colour too.

The vessel shone in a corner of the house;
the artisan was far away in his own place.
Only if the dignity of his labour remains
will this form become complete.

Beyond the Name

The child said "mango" for the first time;
Mother showed the fruit.
Sound became linked with colour,
and a road toward fragrance opened too.

But how can every mango fit
upon the small branch of a name?
Sour, sweet, unripe and ripe -
experience will spread its own leaves.

The eye said one thing, the tongue another;
the hand told of its touch.
I saw different roads meet
as they arrived at a single fruit.

The name kept walking beside me;
the fruit kept opening its taste.
In the slow work of understanding meaning,
life became my teacher.

The First Day of Speaking

That small child, learning names,
raised a finger again and again.
Sometimes "lota," sometimes "water,"
sometimes only a hand was named.

I placed words beside things
and showed actions beside words.
In the small gesture made at drinking time
how many relationships I joined.

When the name flew away, the object did not;
when the object was gone, the name remained.
Remembering absent water,
the child's voice of thirst emerged.

Sound did not teach in solitude;
living together made the road of meaning.
Inside one tiny utterance
everyone's world awoke.

Look Again

A white sheet gleamed in a distant field;
I thought water was shining.
When I went closer, I found sand;
sunlight had been playing its game.

I did not find truth by closing my eyes;
I opened them and looked again.
I changed position, touched with my hand,
and corrected my first understanding.

The sorrow of one mistake
did not make me abandon every road of seeing.
I searched for the cause
of the particular illusion I had suffered.

Faith does not mean a blind grip;
testing does not mean denying everything.
I brushed away the dust and raised my eyes;
far off, the edge of the pond was shining.

Each Leaf Has Its Own Green

I call every leaf a leaf,
yet they are not all the same.
One bears an insect's mark along its edge;
in another, dew has settled.

Beneath the shade of a common name
lie stories of different bodies.
The leaf that came into my hand
had a touch belonging to itself alone.

My idea of greenness
was made from a hundred leaves.
Yet when I reached out to touch,
the soft edge of one leaf came forward.

One understanding can join the many;
one recognition can preserve difference.
Though all the leaves of the tree move together,
each lets its own light dance.

Form with Colour

You said, "Deep blue."
I asked, "Whose blue?"
Sky, anchal, pond-water -
colour flowers differently in each.

A hard stone, a hard word -
one expression, two experiences.
The first stops the hand;
the second stops the motion of the mind.

The moment I separated quality from its body,
its meaning began to slip away.
The blue that lived in cloth
became something different in water.

I looked at colour together with form,
joined speech with context.
In the dry branch of an isolated word
I found the green sap of relationship.

A Path Inside the Knot

A tangled cord came into my hands;
when I pulled, the knot grew tighter.
I gave up force and sat beside it,
beginning to look at every turn.

Somewhere an old grip had tightened;
somewhere a new loop had formed.
As I understood one end,
the meaning of the other began to change.

Courtyard speech, silent prayer,
the rules of play, the dignity of affection -
each has its own way,
its own signature for opening a knot.

The cord remained all the way to the end;
what came undone was my haste.
While opening the knot I learned one thing:
understanding, too, is work done with patience.

The Many Colours of "Why"

The child asked, "Why did the leaf fall?"
I said, "The branch had dried."
Then the child asked, "Why did the heart cry?"
My first answer stopped.

The cause of a leaf's falling is one thing;
the story of affection for the leaf another.
Inside the small sound of one "why"
how many kinds of need can live.

Sometimes it asks for a cause,
sometimes for intention, sometimes comfort.
Sometimes it is only
a simple invitation to sit close.

I looked into the eyes of the question;
at once the shape of the answer changed.
What had merely been correct before
now became useful to the one who asked.

Light in Cupped Hands

At dawn she washed the doorway
and gave a little water to the earth.
Her hands had not risen to measure the sun;
they joined in cupped gratitude.

In that bending was the body's weariness;
in that rising, hope.
Within the quiet rhythm of a small act
the whole mind found a place.

I saw the calm in her eyes
while keeping the lamp of questioning beside it.
Where does faith enlarge affection,
and where does fear assume its form?

The water entered the earth;
the hands went on to the day's work.
When the joined palms opened, I saw
her giving food to someone hungry.

The Silence Behind the Question

We counted every star
and measured the spread of night.
Yet alone upon the bed
I could not understand my own sadness.

So many answers lay near the pillow;
so many thoughts I had stored away.
Still the mind's primal thirst
kept waking silently.

Suddenly a leaf moved outside;
my breath joined its rhythm.
An experience opened
of being beyond my small enclosure.

The question did not disappear; its weight changed.
I sat beside life.
Where an answer could not become speech,
I breathed within its silence.

What Remained Unsaid

You returned after a long separation;
I had thought of so many things to say.
The door opened, our eyes met,
and every sentence vanished somewhere.

Palm came close to palm;
warmth spread through the silence.
What had seemed impossible to say
became clear without being spoken.

Silence did not mean emptiness;
it held the voices of years.
Speech came as far as its own boundary;
affection travelled beyond it.

Then I said something ordinary:
"Sit down; you must be tired."
So much remained within those few words,
and so much of the remainder was expressed.

The Language of Play

The children were playing house;
one stone became the hearth.
Yesterday that same stone in the field
had sat there as a king.

When the name changed, the game changed;
when the game changed, the use changed.
With the same object, everyone's
whole manner of dealing changed.

Carrying the tired knot of words,
I sat among their laughter.
How many grave confusions I found
inside words that had forgotten their place.

When I brought speech close to its use,
I began to see the feet of meaning.
The dust of play kept rising;
the mist in the mind grew light.

The Silent House Within

Day opened the window of the eyes;
guests of colour came inside.
The mind shifted its seat
and gave every form a place.

When night came, the door closed;
dream brought in its own fair.
Then that glittering market too was lifted away,
and deep peace descended silently.

At dawn I woke and asked myself:
who was in that silent house?
How did even what was never seen
leave a faint imprint in the mind?

Between day and night there seemed to flow
an inexhaustible mystery.
I gave up my haste for answers
and began to listen to the peace within.

The Stairway of Cause

Smoke rose and people ran;
someone pointed to the place of fire.
Someone asked, "Does smoke always rise
from one and the same cause?"

One question upon another question
became a stairway through patience.
Testing quick understanding again,
the old feet of reason moved forward.

Many times the sentence grew shorter
while the edge of its distinction grew sharper.
The tiny difference that had been missed
was where the turning of truth was found.

Climbing that stairway,
I touched the steps below.
With the fine lines of earlier labour
I sharpened my own gaze.

Veiled Light

In a room filled with light
I grew afraid of my own shadow.
Forgetting what I am,
I put on a shape made by myself.

If a lamp is burning within,
where did this darkness come from?
And if darkness were all there was,
how could awareness of darkness awaken?

Pulling and pulling the thread of the question,
my fist tightened.
When I opened my hand, a line of sunlight
fell quietly upon my palm.

Thought continued doing its work;
experience opened its own door.
The shadow did not need to be erased;
beside the light, it too found its place.

Meeting of the Gaze

There was a flower on the village road,
while my mind was somewhere else.
Though colour lay before my eyes,
at that moment I did not see.

When the current of attention turned,
the flower suddenly came near.
Colour, shape, the hint of fragrance
appeared together in one encounter.

Distance remained where it was,
but strangeness diminished.
By the light awakened within,
the outer form grew luminous.

I did not merely lift my eyes;
I brought my presence too.
In this meeting with a single flower,
I experienced what it means to see.

When Even the Dream Slept

Night gathered up its pictures;
the dream's last colour faded.
There was no road, no traveller,
no sound of the mind running.

The call of dawn reached my ears;
I opened my eyes upon the bed.
I said, "I slept well,"
then stopped at my own words.

Who saw that rest
when there was nothing to be seen?
What sign did I bring back with me
when no image remained?

At the closed door of deep sleep
an unanswered peace remained.
I gave up the hurry to name it
and held the imprint of rest in my palm.

Three Shores of Sleep

In the waking day, the empty veranda
made an absence known.
In dream, the absent one even came,
yet separation still hurt the heart.

In deep sleep the veranda too disappeared;
both coming and going were gone.
Whose absence, whose waiting—
even the one who asked grew still.

With dawn the world returned,
and all the relations of names returned.
The dream's tangled presence
and the day's distance stood apart.

The silent middle of the night
kept touching both shores.
In different forms of emptiness,
the mind saw its own depth.

On Unsteady Ground

The moment I set my first foot on the bridge,
the wood gave a faint sound.
I stopped and tested it with my hand;
the river flowed at its own speed.

Fear said, "Nothing is stable."
Hope said, "Go across."
I listened to both voices
and placed my feet slowly.

I recognised what was unsteady;
I held what was strong.
Not every question can be settled at once—
I accepted that.

Reaching the other side, I looked back;
the bridge's trembling stayed in memory.
My trust had not been blind;
my doubt had not become a chain.

Tomorrow's Dawn

Again today the east turned red;
a bird opened its wings and flew.
Thinking of tomorrow's work,
I watched the sun's accustomed road.

Many dawns live in my memory,
and from them hope grows firm.
But tomorrow's unopened door
does not open through today's counting.

What has happened has a long footpath behind it;
what will happen lies ahead.
With the trust that joins the two
there is also room for uncertainty.

I stored grain for the next dawn;
I did not fashion its sun through assertion.
I learned to live with hope
and to call the unknown unknown.

The Window of the Possible

In my mind I made a green moon;
the sky changed there.
Saying it did not make it true,
but it opened a road for imagination.

Then I tried to shape a form
that would be round, yet no circle.
Speech snagged within speech;
meaning stopped on its own feet.

Between the unlikely and the impossible
a subtle line appeared.
The world's habit was one thing;
the knot of meaning was another.

I opened the window and let in air;
I gave thought enough room.
But the word that demolished its own house
I tested once again.

The Heat of This Moment

You asked, "Is there a fire?"
In the dark I could not see clearly.
But the warmth near my palm
was an experience I did not forget.

The name of the cause might change;
an error of recognition was possible.
Yet the warmth felt in this moment
had a powerful presence.

What I experienced
I kept apart from claims about the world outside.
Between two kinds of certainty
I saw a fine distinction.

Drawing my finger back slowly, I said,
"For now, warmth is being felt.
I will speak of its cause after testing it;
the sensation is awake here."

Awake or Dreaming?

In dream I read a letter;
the letters were so clear.
When I woke, my hands were empty,
yet its warmth remained in the mind.

Now, when I open the window,
how shall I recognise this as waking?
Having risen from one deceptive experience,
how shall I test every experience?

The knock at the door, the touch of water,
the answering voice came together.
In the linked conduct of the day
I found the meaning of being awake.

Even so, a fine voice of questioning
sounded like a distant cricket.
Listening to it, I went on with my work;
the door of life remained open.

Whom Did I Recognise First?

Before I saw the face,
I recognised the footsteps.
Even near the turn of a dark lane
I knew that familiar gait.

Then in daylight I saw the face;
the footsteps found a home in a name.
Sometimes form recognised the voice;
sometimes voice revealed the form.

A fragrance recalled the garden;
the garden awakened memory of the fragrance.
As one recognition found support,
another made a place of its own.

I kept the first seat unoccupied
and watched the weaving of relation.
The world was not made from a single line;
through joined signs I kept finding the way home.

The Voice of What Ought to Be

One hand pushed another;
the eye saw what happened.
I said, "Do not do that,"
and a new insistence woke in the voice.

What happened was one story;
what ought to happen was another.
Crossing the quiet threshold of description,
the mind took up responsibility.

Measure alone will not give dignity;
numbers alone will not give affection.
Yet even for what I urge,
I will not flee from giving reasons.

I wrote the event down and tended the wound;
I understood the different work of each.
Along with speaking what is correct,
I took on the burden of doing what is right.

Your Pain

You rest a hand upon your head;
I sit nearby and offer water.
The hurt inside you
I cannot feel within my own body.

Yet the tired shadow in your gaze,
the broken rhythm between your words,
the faint trembling of endurance kept silent
reaches as far as my heart.

Affection does not require
that the whole pain first become mine.
You are separate from me; for that very reason
I must reach toward you.

I did not understand everything,
yet I kept listening to you.
Within the distance between two bodies
I made a place for participation.

The Wind of Speech

The village woke to the call of dawn;
the market opened through forms of address.
Respect, coaxing, laughter, reproach
passed from one mouth to another.

With some words fields were divided;
with some words hands joined.
Trusting a single promise,
a distant traveller returned home.

Within this flowing wind
I recognised my own single voice.
In the language that came to me,
I came to know everyone's labour.

Living inside the house of speech,
I came to see its threshold.
I chose the work of keeping clean
this window through which I understand the world.

In the House of Words

I went to the market looking for justice;
it was not found upon any plate.
I went to the field looking for time;
it did not grow upon any plant.

Yet at the moment of division, justice
rose in people's speech.
When the season for scattering seed arrived,
the meaning of time became visible.

What cannot be held like an object
is not therefore distant from life.
Its identity lies hidden
in the joining of words and the distinctions of action.

Sitting in the house of words,
I began to test the direction of its doors.
Which word leads where?
At which turn does it lead astray?

A Voice Learns

No newborn arrives
with a language tied in a knot.
The child cried, laughed, listened,
and slowly recognised forms of address.

Mother spoke, Grandmother spoke;
even the village market reached the ear.
When distinctions opened within sound,
meaning's first wing began to grow.

Some rules were learned without being stated;
some were understood by making mistakes.
From the small bag of limited speech
new meanings kept being drawn.

Listening to the child's first story,
I filled with wonder.
With a small voice received from everyone,
the child was creating a world of its own.

Everyone's Square

I kept a sign inside my mind;
only I knew what it meant.
Yesterday I looked at that sign again—
had its meaning changed, or had I forgotten?

If memory alone bears witness to itself,
how will it catch its own mistake?
Where no one else can test
the difference between right and wrong?

At the village square speech opened;
people corrected, people learned.
One person's mistake was recognised by another,
and a place for rules formed together.

Even when I speak alone within the mind,
I speak carrying the language of everyone.
Even in silent inward dialogue
I preserve the possibility of a listener.

Flower and Measuring Tape

The tailor stretched the tape and measured;
the cloth had to be cut correctly.
At home Mother spread her anchal;
the measure of that circle was different.

Sometimes a word needs
one clear, exact meaning.
In the many shades of another word,
the warmth of affection becomes complete.

The line of numbers went straight;
the rhythm of song curved and turned.
Understanding their different work
preserved the dignity of both.

The tape gave the measure of the cloth;
the flower filled the border with fragrance.
Alongside making something correct,
there remained room to make it beloved.

The Weight of One's Own Feet

At the turning of the road there was no one
who could place a foot in my stead.
From both directions, in their different ways,
the possibilities of life called out.

I gave fear many names;
I fashioned many excuses too.
Yet even in the decision to remain standing
I saw the mark of my own hand.

Freedom is not the light wing of a flower;
it is a weight that travels with the feet.
The road I choose will have effects
that do not stop with me.

I walked carrying my own name;
I kept my own place for blame as well.
The sky remained open above my head;
I held the earth's answer in my hand.

Outside the Mould

People said, "You must be like this,"
and drew the outline of my form beforehand.
Standing within that enclosure,
I heard the tightness of my own breathing.

I am not merely a caste-name,
nor merely a shawl of occupation worn over me.
In every small choice I make
the road of my becoming opens.

Circumstance has set up its walls,
yet within them there remains a door.
Within the limits of what is possible,
my answer comes into being.

What I became today may change tomorrow,
but today's burden is mine.
Outside the ready-made mould,
I keep shaping my life.

Under the Open Sky

I looked upward and found silence;
I looked down and saw hunger.
Between the two I found awake
the responsibility of my own decision.

The sky is silent; therefore
I do not claim to know all its mysteries.
On the strength of my limited understanding
I did not stamp a final seal.

What I know is only this:
someone is asking for help now.
No distant answer is needed
to postpone the work of my hands.

Let there be faith, or let there be questions—
humanity must happen through the hands.
Standing beneath the silent sky,
I will answer for my actions.

Beyond the Body's Boundary

I saw my face in the pond;
that was my outward form.
Closing my eyes, I listened to my breath;
that was the body lived from within.

Then attention grew so still
that the body's boundary became light.
The body did not vanish; I did not fall asleep,
but its insistence moved farther away.

From the body seen and the body felt,
my being seemed somehow distinct.
From the grasp that made me into an object,
a little freedom came.

I returned and placed my feet upon the earth;
my regard for the body only increased.
Finding a little distance from myself
made it easier to reach myself.

Waking with the World

I brought the world into my eyes;
the world was already surrounding me.
In this meeting of within and without
the shape of my thinking was formed.

If I called it only a play of the mind,
the stone's blow would not stop.
If I called everything only stone,
the meaning of pain would not open.

I walked carrying my own desire,
but the road had been made by many people.
Beyond the circle of my choices
stood hunger, labour and history.

I held together the world's truth
and my own responsibility.
To wake is not merely to open the eyes;
it is to accept the weight of relationship.

The Stone in the Palm

I placed a stone upon my palm;
its coldness entered me.
The eye caught the imprint of colour;
the hand bent slightly beneath its weight.

What I learned arose within the encounter
and became my experience.
Yet the stone did not remain merely
a shape imagined by the mind.

Its unseen underside
was still beyond my eye.
When I turned it, another face appeared;
the earlier form remained as well.

I gave up claiming a complete view
and accepted the object's own insistence.
In this encounter with the world
I recognised the boundary of my gaze.

From the Solitary to the Together

I said: I shall choose my own road,
but a flood stood across it.
However strong solitary courage might be,
there was no boat for crossing.

Other people came from afar;
the same obstacle stood before them.
When bamboo, rope and hands came together,
the shape of the ghat began to change.

The dream of a free mind survived;
knowledge of need grew beside it.
What I had taken for my private sorrow
was joined to the lives of everyone.

My own desire was not erased;
it found a place within the common voice.
A solitary decision joined hands,
and the halted journey found a boat.

The Anklets of Time

An old melody sounded in a new voice;
the dust of years flashed into light.
Someone said, 'That day has returned';
someone heard an unseen dawn.

The stone image remained still;
the viewer's eyes had changed.
Within the flowing river of time
form kept opening into new meanings.

Counting dates, I suddenly stopped;
one note touched the heart.
The pulse of what had passed
came alive again in this moment.

The anklets of time kept ringing;
art kept changing its step.
Between memory and new creation
the play of enduring life went on.

Flowers in Countless Ways

A song flowered in the ear;
a colour blossomed in the eye.
In the curved movement of a dance
an unspoken meaning of the body appeared.

If I bind them all with one cord,
how many delicate differences will break?
If I keep them entirely apart,
the road of shared delight will be lost.

A picture awakened time in silence;
a note shaped form from moment to moment.
The distinct light of each medium
opened a closed window of the mind.

Leaving the straight road of utility,
I met wonder unexpectedly.
In the many ways flowers bloom
I found one open sky.

The Light of the Touchstone

I set out to test a statement,
a touchstone in my hand, a question in my mind.
On the road the touchstone itself asked:
where did I get my trust in you?

Behind one proof stood another;
and behind that, whose hand?
Between testing and what is tested
how many roads are made mutually.

Eye, memory, what was heard,
the fine thread of inference -
let each be recognised in its own place;
let the limit of each remain visible.

The end of testing is not blind belief,
nor must we lose ourselves in endless pursuit.
Where experience is clear,
there I shall place a careful foot.

Measure and Measured

I brought a balance to weigh the paddy;
then I tested the balance-pan itself.
What had served as measure a moment ago
also needed to be measured.

The measured thing and the one that measures
find their value within relation.
How far can confidence in either travel
without the other?

Grains shone before the eye;
the mind made them into a group.
Between direct encounter and the mind's form
a small lamp of difference was lit.

I kept both together:
the working truth and the deeper question.
The hand lifted the weight of paddy;
intelligence lifted its own burden.

Many Roads of Encounter

A ripe jackfruit hung upon the tree;
the nose caught its smell first.
The eye saw its colour;
the hand touched and found softness.

Three testimonies to one thing,
each with a voice of its own.
Where they agreed, trust increased;
where they differed, a new question rose.

Yet smell cannot tell the colour,
nor colour the whole knowledge of taste.
The worth of converging roads remains
when we do not forget their limits.

I plucked the fruit and shared it with everyone;
experience joined experience.
Within the widened meaning of one encounter
different witnesses found their place.

Not Every Key Is the Same

There were many keys in the household ring:
one for the granary, one for the door.
I said, 'All are made of iron;
why carry so much weight when one should suffice?'

The first lock opened easily;
at the second, the hand stopped.
The spell of identical metal broke;
I saw the small difference in the teeth.

Instruments of inquiry can be combined;
sometimes one may enter into another.
But differing tasks have differing needs;
they cannot be erased by force.

I gathered the key-ring again
and removed what was needless.
What was necessary I kept clearly marked,
each in its proper place.

Its Own Light

The lamp burned, and I saw the wall;
at the same time I saw the flame.
I did not bring another lamp in my hand
in order to see the first flame.

A thought came into the mind,
and I was aware that it had come.
As the outer form was illumined,
the waking within revealed itself.

If behind every light
I keep searching for yet another light,
night will pass entirely in the search;
when shall I hold the day already seen?

In the conscious brightness of this moment
knowing makes its own presence known.
Together with the object and its awareness,
the light of awareness itself is awake.

An Open Sitting

Four seats in one courtyard;
a lamp of questioning burned between them.
One voice followed another;
even disagreement received respect.

Someone untied the knot of speech;
someone looked beyond speech.
Someone brought the work of life;
someone placed inward stillness there.

Not all feet walked one road;
not all eyes saw the same thing.
Yet in the gentle light of listening
each person's limits became visible.

The sitting ended; the question remained.
What remained had changed its form.
We all walked toward our own homes
with one another's voices beside us.

Open the Question

You asked, 'Is this the house?'
I was looking toward the threshold.
Perhaps inside your question
another house of meaning had been dwelling.

Are you asking the name of the walls,
or searching for the place of belonging?
Is the question about shelter,
or is a chamber of memory opening?

When one question opens in different ways,
every road to the answer changes.
First I shall loosen the knot of the question -
this much I decided.

Behind speech, thought awakened;
behind thought, life stood.
Recognising a door and reaching within it
revealed themselves as different things.

The Cord Slowly Untangled

A net had fallen across my mind:
many ends of a single word.
Where its work differed by place,
I had tied those uses together.

I lifted one use after another
and listened to speech between two people.
Here a request, there information;
elsewhere the weight of a promise.

No monster stood behind the net;
only tangled connections frightened me.
When speech was placed in its proper setting,
the knot in the mind loosened.

I made no enormous claim;
I cleared one small entanglement.
In the light of one clear statement
the next step became easier.

Boat and Shore

I tested the boat's planks,
the rope, the sail, the oar.
Wherever a joint was weak,
I repaired it one by one.

The boat was safe and the water calm,
yet the journey had not begun.
Which shore had awakened desire?
That question remained unspoken.

Clear knowledge of the means is necessary;
without it the feet will sink.
But by looking only at the boat,
how can the thirst for the far bank be satisfied?

I took the oar in hand
and looked toward the distant green.
Along with the work of understanding
I opened the deeper journey of being.

The Open Forest of Meaning

In the forest of speech there were many roads:
one the clear highway of science,
another a thin footpath of affection,
a third the inward path of silence.

I wanted to see every road;
I did not measure them all with one measure.
I entered the life in which each was used
to see what meaning woke there.

The language of justice called for action;
the language of reverence opened direction.
The language of form coloured the mind;
the language of questions uncovered sleep.

The forest kept its diversity;
the discipline of meaning survived as well.
Between clarity and self-search
there was no longer a locked gate.

Trust in a Statement

A traveller brought news:
'The pond in the distant village has dried.'
I asked, 'Who saw it?
When did the earth crack?'

I understood what the statement meant;
its truth still needed testing.
Between meaning and trust
there remained a working distance.

Then he said, 'Save the village.'
That voice was asking something different.
Along with the fact, a human appeal
reached my decision.

I checked whether the news was true
and gathered help at the same time.
To understand a statement, to test it,
and to act upon it - I learned the distinction.

The Door of Testing

You said, 'There is water in the well.'
I lowered the rope.
Along with the meaning of the statement
I saw a possible road of testing.

The bucket came up empty;
the claim proved untrue.
But the meaning of what had been said
was not erased by that failure.

What experience would speak
for or against the claim?
With this question the haze begins to clear;
the shape of the assertion grows distinct.

I touched the latch of the door;
an entrance for inquiry opened.
Before accepting the statement, I learned
where it could be put to the test.

Where Meaning Still Remains

I know many signs of the rains;
you know many more than I do.
Yet when we speak of rain
we understand one another.

Though the heaps of knowledge differ,
a shared place of speech remains.
Opening a new road of testing
does not alter meaning every time.

Today's inquiry is not final;
tomorrow another sign may appear.
The word that works today
does not thereby become voiceless.

I kept the claim open
without making the meaning dim.
In conversation with the evening cloud,
I left a place for the unknown as well.

Every Light Has Its Own Direction

The eye said, 'The star is shining';
an instrument told its distance.
The mind said, 'Someone is lonely';
a hand searched for a way to sit nearby.

A fine measure for distance
cannot measure the weight of loneliness.
The call of affection and the desire for justice
touch life in different ways.

I kept the lamp of inquiry safe;
its light is greatly needed.
But to understand all voices
I kept all the windows open.

The star kept shining in its own place;
the nearby human being was no longer alone.
Compassion awakened beside knowledge;
in the night the whole courtyard opened.

SECTION V — LANGUAGE

The Language That Makes Its Home Within

The lines drawn upon the body of a country may change;
the emblems of state may change;
the language of the throne may change - but the language dwelling within a human being is the silent memory of generations.

The language in which a child first learns the name of the smell of earth, in which Grandmother's story cuts through the darkness of night, in which the cultivator looks toward the sky and prays for rain - why should questions not be born in that language? Why should philosophy not flower in it?

Thought is no slave of a court. It is like a seed:

in whatever soil it is planted,

it drinks the sap of that soil and takes on its own form. The seed of the Indian mind seeks new shoots in the fields of Indian languages.

The ancient bell of Sanskrit, the quiet footfall of Pali,

the easy laughter of Prakrit, the sea-scent of Tamil,

the song of Bengali, the vigour of Marathi,

the grave voice of Kannada, the rhythm of Telugu, the green shade of Malayalam, Punjabi, Assamese, Odia, Gujarati, Hindi, Maithili - together they work the loom of India's consciousness.

To cut one thread is to impoverish the loom;

to enthrone one colour is to diminish the picture. The point is not merely that a language should remain alive. The point is that it should think, question, voice disagreement, build arguments, and carry the weight of new knowledge.

Let there be encounter with the knowledge of the world - with an open mind and an open heart - but after that encounter let us not extinguish the lamp of our own home. Let the light of distant lands dispel darkness in our courtyard, and let the lamp of our courtyard be visible from afar. The dignity of knowledge lies in this exchange.

When science coins its own terms,

history asks its own questions,

jurisprudence sustains its own arguments,

philosophy opens its subtle distinctions, and poetry gives speech to the unspoken pain of the mind, language ceases to be merely speech; it becomes the workshop of a civilisation.

Freedom will be complete only when the right to think is also free;

when no student feels ashamed to ask the most difficult question in the mother tongue; when no scholar feels diminished while creating a new theory in the words of one's own people.

The languages of India are not museum objects. They are living tools with which the future can be shaped.

They need not worship but use; not monuments but creation.

And when each language gathers the intelligence,

experience and dreams of its people into new words,

Indian thought will not be a single voice but a luminous hall of many voices, where difference is not an obstacle but an expansion of knowledge.

Maithili's New Field

Advancement does not mean merely writing a name upon a high platform, nor making one's own voice louder by suppressing another. Advancement occurs when a language enters the work of people's lives. If Maithili grows, let its growth be like the greenness of a field - with room for new seed, with the memory of old seed still preserved, and with winds from neighbouring fields bringing pollen that sets new fruit.

Words do not live only in dictionaries. They seek meaning in courts of law, receive names in laboratories, become questions in schools, instructions in factories, reassurance in hospitals, arguments in the news, and the inner darkness of human beings in novels.

Therefore the first way to enlarge a language is to give it the difficult work of life. Along with simple matters, complex thought too should be spoken in it; science, economics, philosophy, history, technology and social debate should each place their words upon its palm.

Where a word is lacking,

create one. Where another language offers a beautiful word,

receive it with respect. Where an old word can sprout a new meaning, awaken it again. A language is enriched not by shutting the door but by movement in and out.

Let the translator's hand row the boat of knowledge from one shore to another; let the dignity of the original remain, and let the language of arrival breathe in its own way. In this passage not only words but the movement of thought changes.

The possibility of Maithili is not merely the number of its readers. Its possibility lies in a student being able to understand a difficult concept and criticise it in an individual way; in a researcher recording conclusions in that language without hesitation; in a poet creating a new rhythm for a new sensibility.

And this growth is not a diminishment of Bengali,

Marathi, Tamil, Urdu, Kannada, Telugu,

Assamese or any other language. Genuine advancement does not know how to brighten its own lamp by extinguishing a neighbour's. It shares light.

When languages learn from one another,

when words, metaphors,

experiences and thought create roads of travel among themselves,

Maithili too will grow richer, and so will India's multilingual soul.

The final touchstone of advancement is respect - respect for the speech of the people, for the complexity of knowledge, for the labour of translation, and for the right to disagree. When language becomes not an order but an opportunity for expression, its future grows larger.

May Maithili's new field become green with this hope:

that every ear of language may make the human being more understanding, more questioning and more generous.

When Thought Finds Its Own Speech

The journey of thought is not merely the changing of a book's binding. It is the art of keeping human questions alive from one age to another.

At times thought lived in sutra,

at times in commentary,

at times in the silent courtyard of a monastery,

at times in the traveller's song, at times in the saint's paradoxical utterance, at times in the easy story of the people - and then one day, seeking the language of a new reader, it arrived at the door of Maithili.

With it came Nyaya's sharp questions,

Vedanta's unfathomable sky,

the measured steps of Jain thought,

the clear gaze of Buddhist compassion, the bodily discipline of the Nath tradition, the fearless inward voice of the saints, the love of bhakti, the Sufi road opening inward - separate currents entering the river of one time.

Philosophy then ceased to be merely the difficult pronunciation of scholars in the capital. It asked: Who am I? Where is the root of suffering? On what basis can knowledge be trusted? Where is the human being situated among God, world, self, body and society?

When the language changed,

the dignity of the questions did not diminish. On the contrary,

the questions found new ears and entered new homes. What had once reached only a limited threshold began to walk upon the public road.

The teacher's voice, the disciple's memory,

the people's story, the discipline of a sect,

the poet's experience - each in its own way kept lighting lamps around one large question.

But time does not move by tradition alone. A new age arrives with its own measure. After the darkness of colonial rule came the search for the self; with political swaraj came the question of inward self-rule; ethics met politics, society stood in the dock of justice, and the economy was questioned by human dignity.

Gandhian thought did not merely spin thread upon the charkha;

it kept searching for the ethical cord between means and ends. Socialist voices raised questions of bread, labour and equality; the scientific outlook brought belief into the light of testing; new humanism tried to write a new compact between person and society.

Thought came from the West - new tools of reasoning,

new ways of reading history, new questions about mind,

language, society and knowledge - but receiving them did not mean becoming a copy. Genuine development occurred when an external question touched the soil of one's own experience.

Translation was necessary so that distant books might come near,

new technical terms might be born,

and students might understand the history of thought. Yet beyond translation there remained a blank page upon which one's own questions, arguments, disagreements and theories still had to be written.

When the university teaches not merely answers for examinations but the courage to generate questions; when research not merely counts old positions but tests their limits; then language truly becomes a philosophical medium.

A textbook opens a road, a dictionary gives tools,

translation builds a bridge,

history shows direction - but new philosophy is born when a mind is not satisfied with an answer already given.

The development of Maithili in this sense is not a matter of numbers but an intellectual responsibility: to create prose capable of sustaining subtle distinctions; to coin words that can bear the weight of argument; to make sentences in which experience and concept can speak with one another.

And if this language can maintain a continuous dialogue from the caves of the Nath tradition to the discipline of Jain Agamas, from the fearlessness of the saints and the compassion of bhakti to modern social struggle, university research and the unseen questions of the future, then its greatness will be measured not by the number of its speakers but by its capacity to sustain thought.

A language becomes great when it carries the freedom of questions more than the burden of answers; when it bows to tradition yet has the courage to test it; when it accepts knowledge from outside without closing its own eyes; and when it tells the new generation: 'The road has been made up to here. Beyond this, make the road yourselves.'

New Questions in Old Letters

Some languages do not remain merely inscriptions beneath the dust of time; in their old bodies they continue to circulate the blood of new questions.

Sanskrit is one such long breath - containing the compression of sutra, the expansion of commentary, the sharpness of debate, and within its silences the audible footfall of countless inquiries.

At the dawn of an independent country, the question was not where to keep old books. The question was: how shall we look at a new day through the eyes of those books?

Pramana rose again:

How do we truly know what we claim to know? How far does the light of perception reach? How strong is the bridge of inference? Where does trust in testimony stand? Can absence itself become an object of knowledge?

These were not new questions. Yet every generation tempers them again in the fire of its own experience. If truth is alive, its examination too must remain alive.

In the courtyard of metaphysics old names returned carrying new shadows - self, world, cause, effect, consciousness, God, liberation, time. Every word seemed to ask: 'Will you only remember me, or will you understand me again?'

Nyaya said: count the steps of thought and see where a leap occurs. Vedanta said: beyond the limited eye lies a deeper question. Sankhya measured the distance between Prakriti and Purusha; Yoga gave the restlessness within a disciplined seat.

But the new age had not come merely to hear old answers. It brought new questions from the laboratory of science, from the documents of history, from social inequality, individual freedom and political struggle.

Then came Sanskrit's real test:

is it only the court of the past, or can it spread its seat in the public square of the present as well?

The scholar who opened a window of new meaning in an old word did more than preserve a language - that scholar preserved a road of thought. The one who questioned tradition did not insult it; that person treated it as alive.

A living tradition does not break at a touch;

it shines under questioning. A dead object requires a glass case. Living thought requires dialogue.

In this dialogue, at times the subtle language of Navya-Nyaya makes the line of an argument fine as a hair; at times a commentator sees with new eyes a difference hidden within an older position; at times a poet-philosopher seats reasoning and experience beneath the shade of a single verse.

The strength of Sanskrit lies not only in its antiquity. Its strength lies in a word-structure that has room for subtle distinctions, tools for untying knots of argument, and an old yet flexible loom for weaving new meanings.

But no language creates a future by glory alone. It needs readers, questioners, the courage to disagree, and writers who can fold their hands before tradition without lowering their eyes while writing.

New philosophy is born when inheritance becomes responsibility; when shastra becomes shastrartha;

when respect does not restrain inquiry but deepens it.

If Sanskrit speaks today, let its voice not merely say,

'Thus it was said.' Let it say:

'Thus it was thought. Now think where this thought stands today.'

In that single sentence a true bridge forms between past and present. On one side, the memory of centuries; on the other, unborn possibility; between them, the human being - questioning, testing answers, and creating new questions.

The longevity of a language should not be measured by counting years. It should be measured by how many new thoughts it has given birth to within itself.

Therefore to honour old letters is not to silence them. Bring them to the fire of the present, so that what endures may grow brighter, what breaks may leave room for a new form, and what is unborn may receive words.

Only then will Sanskrit step out of the vast house of memory and become a workshop of the future - where beside every old sutra a blank page is kept for the questions of a new generation.

From Roots to Horizon

A banyan tree cannot be called old merely by looking at its bark. Sap continues to move within it; its roots read the earth in darkness, while its branches hear new reports from the sky.

Indian philosophy too is such a many-branched tree - here the hard thorn of questioning, there the soft leaf of compassion, here the bright flower of reasoning, there the deep fruit of silence.

There is not one road but many paths:

disagreeing with one another,
sharpening one another's questions,
sometimes cutting, sometimes joining, thought has moved forward.

The one who only praises reads half a page of history;
the one who only mocks also reads half. The whole page opens only when reverence and doubt sit at the same table.

Old texts are not lamps locked in a shrine;
they are furnaces of questions. Positions were formed there,
positions broke, counter-positions arose,
and then the metal of new answers melted.

Knowledge is not merely how many sutras one remembers. Knowledge is the moment when the living problem behind a sutra becomes visible and we ask: 'Where is the limit of this answer?'

Some saw the world changing moment by moment;
some searched for permanence. Some protected the lamp of the self;
some questioned the very word 'self'. Some followed the road of God; some demanded proof. Some spoke of liberation, some of justice, some of compassion, some of public welfare.

Within this crowd of disagreements there is a hidden discipline:

do not accept without reason,
do not reject without listening,
and do not even invoke tradition without questioning.

But time changed. New schools opened,
new languages entered classrooms,
books from distant lands opened new windows;
then the rooms of one's own house too needed to be seen with new eyes.

Some turned inheritance into an object of worship;
some brushed it aside as dust. Between these two extremes,
the real house of thought often stood empty.

What is needed now is this: open the texts,
but open the eyes as well; read tradition,
but hear the heartbeat of the present;
learn foreign theories, but name one's own questions in one's own language.

Many old questions remain new even now - What is a human being? What is consciousness? Where is the root of suffering? What is the touchstone of truth? Is justice merely statute, or a balance within life? Is freedom only a right, or responsibility too?

And many new questions knock upon the door of old words - machine intelligence, the limits of science, environmental suffering, new forms of inequality, struggles of identity, the solitude of the global village. The future is not a copy of old answers. The future is to bring the light of new experience into old questions.

One scholar may know the fine distinctions of the original text,
another modern researcher the tools of a new method. If the two remain in separate rooms, the house of knowledge will remain incomplete. Open the door of dialogue - learn one another's language, hear one another's doubts.

Translation is not merely changing words;
it is the first stone of a bridge between two shores. Let the fragrance of the original survive, and let the new reader breathe. In this balance a new tradition is born.

If a university becomes merely an examination paper,
philosophy's breath will grow short. If the classroom becomes a workshop of questions, students will become not spectators of history but participants in thought.

We need a generation capable of turning the pages of shastra and reading today's news as well; one that understands the meaning of ancient words and coins a language for new problems; one that converses with the West without losing its own voice.

Comparison is not a game of victory and defeat,
nor a weighing in which one philosophy is made smaller or larger than another. Comparison is placing two lamps close together to see the limits and possibilities of both lights.

Let the future of Indian philosophy be neither a sealed museum nor a market of imitation, but a living workshop where memory becomes a tool, reason a hammer, experience metal, compassion heat, and questions the artisan's hand.

A tree does not grow tall by cutting off its roots;
nor does it touch the sky by disappearing entirely into the roots. Let the roots hold the earth and the
branches seek direction - in the meeting of the two lies the height of life.

So look back, but not in order to return;

look forward, but not in order to flee. Understand the meaning of what has been, touch the pulse of what is
happening, and prepare questions for what will be.

The future of Indian philosophy is no ready-made prophecy. It is a map slowly forming in every wakeful
mind. On the day tradition gives courage rather than fear, and modernity gives expansion rather than
amnesia, new leaves will break from the branches of the old tree.

And those leaves will not merely be green memories of the past - they will call the wind of the future by its
own name for the first time.

The Swaraj of Thought Within Swaraj

The dawn of the fifteenth of August did not merely change the colours of a flag; a country received the right to write its future in its own name.

But freedom opens a door;
it does not walk the road for us. Once political chains broke,
the old chains of the mind became more clearly visible.
Before the philosopher in this new dawn stood the question:
will thought continue to sit at the threshold of old books,
or will it go out upon the road and recognise the dust of a new nation?

Behind stood the voice of the Vedas,
the silence of the Upanishads, Buddhist compassion,
Jain restraint, Nyaya's reasoning,
Mimamsa's discipline, Vedanta's depth - as roots, as memory, as a long tradition of debate.

Ahead stood a new republic - hunger,
the wounds of Partition, the first practice of democracy,
the rapid pace of science, factories, dams,
universities, new laws, new aspirations, and the questions in millions of eyes.
If philosophy looks only toward the distant sky of moksha,
who will see the human shadow fallen upon the earth? If it asks only of the self and not of the body's hunger,
only of Brahman and not of the burden of injustice, then in an independent country its own freedom
remains incomplete.

The first twenty-five years were a laboratory - Constitution on paper, tradition in the mind, new Western theories in the classroom, centuries of experience in the village, and between them the Indian intellect searching for balance.

Some turned toward old texts,
some toward new European ideas;
some made the two mirrors for one another,
some disagreed with both and searched for a third road.

Existential anguish, analysis of language,
the evidence of experience, the touchstone of science,
social structure - new terms slowly began to echo through university corridors.

But India's questions were not merely translated questions. Here lived the memory of satyagraha, the difficult discipline of non-violence, the dream of sarvodaya, the village question, the dignity of labour, and the unfulfilled promise of equality.

Gandhi was not merely an image in history but an ethical touchstone standing before the new state: as power grows, is the human being becoming smaller? Does the chariot of development carry everyone along?

Vinoba's footsteps asked questions of land,
probing beyond the meaning of donation into the soul of ownership;
the voice of the Loknayak called again for public participation and an ethical politics.

Meanwhile philosophical books were written,
interpretations made, translations produced,
new research centres founded. Yet behind every book a hard question remained: are we reading our own time with sufficient seriousness?

Often we wore the bright garment of ancient glory but had little courage to see the dust of the present upon it. Often we put on the glittering spectacles of foreign theory but did not ask how clearly the face of our own village appeared through them.

The swaraj of knowledge does not mean merely that books exist in one's own language. It begins when the questions are one's own, when examples rise from one's own life, and when answers arriving from elsewhere are tested in the fire of one's own experience.

The university classroom was a small parliament of new India. There shastra and modernity met; students asked: What is proof? What is the person? What is society? Where is the limit of religion? What is the ethics of the state? How can freedom and equality walk the same road?

The teacher's responsibility was not merely to distribute a list of positions but to cultivate the habit of questioning. Philosophy lives not by memorised answers but by questions asked in the right way.

In the first twenty-five years many bridges were built - from Sanskrit to modern languages, from India to the West, from shastra to society, from spirituality to politics.

Some bridges were strong, some half-built,
some stopped in the middle of the river;
yet the desire to cross was recorded in history.

This period was neither complete victory nor futile waiting. It was a season of sowing: some seeds sprouted; others remained beneath the soil waiting for next year's rain.

The most difficult lesson before philosophical thought was the lesson of freedom itself - to be free means not only dismissing an old master but also taking the weight of one's decisions upon one's own shoulders.

Therefore thought had to become neither the follower of political proclamation nor a tower from which ordinary life looks hazy. It needed dialogue with the dust of the road, the laboratory's question, the farmer's hand, the worker's sweat, the woman's voice, the humiliation of the Dalit, the young person's restlessness, and the seeker's silence.

For truth does not enter a house through one door alone. Sometimes it comes as reason, sometimes compassion, sometimes resistance, sometimes self-examination.

At the end of twenty-five years the country looked into its mirror - some achievements, some incompleteness, some borrowed language, some of its own voice, some deep research, some shallow imitation.

But a mirror's task is not to tell the face it is beautiful;
its task is to show the face clearly.

Thus the true gift of that period was not merely the number of books but the awareness that Indian philosophy is not an object of the past; it is a responsibility of the present.

The past gives us a back to stand against,
but not a direction. Direction must be chosen by the discernment of the present.

And the future? It was the next generation standing at the doorway after those twenty-five years, questions in hand, doubt in the eyes, hope in the heart.

That generation could be told: love tradition,
but do not abandon the question; learn from modernity,
but do not surrender; converse with the world,
but do not render your own experience mute.

The first chapter of swaraj was written in politics;
the second had to be written in thought.

And this writing is still unfinished. Every generation must write the questions of its own time with its own discernment, so that freedom remains not merely a date in history but a continuing practice of consciousness.

Our Own Earth, Open Sky

After independence the country faced not only borders but a compass of thought as well - from where shall we move, with whom shall we move, and while moving how shall we preserve our own face?

Old books burned like lamps behind us,
but the road ahead was not a literal copy of that light. New time had already opened the door to new questions.

On one side stood the long tradition of religion,
self, moksha, Brahman, karma and rebirth;
on the other, science, democracy, industry,
individual rights, social justice and the changing thought of the world.

Between them stood the Indian philosophical mind - unable to abandon the past, unable to evade the present.

Some said: return to your roots. Some said:

learn the language of the new world. But the question was not to choose one and discard the other. The question was: how shall we hear both and make our own judgement?

Philosophy's identity is not made by the cover of a book. It is made when a question touches the nerve of life.

If there is hunger, ethics must see it. If there is injustice,
the philosophy of justice must hear it. If science grants new power, discernment must ask: how far is this power in the service of human beings?

If machines grow faster,
has the human conscience grown faster too? If cities expand,
has compassion shrunk or grown? If education spreads,
has independent thought spread as well?

Without such questions philosophy can become merely a handsome cupboard of words.

To call something 'Indian' does not mean only antiquity,

only Sanskrit vocabulary,

only marks of religion. Indianness is a many-shaped ground of experience - village, city, forest, factory,
temple, mosque, vihara, school, parliament, the silence of women, the sweat of labourers, Dalit resistance,
the doubt of youth.

Identity becomes alive when thought searches for its touchstone amid all this.

Tradition is not a relic kept in a glass case;

it is an ongoing dialogue. An answer sufficient yesterday may be tested again today. Even a great doctrine is not beyond questioning.

Reverence is not the enemy of questions. Genuine reverence can endure the fire of questioning.

And modernity too is not final truth. A thought is not superior merely because it is new; it too demands testing.

Foreign thought is not an enemy,
but neither is it a master. Let it arrive as a guest;
let us listen, serve it the food of our own experience,
and decide while sitting together.

Imitation is not dialogue. Self-enchancement is not swaraj either.

Philosophical swaraj is born here:

when we open the books of the world without closing our own eyes;
when we read our own shastras while hearing the world's voices as well.

Some questions do not recognise national borders - What is truth? What is a valid source of knowledge?

What is the relation of mind and body? What grounds moral action? Does society make the person, or does the person make society?

No country's name is written upon such questions. Yet history,
language, culture and experience leave their imprint upon the way answers are given.

Therefore universal questions and local experience are not enemies. Together they make the whole body of thought.

If philosophy in the university is only a syllabus,
questions will remain upon examination paper once the examination ends.

The classroom needs living controversy,
coherent disagreement more than easy agreement,
and teachers who give courage not to fear a question instead of merely distributing answers.

Research is not old content in a new wrapper. It must name new problems, test them with new methods, and where necessary show the limits of old categories.

Philosophy does not walk alone. It can learn from psychology,
sociology, history, linguistics, science,
art and literature.

The human being is not a department;
therefore human questions cannot be contained completely within one department.

But companionship among disciplines must not mean losing one's centre. Philosophy's work is to go to the root of a question, open the layers of assumption, see the meanings hidden within words, and test the joints of an argument.

At times philosophy takes the language of science,
at times of ethical pain; at times the edge of analysis,
at times the depth of experience. Not every problem opens with the same tool.

One who demands only measurement will not grasp the whole meaning of love; one who demands only feeling cannot evade the hardness of fact.

Reason and sensibility must live in the same human house.

One pain of post-independence thought was also uncertainty about identity. Again and again we asked: are we modern or traditional? Eastern or Western? Religious or secular?

But human beings do not fit easily into such paired boxes. Life is mixed, and thought needs an honest language for this mixture.

Secularity is not hostility to religion;

religion is not hostility to reason. Morality is not merely the child of fear, and freedom is not mere whim.

If philosophy does not preserve these subtle distinctions,
slogans will occupy the place of thought.

And slogans sound loudly but very seldom answer deep questions.

The philosopher needs the art of pausing for a moment even amid a crowd; the courage to ask 'why?' before popular opinion; and the same severity before a favourite doctrine.

For bias is not only another person's error;
it is also the shadow of one's own thought.

The right direction is not always found ready like an arrow-sign. Direction is made through questioning, testing, failure, reconsideration and dialogue.

Let us keep walking, keep asking, keep listening,

and standing upon our own earth let us continue to make the open sky the direction of our thought.

The Campus of Questions

Behind history there remains a campus where generations meet in the same veranda carrying their own questions.

The university of an independent country was such a campus:
new names upon the walls, old texts in the syllabus,
foreign books upon the table,
and an unanswered present within the students.

Philosophy begins not with an answer but with wonder. The moment someone sees and then asks, 'Why is this so?', thought is born.

But the habit of questioning does not arise easily. Often an institution protects the syllabus more than the question; often a teacher protects the sequence of notes more than curiosity.

Then philosophy ceases to be lived experience and becomes an examination answer.

After independence many doors opened in the Indian philosophical campus - Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, Bradley, Russell, Wittgenstein and many modern voices; alongside them the long debates of Nyaya, Vedanta, Buddhism, Jainism, Mimamsa, Yoga and other Indian traditions.

This was richness, but there was also a danger:

while reading another person's map,
might we forget the roads of our own earth?

Exchange of knowledge is natural,
but imitation must not be the end of thought.

Let foreign books become windows, not walls;
let one's own tradition become a root,
not a chain.

The philosopher's work is to open both - the light outside and the darkness within.

There was another problem in the campus:

groups. Groups around positions,
groups around teachers, groups around journals,
groups around appointments.

Where the value of thought is judged less by reasoning and more by acquaintance, questions slowly remain standing outside the door.

If a philosophical community merely imitates the social hierarchy around it, its moral authority weakens.

Let there be friendship in the realm of thought,
but not factionalism; tradition,
but not inherited privilege; disagreement,
but not exclusion.

A researcher arrives with a new question and needs a library,
guidance, time, linguistic access,
and above all the right to question without fear.

If that question differs from the teacher's position,
it is not a crime; within that difference lies the possibility of new philosophy.

Originality is not lightning falling from the sky. It is born from long study, the right question, patient doubt, and the continuous collision of reasoning with experience.

Yet originality is easy to praise and difficult to make. One must first read a great deal, then step out from beneath the shadow of what has been read.

The true test of research is not how many names have been cited but whether, once those names are removed, the researcher's own question still stands.

Language too is a serious question on this campus. If thought is written only in a language understood by a very small part of society, philosophy's public life contracts.

Learning English may be necessary for conversation with the world;
but philosophical terminology, research,
translation, debate and teaching in Indian languages are equally necessary.

Truth does not change when the language changes,
but the road by which truth is reached does change.

A question asked in one's own language often sounds closer,
because its words remain connected with home,
village, memory and lived experience.

The philosophical campus is not only inside the library. Outside,
life writes questions every day - corruption,

caste, gender inequality, religious tension,
poverty, development, environment, the ethics of science, the power of technology.

If philosophy averts its eyes from these questions,
its depth will remain merely the depth of words.

Philosophy does not always mean giving a solution. Sometimes it is philosophy to clarify the language of a solution, sometimes to expose an assumption hidden inside a problem, sometimes to change the form of a wrongly posed question.

A society asks, 'How much development?' The philosopher may ask,
'Whose development? At whose cost? For whom?'

A state says, 'We need order.' The philosopher asks,
'How long can order survive without justice?'

A technology says, 'This is possible.' The philosopher asks,
'But is it right?'

In these small differences lies the real usefulness of thought.

Philosophy need not solve every question alone. It must speak with science, sociology, psychology, history, linguistics, economics, art and literature.

Human life does not respect departmental walls;
knowledge too must cross them.

Interdisciplinary dialogue is not fashion but a demand of reality. Yet dialogue does not mean losing one's own discipline; philosophy's identity lies in the depth of its questions, clarity of concepts, testing of arguments, and discernment of values.

Philosophical writing too takes many forms - sometimes pure argument, sometimes interpretation, sometimes criticism, sometimes application, sometimes a meeting of these.

Not all writing has the same measure;
but all writing has one demand: honesty.

What is quotation, call quotation;
what is interpretation, call interpretation;

what is one's own view,
take responsibility for it in one's own name.

In the world of knowledge, vague borrowing weakens thought;
clear dialogue strengthens it.

The health of a campus is not measured by how many buildings it has, but by how many independent questions can remain alive within it.

Let books be published, but also read;
let research be done, but also examined;
let conferences be held, but also debated;
let there be positions, but also responsibility.

If an institute of philosophy becomes merely a ladder to positions,
thought will be left below. It needs an atmosphere of discipline where slow reading is not shameful, deep thinking is not a waste of time, and disagreement is not bad manners.

We need classrooms in which students can question teachers;
departments in which young researchers can re-examine old doctrines; journals in which the thought is read before the name.

We need a language in which difficult thought can become clear without becoming shallow, and a simplicity that contains clarity rather than poverty.

The post-independence philosophical environment is not a story of one colour. It contains achievement, translation, research and new institutions; beside them also imitation, factionalism, linguistic distance, lack of originality and anxiety about separation from life.

But criticism should not become despair. Criticism is the first lamp of improvement.

A campus that can see its weakness can change. One that sees only a picture of glory covers half the mirror. The philosophical environment of the future will be no single person's project. It will be the joint result of the teacher's ethics, the student's curiosity, institutional fairness, the expansion of language, the quality of publication, and continuous conversation with society.

Thought needs a home, but windows too; tradition,
but testing too; freedom, but discipline too;
identity, but openness too.

Only then will philosophy become not a quiet object in a museum but the alert consciousness of a living society.

And the university campus will become not merely a place that gives degrees but a public square where each generation arrives with the questions of its own time, hears the answers of the ancestors, understands the debates of the world, and finally writes a new answer in the voice of its own discernment.

The Questions That Still Ask for Answers

Behind every answer some questions remain;
 and sometimes in those remaining questions the unease of an entire age sits quietly.
 Freedom came, the country changed,
 schools multiplied, university buildings rose,
 syllabi were made, research papers written - yet some chairs at philosophy's table remained empty.
 Those chairs were meant for the living problems of society,
 for the ordinary struggles of human beings,
 and for questions born not in books but in life.
 Tradition was preserved - this was necessary. But tradition is not merely something to be preserved; it also
 asks to be questioned again.
 For the root remains beneath the earth,
 but the tree puts out new leaves every season. To worship the root while preventing the leaves is not to protect
 the tree.
 On one side stood long discussions of spirituality,
 self, Brahman, liberation and dharma;
 on the other, human rights, political freedom,
 social inequality, exploitation, language, education, new science and new technology.
 Philosophy's responsibility between these directions is not silence but dialogue.
 The question is not whether the old shastra was wrong or the new thought right. The question is: on what
 basis will today's human being make decisions about life?
 It is useful to teach many positions in a university classroom;
 but the number of positions does not create depth of judgement.
 If a student remembers Kant's name,
 repeats Shankara's formulations,
 recognises Buddhist arguments,
 lists Nyaya's pramanas - but cannot question an injustice directly before the eyes - how far has the lamp of
 education really burned?
 Philosophy is tested not only in the answer-book but in the dilemmas of life.
 Someone asks, 'What is the human being?' But an unemployed young person asks, 'What is the value of my
 labour?'
 Someone asks, 'Is there free will?' But an oppressed woman asks,
 'Why do I not have the right to make my own decision?'
 Someone asks, 'What is moral good?' But a hungry family asks,
 'What shall we call justice?'
 Such questions cannot be kept outside the door as 'non-philosophical'.
 A problem is a fact of life. Sometimes it is born inside the individual, sometimes in the structure of society,
 sometimes in both at once.
 A solution is not merely a game of thought. It needs recognition of facts, inquiry into causes, a touchstone of
 values, and discernment among alternatives.
 The philosopher is neither physician nor engineer nor administrator, but philosophical questioning can
 open the hidden assumptions inside all these forms of decision.
 Science may say, 'This is possible.' Economics may say,
 'This is profitable.' But the question,
 'Is this right?', knocks upon philosophy's door.
 To declare a solution before understanding the problem often creates a new problem.
 Therefore philosophy requires the art of looking slowly - at structure behind event, meaning behind word,
 value behind decision, and the image of the human being behind value.
 We cannot compress society into statistics alone;
 nor can feeling alone grasp its complexity.
 Philosophical thought demands the difficult discipline of keeping facts and values together.
 In the post-independence period one question returned again and again: in what sense is Indian philosophy
 Indian?
 By Indian names alone? By ancient sources alone? By Sanskrit vocabulary alone? Or because it accepts as its
 own the questions of living human beings upon this land?
 Identity is made by work, not declaration.
 If philosophy does not see India's village,
 urban inequality, caste wounds, religious tension,
 the condition of women,
 educational inequality and political ethics, then the word 'Indian' may become merely a covering.
 And if it closes its door to the thinking of the world,
 its own experience may become narrow.
 Therefore two windows must remain open - one toward one's own society, another toward the world.

Imitation is an easy road:

place upon one's own paper the problems of another country,
the words of another time, the examples of another society,
just as they are.

But questions are not merely translated.

The dust, smell, history, language, struggle,
faith and opposition of one's own society demand their own philosophical form.

Originality in philosophy is not merely coining new words;
it is seeing a problem in a new way.

Sometimes originality resides in one small question:

'What is the basis of what I have been assuming?'

Sometimes it opens an old word in a new context;

sometimes it sees an unnoticed relation between two distant ideas.

But this requires training in research.

A researcher needs not only a bibliography but judgement in choosing a problem; not only quotations but the structure of an argument; not only conclusions but honesty in recognising the limits of the question.

If the university becomes merely a factory of degrees,
philosophy's future will be bound inside certificates.

Therefore the teacher's role is deep:

before teaching students to answer,

teach them to form questions.

'What is the problem?' 'For whom is it a problem?' 'Why is it important?' 'What facts are necessary?' 'What values are at stake?' 'What alternatives are possible?' 'And what is my own bias?'

Practice in these questions is philosophy's gymnasium.

If a philosophy syllabus becomes only history,
students will tour a museum of thought and return home.

History is necessary,

but a bridge is needed from history to the present.

While reading Nyaya, ask about contemporary justice;

while reading non-violence, ask about political violence;

while reading dharma, ask about plurality and coexistence;

while reading the self, ask about personhood, consciousness and responsibility.

Only then will the old shastra speak with the present.

The question of language too cannot remain unanswered.

If philosophy remains only in English within a small academic circle, its social breath will narrow.

Accurate terminology, high-quality translation,

original books, critical writing and opportunities for research in Indian languages must expand.

Language is not merely a medium. It changes the rhythm of a question, the nearness of experience, and the number of readers.

But one's own language should not become vague in the name of simplicity, nor a closed fortress in the name of difficulty.

Clarity is an ethical virtue of philosophical writing.

Define the words you use;

understand correctly the position you criticise;

acknowledge the limit of the conclusion you write.

For honesty in thought is not decoration but a basic condition.

The remaining unanswered questions are not a catalogue of despair;

they are a catalogue of work.

Every question that remains is an invitation to the next generation.

Society will keep changing; new technologies will arrive;

forms of family will change;

political relations of power will change;

environmental crises may deepen; questions of identity will return in new forms.

Philosophy must not merely run behind these changes. It must see the fundamental questions in time.

A crisis of values does not always sound loudly at once;

it enters language, behaviour,

institutions and decisions slowly.

Philosophical consciousness is the capacity to hear this slow change.

It asks: 'What are we treating as normal?' 'Whose suffering has become invisible?' 'Which privilege are we calling a right?' 'Which injustice are we protecting in the name of tradition?'

Such questions make society uncomfortable,

but discomfort is sometimes a sign of health.

The philosopher's work is not to please everyone. It also includes giving words to necessary discomfort in the search for truth.

But criticism is not hatred. Philosophical severity without compassion can become dry wood.
 Human questions are for human beings;
 therefore at the final ground of reasoning there must remain a place for compassion.
 We need a philosophy that does not flee society and does not become society's propagandist; that is not the
 servant of the state and does not cultivate the arrogance of being the state's enemy; that understands religion
 without abandoning the right to question; that respects science without forgetting the question of value.
 Perhaps philosophical maturity is the name of this balance.
 Unanswered questions remind us that freedom is not a one-time event; in thought it is a daily practice.
 Every generation must recognise the chains of its own time - sometimes fear, sometimes blind imitation,
 sometimes prestige, sometimes faction, sometimes language, sometimes the hard shell of tradition.
 And every generation must make the key to its own questions.
 The future of philosophy is not a book of ready answers;
 it is an open notebook.
 On the first page the past is written,
 on the second the struggle of the present,
 and the next page is still blank.
 That blank page is not a deficiency but a possibility.
 There we must write: knowledge connected with life;
 reasoning that is fair; language that is open;
 research that is honest; education that loves questions;
 and a philosophy with the courage to make human suffering its subject.
 Then the unanswered question will not remain an ending;
 it will become the first step of the next journey.
 And the question standing before us today may tomorrow become the first seed of a new answer.

The Touchstone of Experience

I open my eyes - colour arrives. I open my ears - sound arrives. I extend a hand - touch tells its temperature. But is knowledge only this much?

Is what I have seen the whole body of truth? Or does the mind add its own meaning within what has been seen?

Experience is not merely air coming from outside; it also knocks upon the inner door. Sometimes it comes as pain, sometimes memory, sometimes hesitation, sometimes joy, sometimes a silence that does not easily find words.

The first seed of knowledge falls in the touch of life, but for that seed to become a tree it needs the soil of mind, the water of memory, the light of reasoning, and the air of language.

If the eyes alone were sufficient, all who see would reach the same conclusion. Yet one scene awakens two different questions in two minds.

This difference is not the weakness of experience but its complexity.

Someone says: what is not directly perceived is difficult to accept. Someone asks: but love? fear? memory? hope? On what balance shall these be weighed?

The human world is not merely a list of visible objects; it is a world of relations. I see a table, but the meaning of 'table' is not only colour and shape. Use, recognition, memory, name and relation together give the object its form in my experience. Thus perception may be immediate yet it is not simple.

What the eye sees, the mind selects; what the mind selects, language names; the name given then becomes a road for further thought.

In this circle knowledge is born - not only outside, not only inside, but at the meeting point of the two.

Sometimes we say, 'I experienced it myself.' There is a special force of trust in this sentence. But the philosopher asks: how am I to know what you experienced?

How does private experience become public knowledge?

Perhaps the answer lies in shared touchstones - description, repetition, comparison, reasoning, the experience of others, and an open door to criticism.

An experience that becomes the speaker's exclusive authority and rises above questioning can become a claim in place of knowledge.

Therefore respect experience, but test it too.

Philosophical caution walks with both hands - reception in one, examination in the other.

Sometimes experience comes by the senses, sometimes by introspection. I do not see my own anger as an external object, yet its presence is real to me.

An inner event may be invisible without being false.

But inner experience too can be mistaken. Memory can change; emotion can colour meaning; desire can push a conclusion.

Therefore introspection is a mirror, but the glass of the mirror too must be kept clean.

One modest rule of knowledge is this:

'I experienced this' and 'This is objectively so' are not the same sentence.

The first bears witness to one's condition; the second makes a claim about the world. The second claim requires further touchstones.

Where this difference is forgotten, feeling may wear the crown of truth and begin to exercise authority.

Religious experience too occupies a deep place in human life. Someone experiences infinite nearness in prayer; someone in meditation feels the limited 'I' melting; someone in a moment of compassion experiences the unity of life.

The philosopher should not mock these experiences, but neither should the philosopher abandon the question.

What do these experiences prove? Does the object of an experience exist independently outside the experience? How does the experience of one religion converse with the contrary claim of another?

These questions do not insult faith; they try to seat faith beside discernment.

Where belief fears questions,
 philosophy finds entry difficult. Where belief can endure questions, dialogue becomes possible.
 An empiricist outlook keeps us upon the earth - speak of the sky,
 but do not forget the touch beneath the feet.
 The value of a theory lies not only in its beauty;
 see how far it agrees with the facts of life.
 If a theory says human beings always behave in one way,
 but life offers a counterexample,
 the theory must learn from life.
 Facts are not servants of doctrines;
 doctrines must remain answerable to facts.
 But facts themselves remain mute without concepts.
 Which fact is selected? Which is called relevant? Which relation is noticed? These questions require the
 cooperation of reasoning and theory.
 Therefore empiricism does not mean hostility to thought. It gives thought the practice of walking upon the
 earth.
 We need imagination, but wings with direction;
 reasoning, but in relation with facts; theory,
 but with the courage to be tested.
 The philosophical mind does not merely see;
 it asks the meaning of what has been seen.
 A stone is a physical object;
 after becoming a statue it acquires a new meaning in human cultural experience.
 A word is sound; within history it can become insult,
 pride, memory and resistance.
 Experience is cultural too. We do not see in a void;
 we see amid history, language and society.
 Therefore the analysis of experience is not merely a science of the senses; it is a house with many doors for
 understanding the human world.
 Sometimes philosophy takes hold of the door of language. The words in which we ask a question already
 carry certain assumptions.
 'What is a thing?' 'What is the self?' 'What is freedom?' 'What is cause?' Every word arrives carrying its history.
 If words are unclear,
 debate may proceed in darkness. Therefore clarifying language is not merely the work of grammar;
 sometimes it is philosophical therapy.
 The meaning of a word is not locked inside a dictionary. It opens in use - in which context? by which
 speaker? to which listener? for what purpose?
 The same word takes on different shades in different situations.
 Philosophical analysis observes these shades,
 unties knots of confusion, and asks:
 do we really disagree,
 or are we merely using words differently?
 Many disputes rest less upon things than upon tangles of language.
 But analysis of language too should not be separated from life. Words are born in human behaviour, change
 in history, and acquire meaning in society.
 Therefore a language sealed in a glass laboratory will not yield the whole truth.
 The world of experience begins with the individual but spreads into society.
 We suffer alone, but the cause of suffering can be social. We experience private fear, but the source of fear can
 also be a political order.
 Therefore if philosophical empiricism stops only within the individual, social reality remains incomplete.
 Experience also has collective forms - the inherited burden of poverty, the humiliation of caste, the memory
 of displacement, the exhilaration of freedom, the fear of violence, pride in language.
 These are facts of history as well as ethical questions.
 Philosophy's task is not to dismiss such experiences as mere stories, but to open the questions of value,
 structure, right and injustice hidden within them.
 An empiricist tendency offers one modest lesson:
 first look, listen, give a place to the evidence of experience;
 then build theory.
 Life first, classification afterwards.
 For classification exists for the convenience of life;
 life does not exist for classification.
 But there is a second modest lesson too:
 what I have seen is not final. Another observer may see more. A new experience may change an old
 conclusion.

This openness of knowledge is not weakness;
it is a condition of remaining alive.

Where a conclusion rises above revision,
knowledge may become a hard wall of belief.
Experience has the right to correct us.

And in respect for this right resides the freedom of thought.

In post-independence Indian philosophy this insistence upon experience opens another question: how carefully did we look at the reality of our own society?

We wrote much about imported problems,
but how much did we hear the questions of our own courtyard?

We learned the language of theory with sophistication,
but how much room did philosophy give to the farmer's experience,
the worker's day, the woman's silence,

the young person's restlessness, the deep fear and hope of the religious mind?

At this point empiricism becomes an ethical demand:

look at what is alive. Hear the voice of what hurts. Find a touchstone for what makes a claim.

Philosophy is not a palace of pure thought outside the human world;
it is a house of discernment in the midst of that world.

Let the windows of this house remain open so new experience can enter; let the door remain open so criticism can come in; and inside let one lamp keep burning - the lamp of reason.

Then experience will not become blind belief,
and reason will not become lifeless calculation.

Together they will make a road of knowledge upon which the human being sees, thinks, experiences, and before giving experience the name of truth asks with humility: 'Can this claim endure further testing?'

In this question reside the dignity of experience,
the discipline of science, the courage of philosophy,
and the human hope of continuing to learn.

The Threshold of Five Decades

The dawn of freedom did not end in a single day;
 it was a long daybreak in which the country slowly opened its eyes in its own light.
 Political chains broke,
 but habits of thought do not change in a single day. Years of rule had made pathways in the mind along
 which the road to knowledge often passed through the doorway of another language.
 The book was in the hand,
 but its language was not the mind's first language;
 thought stood before us,
 but its voice was distant from the voice of home.
 Then the question arose:
 how long would the philosophy of an independent country speak only in translated voices?
 Knowledge is not the property of any one language,
 yet language is certainly a house for knowledge. When the house changes, thought does not die, but its gait
 changes, the rhythm of its breathing changes, its readers change.
 Therefore after independence another effort began - to give thought the body of one's own language.
 Philosophy in Maithili, philosophy in the languages of India,
 translation, interpretation, textbooks,
 research, journals,
 original writing - these were not merely events in publishing; they were the rehabilitation of consciousness.
 Someone searched for difficult terms,
 someone coined new expressions,
 someone placed old Sanskrit words in the sunlight of new meaning;
 someone planted a foreign concept in the soil of one's own language to see whether the seed would sprout
 here.
 Translation is not simple imitation. Behind a single word there may stand an entire philosophy; behind one
 concept, centuries of debate.
 So changing the word alone is not enough. The journey of meaning from one culture to another must be
 undertaken with care.
 Sometimes an equivalent word is found but not an equivalent meaning; sometimes the meaning is close but
 the history is different.
 The philosophical translator rows a boat between two shores - the original on one side, the reader on the
 other, and between them the deep water of meaning.
 Five decades witnessed many voyages of this boat:
 some successful, some incomplete, some difficult,
 some opening a new road for the next generation.
 Universities expanded, departments were formed,
 researchers arrived,
 a new generation of teachers was prepared. Philosophy ceased to be merely a subject of traditional schools
 and increasingly found a place in the curricula of modern institutions.
 But institutions do not create thought by themselves. Buildings do not ask questions; syllabi do not write
 originality on their own.
 Human beings must ask questions,
 and institutions must make room for such questions.
 The first excitement of freedom slowly changed into daily labour - editing books, constructing terminology,
 revising syllabi, interpreting old texts anew, and entering into dialogue with modern thought.
 This labour does not make a glittering history,
 yet the real foundations of knowledge are often built by just such slow work.
 Some turned their gaze again toward ancient India,
 but not merely for glory; they asked:
 what can an old argument say today? How does an old question change within a new society?
 Some read modern Western philosophy,
 but not merely to imitate it; some made it a touchstone,
 some a challenge, some a companion in dialogue.
 In these five decades the mirror of Indian philosophy reflected many faces at once - tradition, modernity,
 language, politics, religion, science, society and the individual.
 One question returned again and again:
 'In what language do we think?' But within that question stood another: 'Whose problems are we thinking
 about?'
 If the language becomes one's own but the problem remains borrowed,
 swaraj is incomplete. If the problem is one's own but the language cannot reach society, dialogue is
 incomplete.

Therefore philosophy had to work on two fronts at once - originality of thought and accessibility of language.

Maithili and the other Indian languages became not merely media in this work but participants. When a concept enters a new language, it itself asks: 'How am I to be understood here?'

This question is part of language's creative power.

Some terms remained unchanged, some were translated, some redefined, some disputed.

In that dispute language remained alive. Where a word is questioned, awareness of meaning grows.

The public life of philosophical writing also changed gradually. Journals, conferences, publishing houses, universities and seminars became new platforms for thought.

But the multiplication of platforms does not make a voice authentic by itself. The questions remain: What is being written? Why is it being written? For whom?

The achievement of five decades is not merely the number of books; more important is how many independent questions live inside those books.

Freedom is not merely permission to publish; it is also a responsibility of thought.

The writer must understand sources, do justice to opposing positions, acknowledge the limits of conclusions, and leave the door open for new questions.

Philosophy is not a manifesto in which the verdict is fixed first and arguments are attached afterwards.

It is a journey in which a conclusion may change when a better reason appears.

Without this humility, free thought can itself become a new dogmatism.

Five decades also teach us that a colonial shadow does not vanish merely because colonial rule ends. It can remain in curricula, systems of evaluation, the prestige accorded to languages, habits of choosing sources, and in the tendency to view one's own tradition either with blind pride or blind contempt.

Beyond both extremes lies a difficult middle path - critical self-confidence.

Read one's own tradition, but with questions; read another tradition, but without inferiority; compare, but not as a contest; enter dialogue, but without surrender.

Here lies the seed of philosophical swaraj.

Swaraj says: I shall listen, learn, accept, reject - but I shall decide through my own discernment.

The journey of five decades was not a straight line. There were moments of enthusiasm, stagnation, revival, imitation and original brilliance.

History is made of such mixed colours.

What matters is not that every effort succeeded; what matters is that the tradition of questioning did not break.

One generation handed the next generation books, words, institutions - and unfinished questions as well.

An unfinished question is not a defect in inheritance; it is the life of inheritance.

If every answer were already settled, philosophy would end.

Therefore the end of five decades is not a full stop but a comma.

Behind lies the first enthusiasm of freedom; in the middle, the labour of language, institutions, translation, research and debate; ahead, a future still open.

The future asks: how far will original philosophy grow in Indian languages? Will universities become places for questions? How close will philosophy remain to the living problems of society? Will tradition be able to endure new questions?

The answers to these questions will not be written by the five decades already passed, but by the next five.

Yet at the threshold one thing is clear:

political freedom makes freedom of thought possible; it does not guarantee it.

For that guarantee every generation must labour again - upon language, research, dialogue and its own discernment.

Only then will freedom rise from being a date in history and become a habit of knowledge.

And philosophy will continue, not as the account of five decades, but as an unending question walking toward the next century.

The Question Behind the Visible

It is easy to say that whatever stands before the eyes is the whole truth; yet the mind does not always stop at easy answers.

It asks: this thing exists,
but what does 'exists' mean? This world appears,
but what ground makes its appearing possible?

Here the road of metaphysics opens - not a road of reckless fantasy, but of the fundamental questions of being.

There was a time when it was said:
speak only of what can be measured;
count as knowledge only what can be grasped in experiment;
regard the rest as confusion produced by language.

This warning was not useless. Philosophy needed to beware of vague sentences, webs of words and claims without evidence.

But when a warning becomes a prohibition,
an entire sky of questions closes.

For a laboratory can tell us how a thing changes,
while the question 'What does existence mean?' may lie outside its field.

Science seeks relations among events;
metaphysics asks about the background that makes those relations possible.

Science asks, 'What happened?' Philosophy asks again,
'On what basis is a world of events possible?'

This is not rivalry. The levels of questioning are different.

The thought of Acharya Yajnadeva Shukla turns our gaze again toward this deeper ground.

The gaze is not only outward but inward;
knowledge concerns not only the object but also the condition of the knower.

The 'I' that knows what we know - what kind of reality is it?

If mind is only a movement of matter,
where are we to place experience, memory,
self-awareness and judgements of value?

If consciousness is merely a shadow,
how does the shadow know that it is a shadow?

Such questions do not disappear easily.

For some, the word 'self' is an object of reverence;
for some, a problem; for some,
a philosophical hypothesis.

But neither the popularity of a word proves it nor refutes it.

The question is this:

what continuity in human experience binds the changing body,
changing feelings and changing thoughts with the thread of 'I'?

Why is the memory of childhood called 'mine' by the consciousness of today?

If the body is no longer what it was yesterday,
and the mind changes from moment to moment,
from where comes the thread of identity within these changes?

Metaphysics is the search for that thread.

The first answer need not be final,
but declaring the question illegitimate is not an answer.

Do the things of the world exist independently of mind? Or do knower and known find meaning through their relation within experience?

An old philosophical dispute becomes alive here again.

On one side an object-centred realism;
on the other, the structure of consciousness;
between them, the bridge of human experience.

The task of metaphysics is not to destroy the bridge but to understand the form of both shores.

If I say, 'This is a table',
the sentence carries more than colour,
shape and touch; it also carries a belief in a certain persistence.

I assume that when I turn my eyes away,
the table does not disappear.

This ordinary belief already contains a conception of existence.

Daily life cannot take a single step without metaphysics,
even if we never utter its name.

'This is true' requires a meaning of truth.

'This is a thing' requires a meaning of thing.
 'This is a cause' requires a meaning of cause.
 'I am responsible' requires some conception of person and freedom.
 Thus metaphysics is not merely a remote sky;
 it is also the invisible ground of ordinary sentences.
 But should that ground be accepted without examination? No.
 Philosophical discipline keeps reverence and doubt together.
 Make a statement, but give reasons; imagine,
 but understand the limits; speak of being,
 but do not abandon clarity of language.
 Here metaphysics differs from poetry and fantasy.
 It is not unrestricted imagination but reasoned hypothesis - thought repeatedly tested upon the touchstone
 of argument.
 At times metaphysics takes up the question of God.
 'God exists' is not only a religious proclamation;
 it can also become a philosophical question.
 Questions of the cause of existence,
 the ground of order, the source of value,
 the ultimate meaning of consciousness - many roads lead toward it.
 But the metaphysician does not merely answer;
 the metaphysician also examines the construction of the question.
 In what sense 'existence'? In what sense 'cause'? What kind of evidence?
 Reason is not an insult to faith;
 reason is responsibility for a claim.
 Religious experience is a fact of human life,
 but there is a distance between a fact and a theory.
 That distance is a field of philosophy.
 One person experiences an ultimate nearness;
 another only silence; another nothing at all.
 Metaphysics asks: how can a shared meaning be formed from different experiences?
 This question is not against religion;
 it is on the side of seriousness.
 So too with the question of the world.
 Is the world only matter? Is life a complex organisation of matter? Can consciousness be explained
 completely through that organisation?
 If yes, where are we to place the private light of experience?
 If not, on what basis are we to accept an additional kind of reality?
 Philosophical honesty requires listening to the difficulties of both sides.
 The significance of Yajñadeva Shukla's thought appears in this insistence: do not turn metaphysics into blind
 tradition, and do not make it the victim of blind denial.
 Preserve the right to question.
 For often in history one age dismissed another age's question as 'meaningless', only for the same question to
 return later in a new form.
 The growth of knowledge is not a cemetery but a city of dialogue.
 Old questions return wearing new words.
 Today neuroscience speaks about consciousness;
 artificial intelligence asks again what we mean by 'intelligence';
 physics changes older images of matter.
 In such a time metaphysics is not needed less,
 but must become more careful.
 For scientific discovery can shake old categories of existence.
 Substance, space, time,
 cause - words once taken as stable can become questions again under new knowledge.
 Metaphysics is not an enemy of science;
 it can change its questions in response to the achievements of science.
 And science does not replace metaphysics,
 because even a vast store of facts does not write 'meaning' by itself.
 Meaning requires human discernment.
 The question of value makes this clearer still.
 What is good? What is right? Why duty? If the world is only an inanimate chain of causes, from where does
 moral obligation arise?
 This is a question of ethics,
 but its root lies in how we understand the human being and reality.

Therefore metaphysics is not wholly separate from ethics.
 The meaning of responsibility changes according to how we understand the human being.
 If a human being is completely determined,
 what sense can blame and praise have?
 If completely free,
 where have the influences of nature and history gone?
 Here the philosophical tension between freedom and determinism is born.
 Metaphysics need not claim that it will give one final formula.
 Sometimes its achievement is simply to make the problem clearly visible.
 A clear question is half of knowledge.
 An unclear answer can be worse than the question.
 Therefore philosophical labour includes cleaning words,
 uncovering assumptions,
 examining the joints of argument and understanding the limits of experience.
 Yajnadeva Shukla's thought gives dignity to this labour.
 To say that metaphysics is 'outside science' does not mean 'ignorance'. It is a region in which scientific facts
 require conceptual discernment as well.
 When we say, 'The world is real',
 against what is the word 'real' being contrasted?
 Dream? Imagination? Illusion? Mental image?
 The meaning of reality is not clear without an opposing category.
 Even illusion requires some ground - whose illusion? about what? deviation from which truth?
 Thus denial too does not remove the question of being altogether.
 If someone says, 'Metaphysics is impossible',
 philosophy can ask again:
 what kind of claim is this statement itself?
 Empirical? Logical? Or a metaphysical demarcation of limits?
 The language of denial can raise questions about its own ground.
 This philosophical irony is one reason metaphysics returns.
 But it should not return in its old form.
 A new metaphysics must learn from analysis of language,
 from science, epistemology,
 psychology and modern logic.
 Tradition remains alive only if it continues to learn.
 Metaphysics retains its justification only if it continues to criticise itself.
 Justification does not mean ancient prestige;
 it means demonstrating the need for the question in the present.
 As long as human beings ask,
 'Who am I?' 'What is the world?' 'What grounds truth?' 'How is consciousness possible?' 'How free are we?'
 'Why does the question of meaning arise in the face of death?' - metaphysics cannot become completely
 silent.
 Answers will change, language will change,
 methods will change,
 but the fundamental restlessness of the questions will remain.
 Perhaps the dignity of philosophy lies in giving this restlessness a civil language.
 Neither blind belief nor blind denial.
 Neither experience alone nor imagination alone.
 Neither tradition alone nor novelty alone.
 Between them, a long discipline - reasoning,
 experience, self-examination,
 and a humble insistence upon truth.
 The visible world gives us much;
 yet the human being asks about an invisible ground behind the visible.
 Because of this question we are not merely creatures who see;
 we are creatures who seek meaning.
 And metaphysics is one ancient, yet still living,
 name for this search for meaning.

The Human Being Within Creation

The human being is not merely a body that has been born,
 not merely a number in society,
 not merely a moving name in the crowd of history.
 The human being is a capacity to give meaning to life. We do not sit quietly accepting whatever we receive
 just as it is; we change it, shape it, create new meaning.
 From this creation culture is born.
 The earth existed already, but human beings made fields;
 sound existed already, but human beings made songs;
 stone existed already, but statues, houses,
 boundaries and memorials became forms of human value-consciousness.
 If life were only a biological sequence,
 a flower would end at fragrance;
 but the human being sees beauty in the flower,
 memory in beauty, relationship in memory, value in relationship.
 Thus the human world is not separate from nature,
 but it lays a new layer of meaning upon nature.
 The thought of Nandkishore Devraj places this layer at the centre of human life.
 Human reality is not only 'what is' but also 'what can be'.
 Possibility is the hidden direction of human life.
 In a child there is the possibility of language,
 in a seed of a tree, in a question of an answer,
 in suffering of change.
 But possibility does not fulfil itself. It needs choice,
 effort, risk and creation.
 A human being is shaped by circumstances,
 but is not completely determined by circumstances alone.
 Around us stand the walls of history,
 the windows of tradition, social rules,
 economic pressure, the limits of language - yet within all this we can ask questions.
 Questioning is the first breath of freedom.
 'Why is this so?' 'Can this change?' 'What must I choose?'
 In these three questions human creativity slowly awakens.
 Freedom is not merely the absence of restraint. If a door is open but there is no direction in which to go,
 openness can become meaningless.
 Freedom needs value.
 For what shall I choose? What shall I become? What shall I protect? What shall I reject?
 Every moment of choice places the human being before responsibility.
 Here humanism ceases to be a decorative word and becomes an ethical question.
 Human dignity does not lie in being all-powerful. It lies in the fact that even while limited, a human being
 can decide.
 We can make mistakes and then correct them;
 create violence and also compassion;
 build systems and also rebel;
 inherit traditions and also create new traditions.
 Creativity does not belong only to the painter's hand,
 the poet's line or the scientist's experiment.
 The way a mother raises a child,
 a farmer draws food from soil,
 a teacher creates an atmosphere of questioning,
 a citizen challenges injustice - each is a form of creation.
 Creation is not only a new object;
 it is also a new relationship.
 A society in which one human being treats another merely as a means may become technologically
 advanced yet remain poor in humanity.
 Humanism asks, 'What is the use of a human being?' - and immediately turns the question around: why
 should a human being be a 'thing for use'?
 The person is a value in oneself.
 A life is not merely a project of the state,
 a customer of the market, a number in a sect,
 or an instrument of family prestige.
 The individual is a centre of experience,
 choice, suffering and possibility.

But individuality does not mean isolation.

'I' is incomplete without 'you',

and 'you and I' are incomplete without 'we'.

Human beings develop in relationships. Language comes from others;

values from society; memory from generations;

even the language of protest comes from earlier struggles.

Therefore humanism is not the closed room of individualism. It is a living bridge between person and society.

Society shapes the person;

the person reshapes society.

This is not a one-way journey.

Culture is the long river of this mutual creation.

Tradition is the old current in that river.

Dam it completely and turn it into a pond,

and it may decay; cut it away and the river may dry.

A living tradition flows. It carries memory within itself and yet accepts new water.

New values do not always wage war upon old values;

sometimes they give old values new meaning in new circumstances.

Compassion may be ancient,

yet in the question of refugees it becomes a new challenge. Justice is an old word, yet in industrial inequality it acquires a new meaning. Freedom is an old ideal, yet in the experiences of women, Dalits, workers,

minorities and disabled people it opens different doors.

Human values are not stars hung in the sky;

they are lights tested in the struggle of life.

The meaning of a value is not merely 'people have long believed it'. Many beliefs were accepted for a long time and were still unjust.

Therefore the age of a tradition is not proof of its truth.

Nor is the glitter of novelty proof of superiority.

Discernment tests both.

The creative form of humanism becomes difficult here:

we must understand values as born in history without treating them as prisoners of history.

Human beings can review their values.

'Does what we believe promote human development or prevent it?'

This question can become a touchstone of value.

Development is not merely the growth of wealth. If wealth grows but fear grows; production grows but humiliation grows; cities grow but human loneliness grows - then the calculation of development must be made again.

Human development is the expansion of creative capacity.

Education therefore is not a machine for memorising. Education should give a human being the capacity to think independently, question, create, and respect the freedom of others.

If education gives only the skill required for employment but not discernment, trained hands can run an inhuman system with great efficiency.

Therefore value-consciousness is necessary alongside knowledge.

Science increases human power; humanism asks:

for whom is this power?

Technology saves time; humanism asks:

what does the human being become in the time saved?

Politics creates order; humanism asks:

within that order, how free and respected is the person?

Economics distributes goods; humanism asks:

have opportunities been distributed too?

Creative humanism places the human being again at the centre of every field.

But centre does not mean arrogance. The human being is not merely the master of nature; the human being is also part of nature.

If creation takes place at the price of destruction, creativity can turn against itself.

Cut the forest to build a palace,

but lose the air for breathing - this is the irony of development.

A new meaning of humanism therefore includes coexistence with nature.

For the human future is not separate from the future of the earth.

One crisis of human life is power.

When power remains a means, it makes work possible;
 when power becomes the goal,
 the human being becomes the means.
 State power, the power of wealth,
 the power of knowledge, the power of religion,
 the power of majority - before all of them the question of human dignity must stand.
 'Does this system enlarge human freedom and creativity,
 or silence them?'
 This question should remain at the heart of democracy.
 Democracy is not merely a ballot. It is the right to disagree,
 diversity of thought,
 and room for the person to create without fear.
 Where only one thought is declared correct,
 creativity slowly dries up.
 Creation requires open air.
 But openness without responsibility can become disorder.
 Freedom and responsibility are not two separate roads;
 they are two edges of one road.
 What a person chooses touches not only that person's life but the lives of others.
 For this reason ethics is not merely an external stick;
 it is awareness of relationship.
 'Whose life will be changed by my decision?'
 In this question compassion is born.
 Compassion is not weakness. It is the capacity to give another's pain a place in knowledge.
 Non-violence does not mean only refraining from striking;
 it also means giving another person's existence a place within one's world of values.
 Humanism can become the philosophical form of this widened sensibility.
 In Nandkishore Devraj's view,
 the essence of human life cannot be imprisoned in a fixed definition.
 The human being is always becoming.
 We shape ourselves through actions, choices,
 relationships, memory and creation.
 For this reason hope is possible in human life.
 If the human being were completely predetermined,
 improvement would have no meaning.
 If society were unchangeable, revolution,
 reform, education and dialogue would all be futile.
 Creativity says: the present is not final.
 This sentence is a sentence of hope,
 but not of laziness.
 Possibility requires action to become reality.
 Humanism dreams, but keeps its feet upon the earth.
 It does not make invisible the real conflicts,
 inequalities, violence,
 competition and exploitation of society.
 A creative outlook does not cover a problem with a decorative curtain; it looks within the problem for a
 point of change.
 Sometimes change comes through law,
 sometimes education, sometimes art,
 sometimes resistance, sometimes self-criticism.
 The history of human culture is the combined story of these many forms.
 Art gives sensibility to the human world of values.
 Poetry can express an experience that fact alone cannot speak. Drama lets us enter another life for a moment.
 Painting gives shape to silence.
 In the world of art the human being first sees possibility in imagination and then searches for it in life.
 Creative humanism does not regard art as luxury;
 it regards art as an important form of human self-expansion.
 If we turn human beings merely into means,
 the future will become mechanical.
 If we keep human dignity, freedom,
 creativity and mutual responsibility at the centre,
 culture will remain alive.

Culture is not merely an object in a museum;
it is the creation of every generation.
We inherit the songs of our ancestors,
but add our own voice. We inherit values,
but test them. We inherit language,
but create new words. We inherit society, but can change its form.
The real drama of human life unfolds between inheritance and creation.
A human being is not a fully written book but a manuscript in progress.
Every decision is a line, every relationship a paragraph,
every struggle a revision,
every creation a new chapter.
And the final page of the book has not yet been written.
For this reason hope is not merely an emotion;
it is a philosophical possibility.
Where human beings can change themselves,
society can change too.
Where society can accept new values,
culture is not inert.
And where culture remains creative,
humanity can rewrite its future with its own hands.

Culture Within Value

Culture is not merely the shadow of old buildings,
 nor the outward decoration of festivals,
 nor the silent row of objects kept in museums.
 Culture is the slow light of value-awareness awakened within the human being, by whose light we give
 meaning to life, society, history and future.
 Countless living beings are born upon the earth,
 but the human being does not merely live;
 the human being asks, 'How ought I to live?'
 Within this small question lies the whole journey from nature to culture.
 Hunger is given by nature,
 but the way food is shared is culture.
 Fear is a natural response of the body,
 but the decision to protect the weak is culture.
 Power is the capacity of body and instrument,
 but restraint upon power is value.
 The human being is a child of nature but not only nature;
 we make memory, create meaning,
 fashion symbols and imagine futures.
 Here the first letter of culture is written.
 In Govind Chandra Pandey's view,
 human life is not merely a sequence of events but also a search for value.
 What we do is not merely an 'event';
 it can also raise questions of right and wrong,
 beautiful and ugly, higher and lower.
 Fact says, 'This happened.' Value asks,
 'Should this have happened?'
 History writes its long story between these two voices.
 Kings change, states change, clothing, tools,
 language, cities and forms of trade change;
 but history's deeper current becomes visible only when we ask:
 what ideals gave direction to human beings within these changes?
 Culture is not outside time; within time,
 value takes form.
 Time is not merely the hand of a clock. It is the accumulation of experience, layers of memory, and a door to
 new possibilities.
 One generation gives another generation houses,
 words, customs, stories - and sometimes unfinished questions.
 This inheritance is not stone but seed.
 If a seed is preserved exactly as it is,
 it becomes a collection; if planted in earth,
 it becomes a new leaf.
 Tradition is the name of this living seed.
 Tradition is not merely the command of the past;
 it is also dialogue with the present.
 What ancestors said may deserve respect,
 but respect does not mean giving up the question.
 For if questions die,
 tradition can change from a living source into a closed reservoir.
 And modernity? It too is not simply attraction toward new things.
 New machines, new roads, new buildings,
 new forms of communication - all can be modern,
 but human consciousness does not become modern through instruments alone.
 Modernity requires a discernment that neither worships inheritance blindly nor throws it away in shame.
 Some old things remain life-giving;
 some old things are burdens of injustice.
 Some new things bring liberation;
 some new things can turn the human being into an object.
 Therefore let discernment become the watchman of time.
 The philosophy of culture is this watchfulness:
 which values should be preserved? Which forms changed? Which practices abandoned? Which novelties
 accepted?
 Human life is not merely a sequence of consumption.

Even if the market writes a price upon every thing,
 not everything is for sale.
 What is the price of trust? Friendship? Justice? Compassion? Dignity?
 Some values remain outside the price-list.
 Culture preserves this 'outside' within the human being.
 Wealth is necessary,
 but value gives direction to its use.
 Knowledge is powerful,
 but the aim of knowledge requires discernment.
 Science opens the secrets of nature,
 but science itself does not decide in whose interest that power should be used.
 Therefore scientific progress and cultural progress are not the same thing.
 A society can advance technologically and fall behind in humanity.
 A country can touch the sky and still fail to see the suffering of its neighbour - the question then remains.
 What is progress?
 Greater speed, or a better direction?
 More means, or greater human dignity?
 Taller buildings, or a higher consciousness?
 The philosophy of culture examines the conflict inside this word.
 Human beings dreamed of ruling nature,
 redirected rivers, cut mountains, melted metals,
 measured the sky.
 But when nature was treated merely as an object,
 the human being began to move away from the very ground of human life.
 Culture is not opposition to nature;
 it is a meaningful relation with nature.
 A forest is not merely timber; a river not merely water;
 soil not merely a means of production.
 Human memory, beauty and relations of life are bound into all these.
 To read nature only in the language of the market is to read only half the text of culture.
 Human consciousness moves in two directions - outward toward the world, inward toward the self.
 Outside, it knows objects; inside, it asks,
 'What do I desire?' 'What do I fear?' 'What is my ideal?'
 Without this self-examination,
 culture becomes only a catalogue of outward forms.
 Value is born within but takes shape in society.
 A child learns language from family,
 conduct from society, stories from tradition;
 but one day that child examines all these again through personal discernment.
 In this re-examination the individual is born.
 The individual is not the enemy of society but its conscious participant.
 Society is not the prison of the individual;
 yet the individual is not complete without society.
 Between them lives a tension - freedom and responsibility.
 Freedom is not merely 'I shall do whatever I want';
 freedom is choosing the meaning of one's action through one's own discernment.
 And responsibility is accepting the fruit of that choice.
 Culture gives human beings not only rules but also the language of choice.
 Sometimes rules protect life;
 sometimes rules protect injustice.
 Therefore moral consciousness rises above a rule and asks for its justification.
 'Everyone does this' does not prove that an action is right.
 Many injustices in history continued for a long time under the name of tradition.
 But awareness of human value sometimes began with a single person who stood apart from the crowd and
 said, 'This is not right.'
 In that one sentence a new birth of culture becomes possible.
 History is not only an account of what happened;
 it also carries the shadows of what might have changed.
 The human being is a product of history,
 but not only a product;
 the human being has the capacity to redirect history.
 Here lies creativity.
 Culture is not imitation of the past but the creative reconstruction of value.

The same ideal does not take the same form in every age.
 Justice is one question under monarchy,
 another under democracy; one form in the family,
 another in the state, a third in the economy.
 The soul of value may remain,
 but its form changes with history.
 Therefore do not turn value into a lifeless rule,
 nor into a passing preference.
 Value is the long dialogue of human consciousness.
 Truth, the good, the beautiful - these are not merely philosophical ornaments; they can become three
 directions of human life.
 Truth is the discipline of knowledge,
 the good the aspiration toward welfare,
 the beautiful the experience of harmony in life.
 When these three are cut apart, culture fragments.
 Knowledge without welfare can become power.
 Welfare without truth can become blind sentiment.
 Beauty without ethics can become merely an alluring cover.
 The philosophy of culture searches for unity amid this division.
 This unity does not mean sameness.
 Diversity is the life of culture.
 Languages differ, customs differ, arts differ,
 forms of religion differ;
 yet human dignity can become a shared ground.
 Unity is not painting everyone in one colour. It is making a picture in which respect preserves distance
 between different colours.
 Indian culture has been formed by many such currents - Vedic memory, Shramana questioning, the
 compassion of bhakti, Sufi love, folk experience, the voices of regional languages, and the aspirations of
 modern democracy.
 To bind all of them into a single formula is not easy.
 But culture is not the name of an easy answer;
 it is the difficult practice of living together.
 Religion has been an important current in this practice.
 But religion is not merely ritual,
 nor merely the boundary of a sect.
 When religion awakens truth, restraint,
 compassion, self-control and concern for others within the human being, it gives culture an ethical ground.
 When it becomes an instrument of pride,
 hatred and discrimination,
 culture has the right to question it.
 Spirituality should not become flight from the world.
 If self-knowledge carries a person away from the suffering of others, it is incomplete.
 Inner peace must not become a reason for silence before outward injustice.
 Human value requires both inward discipline and outward conduct.
 Where compassion exists only in meditation and not in behaviour,
 culture breaks into two.
 Govind Chandra Pandey's vision of culture sees the human being as a self-conscious creature within history.
 We are made by the past,
 yet responsible for the future.
 We learn from society, yet can change society.
 We are part of nature, yet creators of value.
 The true form of culture lies in this complexity.
 Economics influences culture; so do politics,
 science and technology.
 But culture is not merely the outcome of these.
 It is also the inward vision of meaning through which human beings decide how means shall be used and
 what ends institutions shall serve.
 The same technology can save life and also destroy it.
 The difference lies not in the machine but in the vision of value.
 Therefore the question of modern society is not only 'What can we make?' but also 'What should we make?'
 This second question is the heart of the philosophy of culture.
 Industry gives convenience,
 but is the dignity of labour preserved?

Cities give opportunity,
 but is the human being sinking into solitude?
 Communication reduces distance,
 but what of the distance between hearts?
 Knowledge becomes limitless,
 but how far is the distance from intelligence to wisdom?
 Without such questions modernity becomes mere speed.
 Culture gives direction to speed.
 The West is not one thing;
 India is not one thing either.
 If we make them two hard walls standing against each other,
 historical truth breaks.
 Every civilisation has changed through dialogue,
 conflict, exchange, translation,
 acceptance and refusal.
 Purity is often an imagination;
 living culture is always in contact.
 But contact is not self-erasure.
 Learn from others, but test what is learned upon one's own experience.
 Take new ideas, but ask:
 what form will they assume in our society?
 In this discernment lies cultural freedom.
 Imitation is a quick road,
 but the destination is not one's own.
 Blind rejection is the other extreme.
 Between them lies the road of creative self-confidence - where a human being speaks with the world in one's
 own voice.
 Indian social traditions have preserved many values and also many injustices.
 Family gives security,
 but sometimes binds the individual.
 Community gives cooperation,
 but sometimes suppresses difference.
 Religion gives meaning, but sometimes division.
 Tradition gives memory, but sometimes inertia.
 Therefore the philosophy of culture is neither celebration alone nor an indictment alone.
 It is discerning review.
 Preserve what is good; change what is unjust;
 create what is newly necessary.
 These three actions are three breaths of cultural life.
 To reject the past completely is amnesia.
 To accept the past completely is lack of discernment.
 Culture is the meeting point of memory and discernment.
 The future is the creative fruit of that meeting.
 History does not flow outside human beings;
 it is born every day in human decisions.
 The values we give our children today will make tomorrow's culture.
 The injustice we accept as normal today will be called to account by tomorrow's history.
 The compassion we put into practice today will become a new possibility for the future.
 Thus, though culture is the subject of vast books,
 it is also a question of everyday life.
 How we treat the guest at the door,
 how we see the weak, the respect accorded to women,
 the value given to labour, our relationship with nature,
 the language used toward an opponent - culture is written every day in all these.
 Civilisation can build roads;
 culture asks for whom we stop upon those roads.
 Civilisation can provide light;
 culture asks whose face still remains in darkness within that light.
 Civilisation can increase food;
 culture asks about the injustice of hunger.
 Civilisation increases power;
 culture places limits upon power.
 Here lies the final test of value.

Culture carries the human being from 'How much have I obtained?' to 'What have I become?'

Wealth, knowledge, prestige, power - all are means;
humanity is the end.

If the means swallow the end,
progress turns against itself.

Govind Chandra Pandey's philosophy of culture warns against this mistake: the human being cannot be understood completely merely as producer, consumer, voter or biological organism.

The human being is a creator of value,
seeker of meaning, bearer of memory and maker of the future.

Human dignity lies in this creative consciousness.

And culture?

Culture is the moment when the human being rises above immediate instinct and chooses a value.

When justice is chosen instead of gain,

forgiveness instead of revenge,

restraint instead of consumption,

dialogue instead of pride.

This choice is not always easy.

Sometimes it goes against history,

sometimes against the crowd,

sometimes against one's own desire.

Yet in this difficult choice the human being rises from the ordinary course of nature and becomes a moral being.

Culture is the collective memory of this rising.

One generation tells another: 'We made this mistake;
do not repeat it.'

And also: 'We preserved this value;
give it a new form.'

Here lies the meaning of tradition.

Here lies the test of modernity.

Here lies the ethical meaning of history.

And here lies the deep question of the philosophy of culture:

while living within its time,

what value will the human being choose that can rise above that time?

The answer is not locked in any single book.

It will be written again in the life of every generation.

Where values remain alive, culture remains alive.

And where culture remains alive,

the human being rises from mere existence into meaning.

The Open Question Between Individual and Society

Society is not a house in which, at birth,
every human being receives a room already assigned;
nor is the individual a solitary island surrounded only by the sea of personal desire.
The two are continuously made and unmade within one another.

A human being is born in society,
receives language there, name there, rules there,
habits there; yet one day that same human being asks society:
'Is everything you gave me right?'

Here the individual awakens.

And society? Where would it exist without individuals?

Laws can be written, but human beings obey them;
traditions can continue, but living people keep them alive;
institutions are formed,

but at the moment of decision some consciousness must carry the burden.

Daya Krishna's questioning finds many knots within this simple truth.

Is the individual free? Or has society already chosen the road before individual desire even begins?

Caste, family, religion, state, market,

language, history - together these draw invisible lines around a human being that both limit choice and give it meaning.

But a limit is not destiny.

Human consciousness has the capacity to see a line and sometimes cross it.

This capacity may be called freedom,
but freedom is not a flower growing in a void.

It struggles with circumstances,
learns through relationships, searches for alternatives,
and accepts responsibility for action.

It is easy to say, 'I am free'; difficult to say,

'The consequences of my choice are my responsibility.'

Social philosophy opens the meaning of this difficult sentence.

One person will say:

society is greater than the individual. Another:
the individual comes first.

But life is not such a simple balance.

In a mother's love the individual becomes society;

in resistance to injustice the individual stands apart from society; in friendship two people form a small society; in a crowd of thousands an individual can remain alone.

Therefore number is not society.

Society is also a web of relations,
a shared language of values, a structure of expectations,
and an arrangement for distributing power.

Wherever there is power, questioning is necessary.

Who decides? Whose voice is heard? Whose silence is taken as 'consent'?

Whose suffering is called a social problem,
and whose suffering is dismissed as 'personal'?

In these questions the ethical face of society becomes visible.

Daya Krishna trusts the sharpness of questions more than ready-made prescriptions.

For if philosophy settles its answer beforehand,
reasoning becomes mere decoration.

Socialism, liberalism, religion, nationalism,
tradition, modernity - all can sound beautiful in declarations;
yet their meaning changes as soon as circumstances change in human life.

Therefore look less at the prestige of the word and more at its conduct.

'Freedom' is proclaimed - for whom?

'Equality' - on what ground?

'Religion' - as faith, or as social control?

'Tradition' - as memory, or as compulsion?

'Nation' - as shared responsibility,
or unquestioning loyalty?

Philosophical questioning removes the glitter of words and examines their actual body.

The individual is not merely the bearer of rights but also of duties.

But duty toward whom?

Family? Society? State? Humanity? One's own conscience?
 These do not always move in one direction.
 A person may obey the law of the state and still commit injustice.
 A son may obey the family and trample another person's rights.
 A citizen may stand with the majority and still move away from truth.
 Therefore there is no single map of duty.
 Moral life is sometimes the name of conflict.
 Two right claims can stand opposed to each other.
 Truth should be spoken - but what if silence saves a life?
 Law should be obeyed - but what of an unjust law?
 Family deserves respect - but what of individual freedom?
 Social philosophy does not flee from these conflicts.
 It says: the ethics of life is not a machine of formulas.
 Some decisions require attention to the particular situation,
 where discernment sees living facts alongside general rules.
 'Treat everyone equally' is a beautiful sentence,
 but equality does not always mean identical treatment.
 Giving additional support to someone who is weak may not be inequality; it may be a form of justice.
 Giving opportunity to one historically deprived may not be privilege; it may be an attempt at balance.
 But every policy must again be questioned:
 does it increase justice or create a new injustice?
 For good intention does not guarantee a good result.
 Policy must be tested not only by intention but also by consequences.
 Sometimes in the name of welfare the individual is made powerless;
 sometimes in the name of freedom the strong are left free to dominate the weak.
 Both extremes can wound human dignity.
 Social order is not merely rules;
 it is also the distribution of opportunity.
 Who receives education? Who receives land? Who receives respect? Who has a place in decisions? Who
 receives only orders?
 Where the answer is fixed by birth,
 freedom can become merely a word.
 Caste is one such difficult question.
 Birth is neither a moral achievement nor a fault.
 Yet if society makes birth the touchstone of dignity,
 occupation, marriage, touch, food and opportunity,
 tradition becomes an instrument of injustice.
 In such a situation it is not enough to say,
 'Preserve tradition.'
 The questions will arise:
 whose tradition? whose benefit? at whose cost?
 Daya Krishna's discourse preserves the right to ask these questions.
 The same caution applies in the realm of religion.
 Faith can be a person's deep experience;
 but when faith becomes a compulsory rule over the life of another,
 a social question arises.
 A human being needs freedom to believe,
 but also freedom to change belief, not to believe,
 and to question.
 The dignity of religion rests not upon fear but upon free acceptance.
 A faith that breaks under one touch of questioning was perhaps more habit than faith.
 The morality of society must not turn the individual into an obedient being without conscience.
 Nor should individual freedom become complete indifference toward society.
 My action is not mine alone.
 A merchant's deceit affects hundreds of families;
 an official's decision can change an entire village;
 a teacher's injustice can wound a child's self-respect for years.
 The individual is not separate from the social waves created by individual action.
 Therefore responsibility is the shadow of freedom.
 Where there is no shadow,
 freedom may be only licence.
 Gandhi enters this discussion like a living question.
 Means and ends are not separate compartments. Can an unjust means create a just society?

Peace through violence? Truth through lies? Equality through humiliation?
 These questions join politics to ethics.
 But ethics must not remain only in the high tower of ideals.
 Before a hungry human being,
 a sermon cannot take the place of food.
 Removing suffering begins with sympathy,
 but changing an unjust arrangement also requires practical wisdom.
 An ideal that does not see circumstances can become harsh.
 Practice that abandons ideals becomes opportunism.
 Ethical politics seeks a difficult balance between the two.
 The socialist dream expresses a deep aspiration toward equality and justice.
 But the questions return:
 how much power should the state possess? How much autonomy should the individual retain? If
 disagreement is suppressed in the name of the collective, does equality survive?
 What liberation abolishes freedom in order to abolish poverty?
 And what justice preserves freedom by declaring poverty to be fate?
 Social philosophy does not choose one pole and deny the other;
 it makes each a touchstone for the other.
 The individual without society is an abstract word;
 society without individuals an helpless imagination.
 Thinking the two together is difficult,
 but precisely this difficulty is the field of living philosophy.
 Freedom is not merely the absence of external restraint.
 Fear, inferiority, ignorance, hunger,
 social humiliation - these too limit a person's choice from within.
 Therefore a free society is not merely one with fewer laws;
 it is one in which human beings can develop their capacities.
 Education gives language to this liberation.
 But if education teaches only examination,
 employment and obedience,
 where is consciousness?
 The deeper purpose of education is the capacity to question,
 the humility to hear reasoning,
 and the courage to disagree.
 Such a citizen may be difficult for the state,
 but is necessary for democracy.
 Democracy is not merely election day.
 It is a daily culture - hearing another opinion,
 accepting defeat, recognising limits upon majority,
 protecting minority rights,
 and questioning power.
 Where questioning is called treason,
 the soul of democracy grows weak.
 A nation can be an object of love,
 but love is not blindness.
 To see the faults of what we love is not hatred;
 sometimes it is the first condition of reform.
 A country's honour lies not in hiding truth but in the capacity to bear truth.
 Society must be judged not only by ideal texts but by daily behaviour.
 We say equality - how much place does the daughter receive at home?
 We say compassion - how do we treat the worker at our door?
 We say religion - how secure are the rights of the neighbour with another faith?
 We say freedom - how much room has the dissenter to speak?
 Words are tested here.
 Daya Krishna's philosophy does not fear this testing.
 It does not seek a conclusion about society that imprisons life's complexity within one formula.
 For society is many-layered.
 One person can at the same time be son, teacher,
 citizen, friend, religious person, businessperson,
 voter and human being.
 The expectations of these roles sometimes collide.
 Then identity is not an answer contained in one word.
 The social meaning of the question 'Who am I?' can change in every relationship.

Yet behind all these roles a moral person makes decisions.
 Here lies the place of self-awareness.
 Self-awareness is not selfishness.
 To recognise one's own desire and to place that desire upon an ethical touchstone are two different things.
 A person should listen to the voice within,
 but not treat it as final truth.
 Conscience too can be formed by habit,
 fear and prejudice.
 Therefore self-examination must continue.
 'Why do I believe this?' 'Is this thought truly mine,
 or an unexamined inheritance from society?'
 In these questions inward freedom is born.
 Society shapes the individual;
 the individual reshapes society.
 This is not a closed circle but the cycle of history.
 Every generation receives some rules,
 changes some, breaks some, makes some new.
 Here lies social change.
 Change is not always progress.
 A new arrangement can be worse than an old one;
 an old practice can sometimes remain useful.
 Therefore 'new' is not a synonym for true,
 and 'old' is not a synonym for false.
 Touchstones are needed - human dignity, justice,
 freedom, compassion and practical consequences.
 Social reform comes sometimes through law,
 sometimes through education, sometimes economic change,
 sometimes moral awakening.
 No one tool cures every disease.
 Law can prevent conduct but cannot by itself change the heart.
 Teaching can touch the heart but does not by itself remove structural injustice.
 Therefore reform is needed both within and without.
 Change the person, and change the institution too.
 Change the institution,
 but do not free the person from moral responsibility.
 Daya Krishna's discourse reminds us of this two-sided caution.
 We can hide our own faults by placing every defect upon 'the system'.
 And by blaming only the individual we can hide the injustice of the system.
 Truth sees both.
 A corrupt official is an individual,
 but if the entire system encourages corruption,
 the problem is not only character.
 A violent crowd is made of individuals,
 yet fear, propaganda,
 political gain and social prejudice shape its collective form.
 Therefore social philosophy opens the many levels of causation.
 And ethics is not a game of finding the guilty;
 it is the just distribution of responsibility.
 The result of an action is not always what the actor intended.
 We may intend good and produce a bad result.
 Therefore intention is not enough.
 Look at consequences too.
 But consequences alone are not enough either,
 because not every means is justified by a good result.
 Moral judgement must examine intention, means,
 consequence and circumstance together.
 This complexity is not weakness;
 it is the real form of moral life.
 A human being is not a mathematical problem in which one formula yields the same answer every time.
 We decide amid living circumstances, relationships,
 history and possibility.
 Therefore philosophy should give not a book of ready answers but a practice of discernment.

An ideal of society can be an image of a better society,
but perfection must never become a violent pressure upon living people.
History has seen many utopias crush human beings in the name of saving humanity.
Let the ideal be a direction, not a prison.
Perhaps the best society is not one in which everyone thinks alike,
but one in which people who think differently can live together under just rules.
Uniformity can look like peace,
but silence is not consent.
Diversity is not disorder;
where there is capacity for dialogue,
diversity becomes a creative force of society.
Fear of difference is a sign of weak social confidence.
Therefore politics is not value-free technique.
It is the public form of ethical choice.
Not only political leaders but citizens too participate in that choice.
A silent citizen is not free of responsibility.
Democracy is not a spectators' gallery;
it is a stage of participation.
But participation is not the excitement of a crowd.
Know the facts, hear the arguments,
first understand the opposing view correctly,
then decide.
Public reason is formed through this practice.
Perhaps the final question of social philosophy is not:
what is the complete map of the best society?
Perhaps the question is:
how can we make a society in which open debate about the map remains possible?
Where the individual is responsible toward society but not a prisoner of society.
Where society protects individual dignity without turning the individual into an island of private interest.
Where tradition gives memory but does not close the door to questions.
Where modernity gives new tools but does not turn human values into tools.
Where religion deepens conscience but does not become an instrument for ruling others.
Where the state gives order but does not claim ownership of the citizen's soul.
Where equality gives dignity, not uniformity.
Where freedom walks together with responsibility.
Such a society cannot be built from a ready-made formula.
Every generation must ask its own questions,
admit its own mistakes,
and examine its institutions again.
Philosophy is the quiet,
severe and necessary art of this examination.
Daya Krishna's social philosophy may not give us one complete answer, but it gives something more valuable
- the courage to doubt answers, the discipline to put a question in the right form, and the discernment never
to make the human being smaller than a theory.
For in the end, to forget the human being in the name of society is to forget the meaning of society itself.
And to forget another human being in the name of the individual is to forget the meaning of freedom itself.
Individual and society are not two opposing banks;
they are the two banks of one river.
The river flows between them - in the form of relationship,
conflict, responsibility, love,
justice and unending questions.
Where questions live, philosophy lives.
Where philosophy lives,
society preserves the possibility of changing itself.

A Lamp in the Cellar of Knowledge

What we see is the first threshold of knowledge; but beyond that threshold lies another house, where the question is no longer merely about the object but about knowledge itself. I see a flower - colour, fragrance, form: that is one kind of knowledge. Then another question rises: how am I to trust that what I have seen deserves to be called knowledge? With this question knowledge turns and looks back at itself. Here the quiet lamp of deep epistemology begins to burn.

Sangamlal Pandey's thought does not merely count waves upon the surface of knowledge; it asks how much of the sea's depth is known by the one who sees the waves. Outside stands the object, within stands consciousness. Can both be weighed upon the same balance? I can place a table before me and observe it; but where shall I place my own consciousness so that I may observe it in the same way? How can the one who sees appear before itself as a seen object? Here begins the first asymmetry between knower and known.

The object stands before me;

consciousness is the light in which that standing-before-me is known. Must a second lamp be brought to show the light? Or is the very burning of the light its first testimony to itself? Self-awareness is a question that, while searching for a mirror, ultimately reaches the source of vision. In the sentence 'I know', the 'I' is not merely a name; it is a silent presence at the ground of knowing. Knowledge of an object moves toward the object; self-knowledge turns back toward its source. For this reason all forms of knowledge cannot be flattened onto a single plane.

Some knowledge concerns an object presented before us;

some concerns the consciousness that itself knows. A field may stretch far into the distance with a sky above it, but the meaning of that land in the farmer's mind cannot be contained completely in a map. In the same way, objective knowledge says much, yet the whole inward resonance of human awareness is not found there. The first level of knowledge concerns events, objects, forms, qualities and relations; the second concerns the possibility, evidence, limits and ground of knowing these. On the first level we read the world; on the second we read the act of reading. The first question is, 'What is this?' The second, 'How did I come to know this?' In that 'how' the whole sky of philosophy opens.

At times we trust perception, at times memory, inference, testimony,

comparison or non-apprehension. But a pramana is not merely a road;

the reliability of the road is another question. It is not enough to find a boat for crossing the river; we must also know whether the boat can withstand the water. A pramana is the boat of knowledge; epistemology is the art of examining its wood, knots, balance and capacity to float. Yet by what pramana is the pramana itself examined? If every pramana requires another, and the second a third, where does the journey end? Can an endless staircase ever touch the ground? Here the crisis of knowledge appears: truth needs a touchstone, but what is the touchstone of the touchstone? A deep approach does not evade this circle merely by changing vocabulary. It asks whether some ground can carry its own light, whether there can be knowledge whose very presence reveals itself. Self-consciousness becomes one profound answer to this question.

I feel pain. The pain does not first arrive as a third-person report about somebody; before I say 'I am in pain', the experience of pain arrives within me carrying its own light. Another person may see signs of my pain; I experience the pain itself. There is a deep difference between these two kinds of knowing. Seen from outside and lived from within are two different doors to truth. If epistemology measures only the outward door, half the house remains unseen. Depth means respecting the reality within.

Yet inwardness does not mean arbitrariness. 'It feels this way to me' and 'the thing itself is this way' are two different statements. Subjective experience is not a direct substitute for objective conclusion. A deep approach gives each its own field and limit. Inner light is authoritative in its own domain; external fact in its own. The difficulty begins when one field seizes the throne of another. A human being is sovereign over the fact of one's own experience, but not the sole legislator of the world. The world does not change colour at my wish; yet the meaning of the world does not arise for me without consciousness. In this relation knower and known are neither wholly separate nor wholly one. Knowledge is the bridge joining them. A bridge does not erase the distinction between two banks; it makes mutual access possible. Reason walks upon that bridge, experience walks, language, memory and pramana walk. Yet beneath the bridge flows a deep river: consciousness. Without that river, for whom would the bridge exist?

Deep epistemology therefore first teaches us to recognise levels of knowledge. Not every kind of knowledge arises in the same way. A potter knows the moisture of clay by the hand; a chemist measures its composition; a poet finds the smell of the village in that clay; a historian discovers civilisation in it. These four forms of knowing are not rivals: each answers a different question. The diversity of knowledge is not a sign of ignorance but a natural result of the diversity of questions. Yet diversity is not licence. Every form of knowledge needs its own criteria, method and limit. Philosophy's difficult work is to draw these boundaries fairly. Where no boundary is acknowledged, a claim can spread like sky and cover everything. Science is extraordinary where measurement is possible; but by what instrument will science measure why justice is beautiful? Poetry can speak the colour of grief, but the dose of medicine cannot be determined by poetry. Every form of knowledge has its own ground. Deep epistemology maps those grounds.

A major question concerns differences among pramanas. We often make a total conclusion from half a fact. We see smoke upon a refuse heap and infer fire – often correctly. But can one experience be applied to every circumstance? One person deceives us and we conclude, 'All human beings are deceitful': this is not knowledge but the expansion of a wounded mind. We must know how far a pramana can carry its conclusion. Do not load an ocean-crossing burden into a small boat. The discipline of reasoning protects knowledge. Some evidence is partial; some wider; some directly available; some remains in the background. We do not make all decisions in life only from what appears before the eyes. Some knowledge rests upon continuity of trust, some upon success in practice, some upon self-manifest experience. 'Whole' and 'remainder' are not merely quantities; they are different modes of the ground of knowledge. Sometimes a clear experience is immediately present; sometimes behind it stands a ground not directly before us but without which the experience would not be possible. The root is not visible above the soil, yet every leaf of the tree bears witness to it. The root of knowledge can lie deeper than the contents of knowledge. This is the meaning of depth. The surface says, 'I have obtained this knowledge.' Depth asks, 'Why was this knowledge possible?'

A river is not merely its surface waves;
currents, pressure,

stones and slope beneath the surface together shape its movement. Knowledge too is not merely an achieved content; it has conditions of possibility. Consciousness, language, reasoning, experience, memory, confidence in the stability of the world – all are invisible grounds of knowledge. Every morning a person opens the door without proving again that the outer world did not vanish during the night. Life begins with a basic trust. Such background awareness accompanies all knowledge silently. Philosophy tries to give this silence a sentence.

Yet definition creates another difficulty. Must a thing first be known before its characteristic can be fixed? Or must the characteristic come first, and knowledge afterwards? If pramana must already be available before we define it, definition is merely a map drawn after the journey. And if a pramana cannot be recognised without a prior definition, where did the definition come from? This circle makes the philosopher cautious. Naming does not create the thing. Calling something 'a pramana' does not establish its validity. A definition is a signpost, not the road itself. A map is not the mountain. Definition facilitates knowledge; it is not always knowledge's source.

A deep approach turns the sequence over and examines it from both sides. Sometimes experience first, name later; sometimes concept first, then the organisation of experience. These processes are interwoven in human knowledge. Therefore the history of knowledge is not only accumulation of facts but transformation of concepts. At times what was once called illusion is revealed by a new instrument as a real event; at times what was taken as certain truth is shown by new testing to have limits. Knowledge is not a fixed board but a journey of self-correction. Yet to travel, some confidence must be accepted provisionally. No one can walk by proving at every step that the ground exists. Doubt is an instrument of knowledge, but life cannot live entirely in a pit of doubt. Philosophical doubt is not destruction but examination: a hammer where a claim has hardened, sensitivity where experience is fragile. Depth means not merely more doubt but the right question in the right place.

Another important direction is language. We usually share knowledge in words. Words are bridges of mind, but sometimes veils of fog as well. 'Truth', 'self', 'knowledge', 'pramana', 'object' – each word carries centuries of debate within it. When meanings remain unclear, the dispute may concern shadows rather than things. For this reason philosophy of language is not far from epistemology. The way we speak often reveals the way we think. Yet language is not truth's prison. Words express truth, sometimes limiting it, sometimes transforming it. Calling the sky 'sky' does not imprison the sky inside the word. In the same way truth can be larger than a statement. If language merely forces reality into the mould of its own grammar, we must ask whether we know the object or only the net of words. But if language is entirely unrelated to reality, how is communication possible? Here lies a subtle balance.

Language is neither slave nor master of truth;

it is a medium. A medium can be transparent without becoming invisible. The scene seen through glass depends in part upon the clarity of the glass. Language is such a glass. Epistemology examines the glass too. One word acquires different shades in different traditions; translation is not merely transference of words but a rebirth of meaning. When European thought and Indian philosophy meet, the first difficulty is often vocabulary. In what sense shall 'subject' become 'subjective' or 'self-related'? In what sense shall 'object' become 'thing' or 'object'? If an old burden of meaning is laid unchanged upon a new concept, confusion can arise before dialogue begins. Deep thought therefore demands linguistic care.

Sangamlal Pandey's effort creates not merely a space of translation between two traditions but a space of dialogue. Indian reflection on pramana and modern European epistemology can be placed before one another not like parties in a courtroom but like participants in a conversation. One tradition may reveal another's weakness and at the same time recognise its own blind spot. Such comparison does not decide a winner; it deepens vision. Two mirrors can return more light to one another.

When epistemology reaches the question of the self,

the problem grows harder. The self does not stand before us like an object. If I turn the self into an object known like a chair, who then is the knower? Another self? And then a third? Where will the endless sequence

stop? Perhaps the self is not an object but a condition of illumination in knowledge. The eye sees many things, yet its own seeing does not stand before the eye as an ordinary object. Self-consciousness points deeply toward this difference. We see the body, watch thoughts come and go, observe feelings change. If that which witnesses these changes were itself only another changing object, from where would continuity arise? The answer is not easy, but the question is serious. Call it self, consciousness or witness - more important than the name is its epistemic role. Where things become illuminated, some condition of illumination is required. Yet the image of a lamp must not be taken physically; a metaphor is useful only within its limits. Philosophical caution does not seat metaphor on the throne of truth.

Self-luminosity does not mean that the self is a mysterious light visible to the eyes. It means that some forms of knowledge are immediately available within experience without waiting for an external certificate. When I say, 'I am thinking', what additional evidence is required for the presence of thinking at that moment? Someone may say I am mistaken about the object of my thought; it is far harder to say, 'You are not thinking at all', when thinking is experienced as present. The philosophical importance of such self-evidence is one ground of deep epistemology. Yet this ground is not omniscience. I may know that a thought is present; whether the thought is correct is another question. 'I am angry' is self-awareness; 'my anger is justified' is an ethical judgement. Do not confuse them. Self-manifestation opens one special door to truth, not every door. Depth also knows the limit of that door.

One wonder of knowledge is that we know our ignorance. To say 'I do not know' is a kind of knowledge. Awareness of ignorance illuminates the boundary of knowing. Complete darkness does not know itself as darkness; consciousness can experience absence as absence. Here knowledge reflects upon itself. Human discernment can be aware of its own limit. This humility is not weakness but maturity. One who claims to know everything may stand far from knowledge. Deep epistemology is not only a collection of answers; it is also clarity about limits: what is proven, what inferred, what experienced, what merely accepted, what is linguistic convenience, what is a metaphysical ground? The discipline of these distinctions keeps thought clean.

The question is not only about a conclusion but also about the road by which it was reached. A person can reach the right answer for the wrong reason; a lucky bull's-eye is not archery. Therefore knowledge is not merely true belief; it asks for a trustworthy ground. Yet what level of ground? With this question depth awakens again. For ordinary action sufficient evidence may be enough; philosophy may ask for a deeper ground. Daily life sees sunrise and says, 'The sun rose.' Astronomy gives another explanation. Both sentences serve different purposes in their contexts. Ordinary experience is not false, but it is not the final explanation. Philosophical knowledge should not insult lived experience; it should understand its limit and use.

Here Indian tradition offers a profound opportunity. Perception, inference, testimony, comparison, non-apprehension - discussions of many pramanas are not mere lists but recognitions of different roads of human knowing. Not every road reaches the same destination. Some concern external objects, some relations, some absence, some meaning. The geography of knowledge is many-shaped. A deep view should not force this plurality into one rigid formula. Openness is not chaos; it is acknowledgement of the legitimacy of multiple methods. A city is not entered through one gate alone; the city of knowledge also has many gates. Yet every gate has rules of recognition. The reliability of pramana performs this work of guardianship.

And metaphysics? If the deep ground of knowledge depends upon being, how can epistemology remain completely separate from metaphysics? We assume an external world exists, objects persist, causal relations are meaningful, consciousness is present. These are not merely technical rules of knowing; they are also conceptions of reality. Thus deep epistemology eventually touches the question of existence. 'What is?' and 'How do we know?' travel apart and then meet again, like two branches of a river joining the sea. Yet the meeting does not erase the distinction. Metaphysics concerns the form of being; epistemology the conditions of knowing. They are silent neighbours, like foundation and window of one house. Without foundation, where is the window? Without the window, how does the foundation become visible? Philosophical thought has the courage to see both together.

This courage is neither pride in theory nor refuge in mystery. Depth does not flee clarity. Where the question is difficult, language should become clearer still. Complexity is not an excuse for obscurity. A deep river can be transparent. Philosophical writing should seek such transparent depth. Too often difficult vocabulary looks like proof of knowledge; yet difficulty of words is not depth of thought. A deep idea can descend into a simple sentence; a simple thought can hide inside complicated language. The true touchstone of deep epistemology is not how esoteric the vocabulary is, but how clearly the fundamental questions have been opened.

The most basic questions of knowledge are these:

Who is the knower? What is the known? What is pramana? How is validity established? What is the nature of self-awareness? What is the relation between language and truth? What are the limits of knowledge? What place belongs to ignorance? These are not only questions of books; they accompany us daily. A doctor's decision, evidence in court, a claim in the news, historical interpretation, religious belief, scientific conclusion - everywhere we may ask, 'What is the basis of this claim?' In that single question lies the democratic power of epistemology. Authority says, 'Believe.' Philosophy asks, 'Why?' The crowd says,

'Everyone believes this.' Philosophy asks, 'Does universal belief make it true?' Tradition says, 'It has always been so.' Philosophy asks, 'Does duration prove justification?' Novelty says, 'This is modern.' Philosophy asks, 'Does being new prove being right?' The cultivation of such questions gives intellectual freedom.

Yet questioning does not mean rejecting everything. If doubt becomes a habit that accepts nothing, how will the house of knowledge be built? Discernment asks reasons both for acceptance and rejection. Deep epistemology is neither blind belief nor blind doubt. Between them lies tested trust. When walking across a bridge we do not examine every atom of iron at each step; yet if we see signs that the bridge is failing, we do not close our eyes. Life rests upon such balance. Trust in knowledge is the shared fruit of experience, tradition, reasoning, testing and revision. No single source is king everywhere. The plurality of pramanas gives a truer picture of the human condition. Human beings are limited, yet capable of self-review. Through such self-review a limit can become strength. We do not know everything, but we can test the grounds of what we do know. We can be mistaken, yet recognise and correct the mistake. We are bound within language, yet can reflect upon language. We are children of history, yet can examine historical assumptions. Here lies the dignity of human knowledge.

Depth is not a claim to unlimited knowledge;

it is the self-awareness of limited knowledge. If the self is a ground of the light of knowing, that does not mean flight from the world. Self-awareness does not deny the world of objects; it clarifies the central situation of knowing. A window is inside the house, yet through it the view extends outside. Consciousness is within, yet knowledge reaches outward. The self is not a wall but a centre of vision. And that centre must not become private ego. To say 'I know' and thereby deny another person's knowledge is a distortion of self-awareness. Genuine self-awareness sees its own limit and therefore opens the door to dialogue.

Another person is not merely an object;

that person too is a centre of consciousness. From this recognition epistemology builds a quiet bridge toward ethics. Once we accept that another is not only an object of our experience but an experienter in one's own right, a philosophical ground for respect is born. Questions of knowledge are not completely separate from human relationship. Even the way we say 'I know the truth' can become violent. Humble knowledge says, 'This is my ground; let me hear yours.' Philosophy lives in that dialogue. East and West, old and new, positivism and idealism - neither side is the final judge of the other. Dialogue becomes meaningful when both sides state their questions and limits clearly.

Sangamlal Pandey's deep perspective is a sustained invitation to such dialogue. Indian epistemology is not merely glory from the past; it can be reread alongside modern questions. European philosophy is not merely an imported syllabus; it can be a new mirror of comparison. A mirror does not change the face; it shows the face. Another tradition helps us recognise our own assumptions. What feels natural inside one's own house becomes a question under another gaze. Here lies the creative power of comparative philosophy.

If knowledge were merely a heap of answers,

the library would be the wisest being. But a library does not ask the meaning of its books. Human beings ask. This capacity for questioning is a basic mark of depth in knowledge. We read and then ask; we accept and then test; we test and then revise. Knowledge remains alive because it can look back at itself. Self-correction is the ethics of knowledge. To admit error is not defeat but victory for knowledge. A theory that can never change may be more a fortress of pride than a search for truth. Truth does not fear questions. Depth is not a fortress but a well: the farther down we go, the cooler the water, the deeper the reflection of the sky. Yet to descend into the well we need a rope - reason; a lamp - consciousness; a vessel - language; and caution - pramana. Without all four, depth may become darkness. The discipline of philosophy turns depth into light rather than darkness.

At the surface knowledge says,

'This flower is red.' In depth the questions multiply:

What is the experience of colour? A property of the object? A process of vision? A category of language? How is the meaning of 'red' stabilised in a shared world? How many doors one small colour can open. This is the wonder of philosophy. Ordinary experience is the seed of extraordinary questions. Depth is not the mystery of some distant land; it is the invisible layer of everyday experience. Drinking water is ordinary; asking whether taste is in the object or in experience is philosophy. Hearing a name and remembering someone: the sound outside, the meaning within, together making one recognition. Knowledge is always a living relation between object and consciousness. Deep epistemology listens to the pulse of that relation. It does not merely say that we know; it asks what happens inside knowing. And then still deeper: how is the consciousness asking this question itself present? At this last turn, knowledge returns home to itself.

After a long journey the traveller discovers that a map was in the hand all along, but the eye by which the map was seen had been forgotten. Deep epistemology reminds us of the eye. The seen is great, but for whom is the seen without seeing? Knowledge is great, but for whom does knowledge have meaning without a knower? And if the knower remains wholly unknown to itself, where is the foundation of the house of knowledge? Thus self-awareness is not an extra chapter but the centre of depth. Yet the centre is not the end. From the centre circles widen - world, language, pramana, reason, other consciousness, history, science, value. If the self remained closed inside itself, the expansion of knowledge would be impossible. The meaning of self-awareness lies in relationship with the world outside. A lamp burns itself, yet its light spreads

in every direction. In this image depth and world are not enemies. Inner light is the capacity to seek outer truth, and outer experience is the touchstone by which inward assumptions are tested.

The two need each other. Knowledge is not a one-way journey but a continuous traffic from world to consciousness and consciousness to world. Here lies living philosophy. A poetic remembrance of Sangamlal Pandey's deep epistemology might be this: know what you have seen; ask the ground of what you know; see the limit of the ground you find; and when you see the limit, do not despair - become more alert. Do not make consciousness a throne of truth; make it a lamp for seeking truth. Do not turn pramana into a weapon; make it an instrument of testing. Do not turn language into a fortress; make it a bridge of dialogue. Do not turn tradition into a locked chest of answers; make it a living storehouse of questions. And do not make philosophy the prestige of difficult words; make it a discipline for seeing oneself and the world more clearly. Then knowledge will rise above information. Knowing will become not memory alone but awakening. A question will become not mere doubt but a stairway of light. Ignorance will become not shame but the threshold of new search. The self will become not a curtain of mystery but a philosophical name for the depth of consciousness. And then the human being, whose desire to know the world is limitless, will pause and ask: 'How deeply has the I that wishes to know everything itself been known?' There is no quick answer to that question. Perhaps the first lamp of deep knowledge is lit precisely by asking it.

The "I" Within the Body

I look at my hand, my eyes, my breath,
my tired body, and easily say,

'This is my body.' Yet within that 'my' a question awakens:

who is the one that says 'my'? An invisible traveller separate from the body? Or is the awakened form of the body itself the 'I'?

Ancient arguments sought a self distinct from body,
senses, mind and breath;

something that would not break when the body breaks. Onto that self were placed the lamp of knowledge, the shadows of pleasure and pain, the waves of desire and aversion, the movement of effort, the weight of dharma and adharma. Birth might change, body might change, yet the experiencer would continue, holding the thread of karma. Such a long conception took deep root within philosophical tradition.

Acharya Badrinath Shukla places an uncomfortable question upon this familiar road: must we necessarily posit another entity behind the body in order to understand the 'I'? Can what flowers as experience in the body not be explained from within bodily life? Must intelligence, memory, desire, pleasure and pain all require a house built outside the body? This question does not insult tradition; it tests tradition. Philosophy does not merely preserve answers; it digs beneath their foundations.

I experience sorrow. Sorrow does not reside in a distant sky;

it changes the pulse inside the body,

moistens the eyes, makes breath heavy. I become joyful:

light appears upon the face, the body feels lighter, the step acquires movement. Experience is so closely woven with bodily life that it is not easy to call the body merely an outer covering. If the body were only clothing, why would the temperature of the clothing change the season of mind? If the self were wholly separate, why would medicine alter consciousness? Why does fever slow the movement of thought? Why does sleep make the world fade? Why do intoxicants affect memory, judgement and feeling? In these questions the body ceases to be a silent container and becomes an active ground of experience.

The human 'I' may not be only muscle and flesh,

but neither need it be an entirely separate shadow untouched by flesh and muscle. The body is the first door to our world. Without eyes, what experience of colour? Without ears, what sound? Without skin, what touch?

If injury to the brain changes the map of memory, how simple can the continuity of 'I' remain? Embodied selfhood brings this difficulty before us. It says, in effect: first look here, where life visibly pulses; only then posit an invisible entity if the need for one remains. Unnecessary doubling is no glory of knowledge. Adding a second mystery to explain the first is not yet an explanation.

Yet the question returns: if 'I' am the body,

the body constantly changes. The child's body is not the young person's body, the young person's not the old person's. Cells change, form changes, strength changes. Yet we say, 'That child was I.' What holds this continuity together? Name? Memory? Bodily continuity? The history of relationships? Here embodied selfhood faces a deep test. Memory is a remarkable bridge: yesterday's experience returns in today's consciousness as 'mine'. Yet memory too depends upon bodily condition; disease can erase pages, injury can disrupt sequence. If memory is affected by bodily change, where is a completely independent chamber of self? Recognition - 'this is the same person', 'this is the same place', 'this is the same I' - does not function only by the seal of a mysterious self. Body, memory, continuity, recognition and experience together create a living persistence. We find ourselves each day in a new form, yet not as complete strangers. Within change there is continuity; within continuity, identity. A river's water changes while the river's name remains. But the river is not merely a name, nor merely each drop of water; it is the continuing structure of flow. Perhaps the embodied 'I' too is such a flow - not a fixed stone but an ordered life.

Here a linguistic confusion repeatedly knocks at the door. We say 'my body'. Does that prove that the 'I' is separate from the body? We say 'my mind'. Does that prove the 'I' is separate from the mind? When we say 'my head aches', has the head therefore gone outside my existence? Grammar creates many relations for convenience; not every grammatical relation is a metaphysical division. 'My village' truly means I am not the village. But 'my thought' need not mean that thought is separate from me in the same way. Words can be mirrors of reasoning, but also nets of confusion. Before determining reality from grammar, the philosopher must pause. 'My body' is a use of language; the leap from that usage to a necessarily additional self requires serious examination. Embodied selfhood measures that leap.

An opponent may ask: if the self is the body,

where does the self go in a dead body? The body remains but consciousness does not. Are living and dead body then the same? No. Wood may remain after a fire is extinguished, but the flame does not. It need not follow that the flame was an independent substance that flew away. A special organisation, process and state have ended. Life too is not merely the shape of a body; it is living organisation, activity, communication, responsiveness and conscious capacity. A dead body does not retain all the properties of a living body. This difference does not by itself prove an additional self. Life can be an emergent property of organisation, where parts together create capacities not found in the parts separately. Music is not contained in a single string; string, air, touch and vibration together make music. When music ends, we need not conclude that an

invisible musical substance has escaped from the instrument. Yet this analogy is not a complete answer; it only opens a possibility. Consciousness remains a profound mystery. The courage of embodied selfhood is not to close that mystery too quickly by naming an invisible substance. To call what we do not understand 'self' is not yet to understand it. Intellectual honesty includes the capacity to name ignorance as ignorance. Another question concerns mind. If mind itself is a subtle substance separate from the body, how do mind and body relate? By what bridge does an invisible mind move a visible body? Where is the contact? How does the conjunction occur? Mind may be introduced to solve one difficulty, only to create a new mind-body difficulty. An embodied perspective may say: do not build the mind into a separate empire detached from living bodily activity. Thought, memory, feeling and decision are activities of the living human being. The human being thinks; not an isolated 'self'. The human being suffers; not a disembodied 'mind'. The human being desires; not a bodiless desire. The person is one complete living unity. Respect for this unity can become the central insistence of embodied selfhood.

Daily life already treats the person as a whole. We do not say,

'His self has gone to the market'; we say,

'He has gone.' We do not say,

'His body committed the crime but the self remained innocent'; we hold the person responsible. Ethics calls the whole human being by name. Action is not an object flying outside the body; it leaves marks in conduct, consequence, memory, relationships and society. One action changes the doer, affects others, leaves an imprint upon institutions, sometimes across generations. The fruit of action need not be only an account in another world; the seed of action sprouts immediately in this life as well. A lie breaks trust, violence creates fear, compassion deepens relationship, education changes the next generation. It is too quick to assume that embodied selfhood must destroy ethics.

If there is no fear of an afterlife,

why should a human being be moral? Because suffering is real here. Another's pain exists in this life. Injustice exists in this society. Trust, respect, friendship and responsibility are living values of present human beings. To make ethics depend only upon proof of an immortal soul is to narrow its foundation too severely. A mortal human being can still be valuable. A flower is transient and still beautiful. Life is finite and still dignified. Perhaps death does not diminish value but sharpens the meaning of time. We have limited time; therefore choices matter. We shall one day not be here; therefore today's conduct can become even more responsible. Mortality is not ethical emptiness; sometimes it is a source of compassion. We are all mortal - why then arrogance over one another? We all pass through suffering - why not mercy? Our bodies are all bound to hunger, illness, fatigue and death; a common human ground lies also in this shared embodied condition.

The body is not a low thing. Many traditions have sometimes spoken of the body as the prison of the self, but without the body where are the embrace of love, a mother's touch, the sweat of labour, the rhythm of dance, the hearing of music, the taste of food, tears in the eyes? The body is not an insult to life; it is life's immediate ground. Embodied selfhood gives philosophical dignity to this ground. Yet dignity is not worship. The body is limited, vulnerable to illness, mortal. Accepting this limit is not despair. One form of philosophy is to look finitude directly in the eyes. The desire for immortality may be profoundly human, but desire is not evidence of truth. We want loved ones to remain forever; desire does not change the law of nature. Truth can disagree with the heart's wish. Philosophical courage is the courage to face that disagreement.

Traditional additional-self theories suppose a continuing experiencer after death. Embodied selfhood asks: upon what evidence? There is no memory, no direct perception, nothing within present living experience; how strong then is the inference? Theories of karmic fruit, rebirth and afterlife support one another, but circular support is not independent evidence. If the self is proved through rebirth and rebirth through the self, reasoning may simply move in a circle. Embodied selfhood draws a line across that circle and asks: where is the first ground? Yet embodied selfhood itself is not free of questions. Why does consciousness arise? How does the organisation of matter become the light of experience? Can the experience of redness, the private sharpness of pain, the intimacy of memory be fully explained only in chemical terms? These hard questions remain. Genuine philosophy does not hide the difficulty of its own position. Seeing the weakness of one view does not automatically make the alternative complete. The strength of embodied selfhood lies in questioning unnecessary additional entities; its challenge lies in giving a satisfactory account of the depth of consciousness. Thought matures in this two-sided honesty.

We say 'I' - and an entire life is gathered inside that word:

the history of the body, the thread of memory,

the web of relationships, the habits of language,

the consequences of action, moments of self-awareness. Perhaps the 'I' is not one object but a living totality, many levels within one name. Embodied selfhood warns us against dividing that totality too quickly into two separate worlds. The human body is not merely flesh; it carries history: hardness of labour upon the hand, age upon the face, memory of accident in a scar, illness in the gait, sleepless nights in the eyes. The body is an account-book of life. What we live is written upon the body in some form, and what the body endures changes the language of mind. To call body and mind separate kingdoms can move far away from lived experience.

For this reason health is also a philosophical question. The dignity of the body is the dignity of the person. Violence upon someone's body is not merely an assault upon an external object; it strikes the person's 'I'. Hunger is not merely an event in the stomach; it changes consciousness, judgement, dignity and opportunities of life. Illness is not only a disorder of an organ; it can contract the whole world of a life. Here the social meaning of embodied selfhood becomes deep: if the body is not merely a covering separate from the person, care of the body is part of human respect. Food, health, rest and safety are not 'lower' needs; they are grounds of the living person. Philosophical height cannot be built by forgetting the bodily foundation. We think because we are alive. The ground of life comes first, metaphysical reflection afterwards.

Yet the human being is not merely a machine for staying alive. We question, create art, seek justice, love, build futures. Embodied selfhood can see all of this not as opposition to the body but as capacities of the embodied human being. A tree rising from earth reaches toward the sky; having roots in the earth does not make its aspiration toward the sky false. In the same way, being embodied does not diminish the height of human thought. It is not necessary to assume a supernatural self in order for beauty, truth, morality and the search for knowledge to have meaning. Values can arise in the living relationships of living human beings. Eternity may be one source of value, but transience can be another. Why is an evening beautiful? Because it passes. Why is a life precious? Because it is finite. Death is not always the enemy of beauty; sometimes it is the background against which beauty shines.

This perspective prevents embodied selfhood from remaining only a negative theory; it illuminates the immediate dignity of life. Yet immediacy is not hedonism. 'There is only one life, therefore do whatever you please' is not a necessary conclusion. The opposite may follow: one life can demand greater responsibility. If there is no endless time for forgiveness, forgive today. If there is no certainty of another birth in which reform can happen, reduce injustice in this society now. If human beings are embodied and mortal, inflicting suffering upon them becomes an even graver wrong, for lost time does not return. Embodied selfhood can move morality from an invisible future account back onto the face of the present.

The question of karma nevertheless remains open. A person does not alone bear the consequences of action. Children, family, society, institutions and environment are affected. The actions of one generation become the circumstances of another. In this sense 'karmic fruit' can also be a social continuity. My body may end, yet the effects of my actions can continue in other bodies and other lives. Immortality need not mean only the journey of a self; sometimes memory, action, ideas, children, institutions, art and language carry human presence forward. Such symbolic continuity is not proof of an afterlife, but it is a real extension of influence in the present world. A person is limited by the body yet may extend beyond the body through effects. A teacher lives after death in the thoughts of students; a poet in lines; an unjust person in the system built; a compassionate person in the courage given. In this way the meaning of life can exceed its biological limit. Embodied selfhood can accept mortality and preserve meaning. Perhaps this is its most human voice.

We need not be immortal in order for life to matter. We are mortal,

yet love is real. Our bodies change,

yet memory is real. We are limited,

yet justice is necessary. We shall one day not exist, yet today's truth is not less true. The body is our limit, but the body is also the door to our world. Through this body we touch earth, see sky, eat food, speak words, lift a child into the lap, stand against injustice. Human dignity does not rise by despising the body.

Understanding the body is the first lesson in understanding the human being.

And the 'self'? Perhaps the question remains open. Philosophy is not quick judgement but patient waiting upon evidence. If there is an additional self, clear grounds are required in its favour. If there is not, then the mystery of consciousness must be understood more deeply in the language of embodied life. In either case the question survives. And where the question survives, philosophy survives. Acharya Badrinath Shukla's embodied selfhood gives us a difficult mirror in which we cannot keep the body at a distance by calling it merely 'mine'. The mirror asks: is this body merely my possession, or the nearest form of my existence? The hand rises - I rise. The eyes weep - I weep. The heart beats - I am afraid, I am glad. The body tires - I seek rest. How much philosophy is hidden inside this daily unity. Perhaps the 'I' is not some distant thing hidden in the sky; perhaps it seeks its meaning here, in this breath, this memory, this touch, this whole flow of a living body. And death? It is not the end of the question, but the limit of life. Where the limit becomes clear, every moment of life appears sharper. So before hurrying to prove itself immortal, the 'I' within the body should first understand, in full depth, what it means to be alive. Perhaps the greatest mystery of the human being is not what happens after death but why the experience called 'I' within this living body is so extraordinary.

Art Beyond the Boundary of Beauty

A flower is beautiful - we say it easily. An evening is beautiful, a song beautiful, a painting beautiful, a poem beautiful. But philosophy asks:

what exactly is 'beauty'? A property of the object? A response of the mind? A social habit? Or a complex meeting among all these? Where ordinary vision stops at colour, reflection on beauty asks about the history of the eye that sees the colour. In Surendra Barlinge's thought, art is not merely a toy for diversion, nor merely a vessel of pleasure. It is a serious act of recreating human experience in a new form.

Art often gives delight,

yet delight is not the same as sensory pleasure. How could the pleasure of a sweet taste and the experience of a tragic play be the same thing? We watch a sorrowful story and weep, yet leave the theatre saying, 'Wonderful.' Why? If art were only pleasure, where would we place the beauty of pain, fear, separation, compassion and tragedy? Art does not erase suffering; sometimes it gives suffering a form in which a human being can see it, understand it, and bear the meaning within it. Therefore aesthetic relish is not the same as consumption. Satisfaction from food belongs to bodily need; satisfaction from poetry belongs to meaning, rhythm, memory, imagination and transformation of experience. A song does not fill the stomach, yet it can give a name to an emptiness in the mind. Here begins art's first wonder.

If delight is reduced to a balance of pleasure and pain,

aesthetic experience remains incomplete. Art concentrates the mind and offers another vision beyond everyday usefulness. Ordinary life asks, 'What is this object for?' Art asks, 'How does this object appear?' 'What meaning lies within this experience?' An old shoe useless in the marketplace can become in a painting the story of a life. A broken house unfit to live in can become in a poem a memory of displacement. Art releases an object for a moment from utility and places it in a new relation.

Yet such release is not flight from the object. Art is made of the very materials of the world - word, colour, sound, body, stone, rhythm, light. The material belongs to earth; the form belongs to imagination. A painter's pigment is chemical matter, yet upon canvas it can become memory. A poet's words belong to everyday language, yet in a poem the sky around those words changes. 'Home' has one dictionary meaning; in poetry it can become a mother's voice, an abandoned courtyard, desire for return, or imprisonment. Art carries language from information into experience. Therefore artistic language is not a copy of an ordinary sentence. News says, 'It rained.' Poetry may say, 'The dry earth heard the name of the first drop.' Both touch the same event, but their work differs: the first informs, the second recreates experience. Art gives words new relations, so that a familiar thing suddenly becomes unfamiliar and we learn to see again. In this 'seeing again' lies one source of beauty.

But must beauty always be smooth, sweet,

balanced and attractive? A distorted face can be the subject of a great painting; destruction in war the subject of a great novel; a terrifying scene the heart of a profound play. Thus artistic value is not always determined by the outward beauty of the subject. An ugly thing can open a deep truth in artistic form. Therefore 'beautiful' and 'artistic' are not synonyms. Beauty is one possibility of art, not its only criterion. Art can give us the courage to look into ugliness. The worker's cracked palm, the hungry eye, the decaying settlement, smoke from war - none of these stand outside art. If art were merely decoration, half the truth of life would remain outside the door.

Barlinge's aesthetics protects the freedom of art but does not turn freedom into social blindness. The artist lives in society, receives language from society, symbols from society, memory and conflict from society. The artist does not create in a vacuum outside society. Yet if society orders the poet, 'Write this subject in this way', art can become propaganda. Politics may converse with art, but should not seize art's breath. Ethics may become a question within art, but moral instruction should not replace art. A poem can stand for justice; but if it is only a slogan, where is the inner structure of poetry? Art gives thought form, rhythm, image, tension and multiplicity of meaning. Thought alone is not art; form alone is not art. Together they make a living structure in which meaning cannot be locked into a single sentence.

Art opens the door to interpretation,

but not every interpretation is sound. Freedom of meaning is not arbitrary meaning. Words, form, context, rhythm, symbol and structure within a work set boundaries. The reader is free, but not completely free from the body of the work. If a river appears in a poem, the reader may understand it as memory, time, the flow of life. But calling the river an iron chair without any ground is not interpretation. Freedom of meaning requires discipline. Art suggests; it does not command. Here lies the power of symbol. A symbol is one thing that opens a door toward meanings larger than itself. A lamp is not merely oil and wick; it can become knowledge, hope, waiting, remembrance. Yet a symbol is not a fixed dictionary entry. Its context changes from work to work, and its shade of meaning changes. The artist not only creates symbols but sometimes gives inherited symbols new meaning. The lotus can be purity in one age, politics in another work, life rising from mud in a third. Symbols live with history.

Here art brings tradition and novelty onto the same stage. Novelty does not require total destruction of the old. A new raga still lives within a tradition of notes; a modern poem uses language inherited from ancestors; an experimental play still stands within a long history of stage, character and audience. The artist is both

heir and rebel: receives, then changes. If tradition is only imitation, creation dies; if novelty is without memory, it loses roots. Art holds the two in dialogue.

Is beauty in the object or in the mind? The same song moistens one person's eyes and leaves another unmoved. Is beauty then only personal preference? If it were, criticism would be pointless. 'I liked it' and 'this is a distinguished work' are not the same judgement. Personal taste may be a beginning but not the final decision. Criticism moves across that distance. The critic asks: how intensely has the work used its medium? What is the relation of form and subject? Is there internal coherence? Is the language necessary or ornamental? Is the symbol alive within the work or pasted onto it from outside? Criticism is not the artist's enemy; it is serious reading of the work. Yet the critic is not an ultimate judge in a court either. The history of art contains many works first called failures and later recognised as major voices of an age. Taste changes, evaluation changes, context changes. This does not mean there are no criteria. A criterion is not a stone measure fixed forever; it is discernment that develops in dialogue, where experience, tradition, awareness of form, awareness of language, history and reasoning meet.

Art cannot be evaluated by a checklist alone. Read a poem,

tick ten rules and decide - art is not such a simple machine. Creativity sometimes transcends rules. A great artist may break an established grammar, not through ignorance but to open a new possibility. The right to break rules becomes more meaningful after the rules are understood. Discipline is not the enemy of creativity; it is the bone of the wing. Without bone the wing cannot hold its shape.

Imagination is one of art's great powers. But imagination does not mean merely inventing falsehood. A poet can create a city that exists on no map, yet its fear, love and injustice feel real to us. Imagination can move away from fact and come closer to human truth. Ramayana, Mahabharata, folk tale, modern novel - the question of historical fact is one matter, the question of poetic truth another. Poetic truth does not demand a certificate from history; it asks for coherence of experience, human possibility and internal credibility within the created world. A fictional character can feel more alive than an actual acquaintance. Why?

Because art condenses the scattered experience of life. Ten years of pain into one scene; the restlessness of an age into one character; a society's conflict into one dialogue. Art compresses time and expands meaning.

Drama is a remarkable example of this power. In a few hours upon the stage, decades of life can pass. The space is small, the world immense. The actor remains oneself and becomes another. The audience knows it is acting, yet the tears are real. The miracle of theatre lies in this double consciousness. We are not deceived; we consent to enter a creative illusion. The sword on stage does not perform a real killing, yet fear becomes aesthetically real. Art builds a bridge between truth and imagination upon which neither loses its identity.

In music, words need not be present at all. A raga without narrative can change the direction of the mind.

Meaning therefore does not exist only in words. Rhythm, tone, pause, repetition, tension and resolution are forms of meaning. In painting line speaks and colour changes feeling while remaining silent. In dance the body becomes language. In sculpture stone's silence receives meaning through form. Every art has its own medium and grammar. The criterion of one art cannot simply be applied unchanged to another. Can poetry be measured like painting? Music by the plot of a novel? Respect for the specificity of a medium is a basic condition of artistic evaluation.

Yet arts also learn from one another. Poetry borrows music's rhythm, painting borrows cinema's framing, theatre borrows poetry's symbols, film borrows painting's light. Encounter need not erase identity; it can open new possibility. Aesthetic theory must therefore resist the temptation to bind all arts into one formula. To say 'all art is this' is easy; exceptions appear at once. Let a definition be a door, not a wall. Art is always somewhat larger than its definition. One age may refuse to call something art that another age accepts as art. Photography, cinema, installation art, digital creation - new media test the boundaries of old definitions. Thus aesthetics is not a book of fixed laws but a developing discourse that renews its questions alongside new forms of creation.

Yet the word 'science' must also be used carefully here. Aesthetic experience is not completely measurable. The trembling of the heart is not merely a number; taste, culture and personal history change experience.

Still, reflection is not impossible where complete measurement is impossible. Human studies can have methods suited to their subjects - interpretation, comparison, analysis, context, subtle description of experience. Aesthetics need not imitate a laboratory; it should discover methods appropriate to art.

The relation of object and mind returns here. Is beauty in the object? If only in the object, why does everyone not have the same experience? If only in the mind, why do art education, cultivation of taste and criticism have meaning? Perhaps beauty is born in relation - the form of the object, the capacity of the viewer, cultural context, the state of mind at a particular moment. A raga may carry one meaning at night and another at noon; unheard in childhood, it may bring tears in old age. Experience is an organised event of both object and person. Therefore beauty is neither wholly objective nor arbitrarily subjective. Between them lies a shared field. The critic's work is to clarify the structure of that field.

An artwork is not merely a physical object. The paper of a book is not the poem; the cloth of a canvas is not the painting; the weight of stone is not the sculpture. A physical ground is necessary, yet artistic existence is made of form, meaning, structure, experience and social recognition. An old manuscript may be fragile as paper yet priceless in cultural meaning. The object carries meanings beyond its physical boundary. Here lies the special mode of existence of the artwork.

Art represents, but representation is not photographic copying. A painter depicts a tree without counting every leaf. A poet writes a city without mapping every lane. Selection, emphasis, omission and composition are parts of representation. Art does not return reality unchanged; it reorganises reality. In that reorganisation the artist's point of view is present. Perspective is not falsehood; it is the acknowledgement of selection. Every camera chooses a frame and leaves a world outside it. Every story gives voice to some and silence to others. To understand art we must see both the aesthetics and the ethics of such selection: whose face stands at the centre? whose voice is absent? which scene is bright, which dark? Decisions of form can also create social meaning.

At this point art and society meet again. The artist's freedom is important, yet a work leaves effects within society. One image can strengthen prejudice; one story can give voice to a neglected human being. Art is not law, but it shapes consciousness. This effect raises questions of responsibility, but responsibility is not the same as censorship. External command can destroy the living process of art. The artist must bear the burden of personal discernment. Freedom comes with risk. A work can fail, offend, become profound, or stand ahead of its time. Society's response should be criticism, debate, counter-speech - not the silencing of every disagreement. Art is a public sphere of dialogue.

Sometimes art shows society a wound that society wishes to cover. Sometimes it gives form to a dream that politics cannot name. Sometimes it simply creates a new play of colour and sound, and the play itself changes human sensibility. Art does not have to preach in order to be useful. A raga does not make policy, yet can deepen attention. A painting does not change law, yet can change the way of seeing. A poem does not abolish hunger, yet can turn a hungry human being from a statistic into a face. To call such transformation 'useless' is to make the meaning of use too narrow. Human beings live not only by bread but also by meaning. Art is food for meaning.

Yet meaning does not come as a prefabricated packet. A work asks for the reader's participation. Reading a poem, the reader fills spaces with memory and imagination. Still, the work is not merely raw material for whatever the reader wishes; it has its own structure. Meaning is born in this two-sided action. An instrument sounds, but without hearing there is no experienced music. Artwork and receptive consciousness together complete the experience. Receptivity is not simply inborn; it develops. A complex raga may be difficult at first; with repeated listening its subtleties open. Practice in reading poetry teaches us to perceive layers of language. Training in seeing art teaches line, empty space and balance of colour. Aesthetic sensibility can therefore be educated. This does not prove that expert taste is always right; it means that depth of experience can grow through practice. Taste is not merely private whim; it is also shaped by cultivation, study and experience.

Criticism gives language to such sensitivity. It changes 'I liked it' into 'Why?' From that 'why' aesthetics is born. Yet not every 'why' has one final answer. A work may be effective for many reasons - form, subject, historical moment, private memory, social tension. Aesthetic experience has many causes. No one formula can open every art. Here the openness of Barling's thought matters: rather than imprisoning art inside one hard definition, it insists upon looking from many sides. Beauty, rasa, delight, language, symbol, form, imagination, society, criticism, medium, freedom - different points upon one circle. At the centre stands human creative experience.

When art is made, the artist does not merely arrange material; the artist gives private experience a public form into which another human being can enter. Private sorrow can become shared experience once it becomes poetry. One person's love can become the voice of thousands in a song. In this transformation art makes the private public without erasing its intimacy; it turns a particular experience into a general human possibility. Here art becomes a bridge between individual and society. The artist writes from solitude, yet language is collective. The reader reads in solitude, yet experience becomes shared. Art is a home for both solitude and community.

Beauty is not merely decoration in that home. Sometimes it is the door, sometimes the light, sometimes the darkness. If after meeting ugliness we can see the truth of life more clearly, artistic experience has gone beyond the beautiful. Beauty may then mean not merely 'pleasantness' but intensity of experience, coherence of form, depth of meaning, awakening of sensibility. For this reason the success of art is many-layered. Popularity alone? A crowd applauds - therefore great? Difficulty alone? Nobody understands - therefore great? Novelty alone? Never done before - therefore great? Moral message alone? A good idea - therefore good art? No single criterion is enough. Greatness may be the successful coordination of many powers within a work - originality, form, depth, mastery of medium, human touch, capacity to invite rereading. A work that opens a new layer with every encounter can converse with time for long periods.

Yet time itself is not an infallible judge. Many works were suppressed by power, many languages disappeared, many works never found readers. The surviving list of history is not the whole truth. Aesthetics must remember the possibility of silent works outside the canon. Art history is also the history of selection. Whose work was preserved? Whose destroyed? Whose language was prestigious? Whose folk art was called 'minor'? Such questions reveal the social structure of aesthetic judgement. Yet social analysis must not swallow artistic specificity. The value of a song is not fully explained only by class context, just as its social history is not fully explained only by the structure of the raga. Both views are necessary, but neither substitutes for the other. Multiple perspectives are a strength of aesthetic reflection.

Art differs from science, but is not irrational. It is not beyond reasoning, but is a form of experience in addition to reasoning. Science seeks general laws; art can reveal truth within a particular experience. Science may tell us how people react in grief; a novel lets us live one particular person's grief. Both are forms of knowledge, but of different kinds. Artistic knowledge does not come as formula but as experience. After a play we may learn no new fact and yet understand human beings more deeply. Such understanding is difficult to measure and difficult to deny. Art enlarges the boundary of knowledge. Aesthetic philosophy gives this knowledge a place at philosophy's table.

Truth is not only truth of propositions; there can also be truth of form, of character, of sensibility. A novel does not say, 'All human beings are like this'; it says, 'A human being can be like this.' Such knowledge of possibility is an important part of the human world. Imagination is not the opposite of truth; sometimes it is a laboratory of truthful possibility. The poet asks: What if this happened? What if a human being were placed in such a situation? What if love and duty collided? A story does not give the answer; it creates a living situation in which the reader feels the burden of decision. Here art can become ethical experience rather than moral instruction. Instruction says, 'Do this.' Art asks, 'If you were here, what would you do?' The power of a question can last longer than the force of an order.

Yet art need not always justify itself through ethical usefulness. Pure play of sound, colour and shape can also be a legitimate field of human experience. Human beings need play. Play is not futile; it is practice in freedom, imagination and new combination. Art is serious play, where rules are made, broken, and new rules born. A child makes unnecessary shapes from clay, yet in that play receives the first lesson in creation. How impoverished would human culture be without such 'unnecessary' acts. Song is not necessary for mere survival, yet how dry the meaning of life can become without song. Here lies the limit of utility. Art is not a technique for keeping life biologically alive; it is a human power that helps make life worth living.

Surendra Barling's philosophy of beauty begins with the word 'beautiful' and leads us finally toward human creative freedom. Beauty asks: Why are we attracted? Art asks: Why do we create? Criticism asks: Why is this work effective? Society asks: Whose experience is speaking? Language asks: How is meaning being made? Symbol asks: How can one thing say more than itself? Imagination asks: How can what does not exist open a possibility of truth? Rasa asks: How can even sorrow be transformed into an experience of aesthetic delight? Among all these questions art refuses to become the servant of one answer. It is itself a field of questioning.

A painting stands before us. We are silent. After a few moments the painting has not changed, but we have. Perhaps this is art's deepest power. It does not always change the object; it changes the one who sees. It does not create a new colour in the world; it renews the capacity of the eye. It does not erase pain; it gives pain a form of meaning. It does not stop death; it turns a moment into memory. It does not solve every social problem; it can make the problem visible enough to be seen. It is not the final sentence of truth; it is another language through which truth can be experienced. Therefore art goes beyond the boundary of the beautiful - at times light, at times ugliness, at times silence, rebellion, play, compassion. Wherever human beings feel the need to give form to experience, art is born. And wherever we pause before that form and see ourselves differently for a moment, aesthetic philosophy opens its question again: 'Was beauty in the object, in the creation, or did it arise within me in the moment of encounter?' Perhaps there is no single answer. Perhaps one beauty of art lies precisely in its refusal to end the question too quickly.

The Road to the Undivided Sky

A tiny spark of a question falls into the darkness of the mind,
 and slowly the whole sky begins to ask for light.
 Where have I come from, toward whom am I going,
 to whose music does the breath between these two move? No book gives all answers at once, and no silence is
 always empty.
 Sometimes a letter is a lamp seen from afar;
 sometimes experience is the earth beneath the feet.
 We live in fragments - intellect in one direction,
 desire in another, fear in a third,
 love in a fourth. The body tells of its fatigue,
 the mind of its wandering, the intellect of its doubt, the heart of its secret call.
 Among all these, some subtle thread waits to string the scattered beads again. Its name may be yoga,
 memory, deep awareness, or perhaps a meeting with oneself within oneself.
 One note alone is not a raga,
 one petal alone is not a flower,
 one wave alone is not the sea. Yet the note has its own form,
 the petal its own colour, the wave its own glitter.
 Wholeness does not erase difference;
 it hears the vibration of one within another.
 Let the hands work, the head think, the heart love,
 and self-awareness keep them from becoming strangers to one another.
 Action without light can become a blind race. Knowledge without compassion can burn like a cold star.
 Devotion without discernment can fill the eyes with smoke. Power that forgets restraint can become a
 storm.
 The winds from four directions move in their own ways beneath the same sky.
 Sometimes a single word begins a journey of years. A sound that enters the ear but does not touch life
 remains only sound. The same word, if it shakes an old knot within, becomes seed.
 A seed does not become a tree by itself;
 it needs soil, water, time and patience.
 Let the guide be a lamp, not a wall. Let the guide say,
 'Look,' but let the eyes remain mine. Let the guide say,
 'Walk,' but let the steps be mine. Let there be light,
 but I must fill the oil in my own inner lamp.
 Faith is not closing the eyes;
 it is steadying them. A question is not disbelief;
 it can be a deeper love of truth.
 Where questions are forbidden,
 light can slowly turn into an idol. Where faith walks with discernment, the path opens from within.
 Power is not a crown placed upon someone's head. Power is the capacity to hold one breath in a moment of
 anger; the voice that speaks truth amid fear; the courage not to choose revenge after humiliation; the
 patience to return day after day to the same discipline.
 Victory over oneself can be deeper than victory over another.
 If great power is truly vast,
 how can it fit into anyone's private purse? A river does not own the sea. A lamp does not own the sun.
 The more vastness a human being touches,
 the lighter the word 'mine' should become.
 Miracle is not the final proof. If I have seen the sky but not my neighbour's suffering, my vision is
 incomplete. If I have found silence but my speech remains harsh, my silence is incomplete. If I have found
 power but not humility, that power is incomplete.
 Discipline must finally descend into conduct:
 clearer eyes, a softer heart, more restrained speech,
 more responsible action.
 From here the inward journey joins the outer world again.
 An individual is not an isolated lamp but one light within a garland of lamps. One person's brightness can
 carry responsibility toward another's darkness.
 If my peace is wholly indifferent to another's pain,
 how whole is that peace? If my liberation belongs only to me,
 the circle of 'I' has not yet broken.
 Liberation may also mean the widening of compassion beyond one's own boundary.
 A mother's lap is the simplest image of such widening. The child does not disappear there; the child becomes
 safe.

Surrender is not annihilation;
 it is the loosening of a rigid ego,
 a slow departure from the illusion that 'everything is me'.
 Mother is not only a relationship but a human memory of shelter without end. Where creation is joined
 with nurturing, power receives compassion.
 Power without compassion is hard iron. Compassion without power is helpless tears. Together they give life a
 deeper heartbeat.
 Time writes upon the body. Child becomes youth,
 youth becomes old. Within one name live so many bodies,
 so many minds, so many aspirations.
 Yet some thread of memory keeps joining us to ourselves.
 A moment of meditation can feel larger than a whole day. A night of suffering can seem endless. An hour of
 joy grows wings and flies away. Clock-time and mind-time are not always the same.
 The present is sometimes a small doorway through which the infinite sky can be glimpsed.
 Death is the sternest reminder of that doorway. One who was beloved becomes silent one day. The house
 remains, the voice does not. The chair remains, the one who sat there does not.
 Before such emptiness,
 grand theories can seem very small.
 Yet meaning can be born again within emptiness. Death increases the value of the moment. Limited time
 makes compassion urgent.
 'I shall say it tomorrow, forgive tomorrow,
 love tomorrow' - that tomorrow does not always arrive.
 Wholeness means listening to life completely in this very breath.
 The body does not stand outside discipline. Hunger,
 sleep, labour, illness, touch,
 breath - these too are lessons of the earth.
 One does not reach the sky by despising the body. A tree does not grow tall by cutting itself away from the
 soil.
 Nor is the mind outside. Its fear, desire,
 old wounds, aspiration - all must be seen.
 Suppression is not purification. Seeing,
 understanding, transforming - this is the slow labour.
 The intellect is not the enemy,
 but neither is it emperor. Feeling is not the enemy of truth,
 but no feeling is final truth merely because it is felt.
 Let each have its rightful seat. Then the inner assembly slowly becomes music.
 Wholeness is not uniformity. Seven colours hide within white light. They do not erase one another to
 become light; they remain together with their differences intact.
 The paths of religion can be like this too. One person's prayer differs from another's silence, one person's
 mantra from another's song. Difference does not require hatred.
 But harmony should not erase distinctions by saying everything is identical. True dialogue listens first and
 speaks afterwards.
 One may say, 'This is my path.' Before saying,
 'Only my path,' look once at the vastness of the sky.
 The deeper knowledge becomes,
 the wider the horizon of ignorance appears. Discipline survives in that humility.
 One who decides that everything is already known may have turned into an idol midway through the
 journey.
 The seeker continues: sometimes light,
 sometimes dryness, sometimes doubt,
 sometimes silence.
 A tree in winter looks dry,
 yet the roots work unseen. Not every day brings joy;
 not every silence is revelation.
 Continuity is greater than miracle. Return each day,
 sit again, see oneself again. Discipline is a long season.
 But discipline is not violence. A method that breaks the body,
 damages the mind or steals discernment may rightly be questioned.
 Spirituality does not stand above human health and dignity.
 Wholeness cannot be made complete by leaving something out:
 body, mind, society, nature,
 history - all are deeply related.
 We breathe because trees exist. We eat because soil exists. We drink because rivers exist.

Nature is not decoration outside us;
 it is the invisible body of our life.
 If unity is truly experienced,
 compassion toward the earth should be its natural shadow.
 When cutting a tree, see more than timber. When polluting a river,
 see more than water. The web of life is invisible,
 but when it tears, everyone is touched.
 Science opens the working of this web. Spiritual vision can ask:
 for whose good is this knowledge? Power has increased - but in what direction? Capacity has grown - how
 much has discernment grown?
 Knowledge without values can become an instrument of destruction. Values without facts can turn good
 intention into illusion. Each needs the other's hand.
 Art gives form to experience,
 science finds laws in events,
 philosophy asks questions of meaning,
 yoga disciplines consciousness. The human being is a shared house for all of them.
 One window is not the whole house. One direction is not the whole sky.
 An integral vision does not break the windows;
 it opens all of them. Lights from distant places can meet in a single room.
 The hardest test of discipline is everyday life. Meditation ends,
 but speech continues. Mantra ends,
 but conduct continues. Worship ends,
 but exchange and transaction continue. The eyes close and then open again - the world is still there.
 If inward peace does not enter outward action,
 the journey is still incomplete.
 Giving water to an old person,
 listening to a grieving friend,
 refusing an unjust advantage,
 standing beside the weak - why should these stand outside discipline?
 Wholeness is not only a special radiance in a special moment. It is the transformation of ordinary life:
 awareness in eating, honesty in work, compassion in relationship, restraint in disagreement.
 Here inward initiation receives its daily body.
 If I keep one face for worship and another for conduct,
 I have built two houses within. Wholeness opens a door between them.
 Try to live what you believe. Have the courage to examine what you live. Have the humility to change what
 proves wrong.
 Perfection is not a title;
 it is a direction. The horizon opens farther as we go farther. The journey therefore does not end; it deepens.
 The human being is not a finished statue but a living poem still being written. Each day is a line. Each
 decision is a new word. Each regret is a revision. Each compassionate act is a point of light.
 The fragments slowly give up their isolation. Intellect speaks with heart, heart with action, action with the
 collective, the collective with nature, and nature returns again into human breath.
 The circle is not closed but alive. Unity is not a fixed stone but an ongoing relation.
 Wholeness may be the awakened awareness of this relation - where 'I' knows its limits and makes room for
 'you'; where power becomes service rather than possession; knowledge becomes light rather than pride; faith
 becomes trust with discernment rather than blindness; silence becomes depth of meaning rather than escape;
 and discipline becomes not leaving the world but touching the world with new vision.
 The journey returns to the questions from which it began:
 Who am I? What are my limits? To whom and to what am I related?
 But now the question is not alone. Around it opens a vast sky of body, mind, compassion, nature, time,
 knowledge, power and surrender.
 Wholeness is not a final answer. It is a way of seeing in which no part mistakes itself for the whole world.
 A wave remembers the sea. A lamp remembers the source of light. A human being remembers an unseen
 relation with all life.
 And perhaps in that moment of remembrance our fragmented days suddenly become separate lines of one
 song - a song without an ending, only a rhythm growing deeper; a sky without an edge, only directions
 opening farther.
 The 'I' in that song no longer means an isolated self but an awakened voice of relationship.
 In that voice discipline becomes life rather than word. The path abandons its insistence upon arrival and
 becomes the light of the journey.
 And in that voice the fragment does not lose its existence;
 it discovers its rightful place beneath the undivided sky.

The Light of Meaning Beyond Sound

A letter leaves the lips, trembles in the air,
 reaches the ear, and in a moment disappears into silence. Another follows, then a third, a fourth - each a
 guest of a separate instant.
 But meaning does not always arrive letter by letter. Suddenly an entire door opens within the mind, like
 lightning revealing the whole courtyard in a single flash.
 Sound moves step by step;
 meaning can appear as one whole scene.
 The first sound has passed when the second comes,
 the second has passed when the third comes. How then does what has gone remain with what is present?
 Memory throws a fine thread backward. What has been heard does not vanish completely; it leaves a faint
 imprint within the mind.
 A new sound touches the earlier imprint,
 and slowly the unity of a word is formed.
 A word is not merely a heap of sounds,
 just as a flower is not only the count of its petals but fragrance,
 colour, form, a wholeness blossoming together.
 In this way letters are separate,
 yet the word is something more than their addition.
 Meaning does not dwell only in the first letter or only in the last. It sees them together in one light.
 A fragment of a pot is not the pot;
 clay alone is not the pot;
 shape alone is not the pot. Together they become a use,
 an identity, a complete form.
 So too a word receives a mental form beyond the moment-by-moment sequence of sound.
 Someone speaks. In that person's mind is a seed of meaning. That seed becomes breath, touches the throat,
 receives form from the tongue, becomes a wave in the air and travels to another ear.
 But meaning is not an object flying through air. Sound is the medium.
 Meaning travels as a bridge from one mind to another.
 The speaker's mind and the listener's mind are not the same. Yet a word opens something shared between
 them.
 This miracle happens every day,
 so ordinarily that we have forgotten to be astonished.
 Say 'water'. The ear receives not merely a few sounds;
 the mind may awaken coolness, river, thirst,
 pot, rain, perhaps the pond of childhood all at once.
 A word carries more than its dictionary. History,
 memory, context, feeling and desire colour it.
 Thus the same word bears one shade in a mother's voice,
 another in a court of law, a third in a poem.
 Language is not stone but a living river. It flows,
 changes colour, touches banks,
 makes new courses.
 Yet amid change some structures preserve recognition;
 otherwise today's word would be entirely unfamiliar tomorrow.
 Memory is tradition's silent grammar.
 We speak because countless people spoke before us. We inherit words, yet each time we place them in a new
 context we give them another birth.
 Language is inheritance and creation together.
 A child says 'mother' for the first time. The word is ancient,
 but that moment is wholly new.
 Here lies the mystery of language:
 an old form becomes the home of a new experience.
 Letters are momentary,
 yet the identity of a word persists beyond the moment. Sound changes with every speaker - heavy, light,
 sharp, soft - and still we recognise the same word.
 Then how can a word be merely a copy of one particular sound?
 Beneath varying pronunciations there is some form that remains a stable sign behind them.
 Like one melody sung by many singers:
 the colour of the voice changes,
 yet the tune is recognised.
 Form arises from sound but is not confined to one instant of sound. The mind recognises a shared pattern
 behind different pronunciations.

Here the light of meaning makes its home beyond sound.
 A sentence is an even deeper mystery. Words arrive one by one. The first leaves an unfinished expectation.
 The second alters possibility. The third turns the direction of meaning. The last can give the first a new sense.
 A sentence is not merely a garland of words. Flowers do not become a garland without the thread; words do
 not become a sentence without relation.
 Which word belongs with which? Who does what? What is the action? What is the time? What is the mood?
 These relations are the invisible grammar of meaning.
 Words do not walk alone carrying private meanings. The moment they enter a sentence they alter one
 another's boundaries.
 In 'blue lotus', blue does not mean the sky;
 it becomes the colour of the lotus. In 'the child runs',
 running is not an abstract movement;
 it becomes the child's movement.
 A sentence gives words their proper places in relation to one another.
 Meaning is also a music of position. A note at the wrong moment can disturb a raga; a word in the wrong
 place can alter the direction of a sentence.
 Grammar is not merely the whip of rules but a secret architecture that balances meaning.
 Bricks are independent, but in the order of door,
 window, roof and stair they become a house. Language is such a house.
 Rules do not exist to imprison life but to make meaning shareable.
 If everyone changed the meaning of every word each day according to private whim, communication would
 break. If meaning never changed at all, language would turn to stone.
 Language moves between stability and change.
 A river flows with its banks. Without banks,
 formless spread; without water,
 a dry line. Grammar is the bank,
 living usage the water.
 A word may have one definition in a dictionary and countless touches in life.
 'Home' - a brick building? Mother's voice? A safe night? A painful memory after exile?
 A word says one thing and awakens many. Yet meaning is not complete chaos; some limits are shared.
 If one person says 'fire' and another understands 'water',
 how could life continue?
 Language is an invisible city of shared agreement. Every speaker is its citizen, receiving rules yet making new
 usages.
 A poet settles an old word in a new neighbourhood. In ordinary speech 'night' is a time; in poetry night can
 become loneliness, fear, love, mystery or rest.
 Yet poetry does not erase the word's original memory. It places new light upon that memory.
 Meaning is clay; usage is the sculptor. New forms arise,
 yet the nature of the clay remains.
 Sound is not the object. When we say 'cow',
 a cow does not enter the ear. Sound is a sign for the object.
 What is the relation between sign and object? Natural? Conventional? Produced by memory? Social?
 Different languages use different sounds for the same object,
 so the bond does not appear innate.
 Long social acceptance becomes the bridge between sound and thing. We learn: this sound leads toward this
 meaning.
 Repetition becomes memory; memory becomes recognition;
 recognition becomes communication.
 Language is the collective practice of countless minds.
 No individual makes a whole language alone,
 yet every individual changes language a little.
 A new usage first sounds strange. A few people adopt it. Generations pass, and it becomes ordinary.
 Language is continually remaking itself.
 Yet the central question remains: when we speak,
 when does the listener receive meaning? At the first letter? The last? From the sum of all letters? Or does the
 whole form suddenly open at once?
 While listening, the mind does not merely count sounds. It anticipates, waits, awakens old memories, forms
 possibilities for the next word.
 As the sentence unfolds,
 the shape of meaning forms within the mind. Sometimes the final word arrives and suddenly clarifies
 everything.
 Like a riddle understood in one flash after ten hints:
 the answer does not shine in ten fragments but as one whole.

What shall we call this wholeness? The name matters less than the experience.
 We all live in it every day: hearing words,
 receiving meaning, without seeing the bridge between.
 The bridge is invisible, the journey real.
 Memory is a principal boat of this journey.
 If the first word did not remain in some form until the last,
 a sentence would fall apart. The instant passes,
 but an impression remains.
 Like a bell that has stopped while its vibration lingers in the ear; like a flower removed while its fragrance
 remains in the room.
 After sound there is a residue that joins the next sound and forms wholeness.
 Listening is not only the work of the ear. The mind brings memory,
 the intellect builds relation,
 context gives direction.
 'He came.' Who is 'he'? Without context the meaning is incomplete.
 Language lives not only in words but in circumstances.
 Movement of the eyes, gesture of the hand,
 rise and fall of voice,
 duration of silence - all participate in meaning.
 Sometimes one silence says more than a whole sentence.
 'All right' can mean agreement, irony,
 anger or despair merely through a change of tone.
 Meaning receives the colour of feeling along with sound.
 Language is not bodiless. Throat, breath,
 face, gesture, time and place are silent co-authors of communication.
 How then can meaning be imprisoned in grammar alone? Grammar gives structure; life gives colour.
 A letter arrives from a distant land. There are only words upon paper, yet the reader sees the signature and
 feels old relationship, waiting and separation all at once.
 Meaning spreads beyond the written line. Yet the line is necessary,
 just as a small lamp can cast light far away.
 A word is small; meaning is expansive.
 Sometimes one word carries an entire age within itself.
 'Freedom' is not merely letters. Struggle,
 sacrifice, aspiration,
 rights and responsibility all stand within its shadow.
 History stores its layers within words.
 Therefore reading an old text is not merely reading words;
 it is a journey into the language, usage,
 habits and beliefs of its time.
 To read an old word only through today's meaning can create confusion.
 Language changes with time. The history of meaning is also the history of thought.
 Words change, vision changes; vision changes,
 the map of society changes.
 New objects ask for new names. New experiences give old words new meanings.
 Language does not merely follow the world;
 it walks with the world,
 sometimes imagining ahead of it.
 A poet may first give a word,
 and society later recognise the experience named by it.
 Naming is one way of making experience visible.
 What has no name may remain hazy in the mind. Once a name arrives we say, 'Yes, this is what was
 happening to me; it can be called this.'
 Language makes maps of experience.
 But a map is not the land. A word is not the object. A definition is not the experience.
 Remembering this difference keeps wars of words from covering the truth of things.
 Many disputes are really disputes over different meanings of the same word. Both sides use one word
 differently and imagine themselves opposed.
 Ask: 'What do you mean by this word?' Sometimes half the quarrel ends there.
 Clarity is an ethics of language.
 Keeping words vague in order to gain advantage is not dialogue.
 In politics, religion, science and philosophy,
 the meaning of words demands responsibility.

'Truth', 'justice', 'religion', 'freedom',
 'nature', 'self' - great words,
 but great words can also raise great clouds of smoke.
 The larger the word,
 the more clearly its context must be stated.
 Language is a house of meaning and can also become a forest of fog.
 Grammar sometimes marks paths through this forest:
 which word joins which, what function a form performs,
 how a suffix changes a shade of meaning.
 A tiny suffix can turn the whole direction of a word. A prefix can add negation, direction, intensity, nearness
 or something else.
 Language is not a simple machine,
 yet its inner principles of formation are exceedingly fine.
 The body of a word is made of parts,
 but meaning is not always merely the sum of the parts. Sometimes the meanings of parts disappear within
 the whole word.
 Sound-similarity does not guarantee similarity of meaning.
 Therefore the identity of a word cannot always be exhausted by breaking it into fragments. Sometimes the
 whole form is primary.
 We do not first add eyes,
 nose and mouth and then recognise a face. Often the whole face is recognised in a flash, and only afterwards
 do we inspect its parts.
 So in language too the whole meaning can flash first and analysis come later.
 A child does not learn speech by first studying a grammar book. The child hears complete sentences, observes
 usage, understands relations, and slowly constructs rules inwardly.
 Living language breathes in usage before it is codified. Scholars afterwards examine the structure of that
 breath.
 Grammar describes life;
 it does not entirely create life.
 Yet description is not useless. It makes the hidden order of language visible.
 Musicology does not create the song,
 but it can reveal the structure of a raga. Music is lived first,
 analysed afterwards.
 Language is spoken first, ordered into rules afterwards;
 yet knowledge of rules can make new creation more subtle.
 Knowledge and usage deepen one another.
 A speaker chooses a word. Why this word,
 not another?
 Feeling, listener, context, purpose,
 social distance - all influence the choice.
 One language with a friend, another in court,
 a third with a child.
 Meaning is not only what was said but to whom,
 when and in what tone.
 Communication is an art of relationship.
 Language is a social body. In solitude,
 the full meaning of words cannot develop.
 Another human being is language's necessary horizon. To speak is to desire to reach someone; to listen is to
 make room within oneself for another mind.
 In this sense language is also an ethical practice.
 Failure to listen is not always a defect of the ear;
 sometimes it is arrogance. We prepare an answer before another person's sentence is complete.
 Then sound reaches the ear, but meaning does not.
 True listening gives a sentence time to open fully. It hears the human being behind the words.
 Sometimes pronunciation is faulty but feeling is clear. Sometimes grammar is perfect but deceit sits inside.
 The truth of language lies not only in correct form but also in intention.
 Yet good intention cannot always rescue unclear speech. There may be love, but if it is not expressed, a
 relationship can suffer. There may be truth, but careless language can wound truth.
 To speak is not only to choose what is true but also to choose the fitting form.
 Words can become medicine or weapon.
 One sentence can give a person courage for years. One insult can leave a wound for years.
 Language is invisible action. Sound lasts a moment;
 its fruit can be long.

Therefore speech carries responsibility.

A spoken word does not return wholly to the mouth. It begins a new life in another mind.

We may intend one meaning and the listener receive another. Communication always contains this distance.

Meaning is not one-way transmission but co-creation.

The speaker gives signs;

the listener completes meaning through memory,
context and intelligence.

Shared language is the bridge between them. Sometimes fog covers the bridge; then questioning, restatement and clarification become necessary.

'What I meant was this' can open a misunderstanding.

Language also has the power to correct its own errors. If said wrongly, say it again. If heard wrongly, ask again.

Communication is not a single attempt but continuous revision.

In this sense language resembles a living democracy:

every voice carries its meaning,
while shared rules hold them together.

Some voices are powerful,

some suppressed. Then the question of language becomes a question of power.

Whose language is called 'standard'? Whose speech is called 'impure'? Whose accent becomes a joke? Whose words enter books?

Language is not only grammar;

it is also a field of dignity.

A dialect can be the soul of a home. To call it small is not merely to belittle sounds but to belittle the memory of an entire community.

A common language may be useful,
but diverse voices are not its enemy.

A forest is not enriched by only one species of tree. Language is a living forest of many forms of speech.

A standard is a convenience for communication,
not a monopoly.

Meaning can find its road through different pronunciations.

Where the mind wishes to understand,
a little difference is no wall. Where the mind is already closed,
dialogue can fail even in the same language.

In the end meaning is a possibility of human meeting.

Sound is its beginning. Letters are its signs. Grammar its arrangement. Memory its thread. Context its direction. Consciousness its light.

A momentary sound enters the ear yet can open an entire world within the mind.

In this wonder, language ceases to be merely an instrument. It becomes the power by which human beings create a shared world.

Words name things, but in naming them they also teach human beings to understand themselves.

We speak, and in speaking recognise our own thoughts. Sometimes only after a sentence is complete do we ourselves discover what was in the mind.

Language is not merely a bridge toward another person but also a road back toward oneself.

In silence a feeling can remain hazy;
in words it receives form. Once formed,
thought can examine itself:

'Is this true?' 'Is it clear?' 'Is it right?'

Language is a mirror of self-examination.

But the mirror is not the face. Words are not the complete equivalent of truth.

Some experiences are larger than words:

the fullness of love, the depth of grief,
the silence of meditation, a moment of beauty.

Language touches them but cannot bind them completely.

Still we speak, because imperfect words can sometimes build a greater bridge than perfect silence.

A poem speaks the unsaid not directly but by indication. There language knows its limit.

Awareness of limits is the humility of language.

The light that shines beyond sound is not only reasoning but feeling too.

Meaning is not merely intellectual recognition. A name can make the heart beat faster. An old song can bring tears.

Sound opens the door of memory. Meaning sometimes happens through the whole body.

The ear hears, but mind,

heart and memory respond together.

Language is embodied experience.
 Therefore the same sentence on paper and in a human voice can affect us differently. Tone is the shadow of meaning. Pause is its breath. Pace is its gait.
 Poetry makes a home of all these subtleties.
 Where a line breaks can itself become meaning. A word standing alone upon a line receives more silence around it.
 Language can also become visual.
 Writing sends sound across time. A throat silent for centuries can become sound again within the mind when its words are read by the eye.
 Script is memory's long boat. Sound is momentary; writing its trace.
 But the written word too is silent without a reader. The eye brings it alive again.
 Reading is silent listening. Letters are still upon paper, but meaning moves within the mind.
 Every reading is a new awakening.
 The same poem can mean one thing at twenty and another at sixty. Has the text changed, or the reader? A new relation with time has arisen between them.
 Meaning is a stable seed in changing soil. In each season the flower's colour may differ a little.
 Yet freedom of interpretation is not arbitrary interpretation. A rose-seed will not grow into a mango tree.
 The text gives limits. Words, structure and context guide the possibilities of meaning.
 The reader participates but is not emperor. The speaker begins meaning but is not its final owner.
 Meaning is a living event between the two.
 Here lies the beauty of language. It is neither wholly private nor wholly external; it is continually born in relationship.
 Sound passes, but meaning can pause for a moment and alter the mind.
 Sometimes one word changes the direction of a life.
 'Yes.' 'No.' 'Forgive me.' 'Stop.' 'Go.' Small words, enormous consequences.
 Language can begin action. Therefore speech is not light matter.
 A promise can bind the future. An order can alter the movement of thousands. A declaration can change a country's history. A poem can shape the sensibility of a generation.
 Sound is momentary; meaning crosses time.
 In this paradox lies the extraordinary power of words: a fleeting medium, a lasting consequence.
 Like a spark flashing for an instant while the forest can burn for a long time.
 Therefore choosing words requires care.
 But remaining silent out of fear is not the answer.
 Language is perhaps the deepest human means of meeting, and it carries risk.
 There will be misunderstanding; still speak. There will be misunderstanding; clarify. There will be difference; listen again.
 Communication is not perfection but effort.
 Meaning is not a finished bridge waiting for us; it is a bridge made while we walk.
 Every honest conversation adds another plank.
 Perhaps one day we understand that the mystery of language does not lie only in language itself but in the human desire for relationship.
 I can create meaning alone, but I cannot create a shared world without another.
 Language is the third space that grows between 'I' and 'you' - neither wholly me nor wholly you, but slowly becoming a shared 'we'.
 Sound is the first knock upon that place. Meaning is the moment the door opens.
 And when the door opens, a momentary letter crosses its own limit and becomes the light of immeasurable memory, experience, thought and relationship.
 Then we understand: a word is not merely spoken; it happens. Sound is not merely heard; it takes form within the mind. Meaning is not merely received; it is shared.

And language is not merely speaking. It is humanity's oldest,
and still unfinished,
journey toward one another.

Light at the Inner Door

How many voices within me are not originally mine - voices of home,
 society, scripture, crowd,
 fear. How many sentences have I heard from birth until I accepted them as my own truths.
 One day silence suddenly asks:
 'What you believe - have you seen it,
 or have you only heard it?'
 With this question an old wall within trembles lightly.
 Truth is not a borrowed lamp that can simply be taken from another hand and placed in one's darkness.
 A lamp becomes one's own only when its wick burns in one's own consciousness.
 Many theories stand at the door in beautiful garments. Many traditions wear crowns of honour. Many books
 bend beneath the weight of belief.
 But the inner eye asks one ordinary question:
 'Where have I encountered this as living reality?'
 Experience is not proof of ego,
 yet how deep are the roots of belief without experience?
 Thirst understood only through someone else's story is not thirst. Water drunk only in definition gives no
 satisfaction.
 When life itself touches us, words receive blood.
 Truth is not the monopoly of any sect. It is not imprisoned inside temple, mosque, vihara or church.
 It can arise between breaths, in laughter,
 in love, in the ruthless silence of a solitary night.
 Any road that leads toward living truth deserves respect.
 But the road is not the destination. The boat is not the river. The map is not the earth. The name is not the
 experience.
 A flower can have ten names,
 but fragrance does not depend upon names.
 Human beings fight over names while fragrance remains quiet.
 Inner revolution does not begin with a slogan.
 It is born in the moment a person sees oneself without excuse:
 one's envy, greed, fear, violence,
 pride - without covering them with another person's fault.
 The mirror is not cruel; it is honest.
 The clearer the face,
 the greater the possibility of change.
 The outer world must change,
 but if inner darkness remains untouched,
 a new order may be filled by the old mind.
 The throne may change while hunger for power remains. The flag may change while ego rises again in the
 same colour. The law may change while the human being remains inwardly enslaved.
 Inner freedom is no paper right. It is the courage to see the chains of fear.
 It is the freedom to ask oneself amid the crowd:
 'Why?' even when everyone says the same thing;
 the discernment to ask 'Where?' even when everyone is moving in one direction.
 This rebellion is not against another person but against unconsciousness.
 Sometimes the greatest revolution is only this much:
 to stop for a moment.
 Listen to the breath. Watch the mind running. Recognise thought as thought and do not immediately seat
 it upon the throne of truth.
 The mind is a continual marketplace. Memory calls out,
 desire bargains, fear shouts,
 hope hangs bright advertisements.
 Amid this crowd, the little shop of silence is often closed.
 Meditation may simply be opening its shutter.
 Buy nothing, sell nothing. Only look.
 Let thoughts come and go. Let feelings rise and settle. Let the mind reveal its own movement.
 Slowly the one who sees begins to recognise a distance from the running.
 Silence is not emptiness. It is the spacious sky behind sound.
 There words lay down their burden.
 For the first time a person meets oneself without an identity card:
 no name, caste, position,
 sect or list of achievements.

Only an awakened presence.

In that presence equality acquires a new meaning.
Human beings are not identical. One voice is sweet,
one hand skilled, one intellect sharp,
one heart vast.

Nature does not create uniformity. In one forest stand banyan,
grass, bamboo, flower and vine - all different,
yet the value of life in none is less.

Equality is not equal shape. It is equal light of dignity.

To pour everyone into one mould is not justice.

Difference is not a crime.

Why should one person's height become another's humiliation? Why should one person's talent become another's servitude?

Equality does not paint all flowers the same colour;
it gives all flowers sunlight in which to bloom.

Bread is necessary. Clothing and shelter are necessary.

To preach only of the soul to a hungry person can become a cruel joke.

But receiving bread does not automatically fill the inner emptiness either.

Outer poverty and inner poverty are two different wounds.

One needs food, opportunity and justice;
the other awareness, love and silence.

Why treat them as enemies?

Remove hunger, but do not reduce the human being to a stomach.

Call it soul, consciousness,

inner sky - whatever name is used,

human depth is greater than economic statistics.

Distribution of wealth demands justice,

but the flower of consciousness cannot be commanded to bloom.

No government can make meditation compulsory. No law can legislate love. No committee can distribute joy equally.

Inner change requires freedom.

Compulsion can alter outward conduct but not the season of the heart.

Therefore freedom is not a luxury;

it is the basic air of inner development.

Silencing a child's first question closes a door within.

If youth receives only orders, only fear,

only imitation, how will a free human being arise?

Education is not merely filling memory;

it is protecting wonder.

Keep questions alive.

Doubt is not the enemy of every truth. Sometimes doubt brushes dust from falsehood.

But if doubt becomes only negation,

it too is a closed door.

Openness is slave neither to yes nor to no.

Look, test, experience, then accept.

And what is accepted today may change tomorrow under new light.

A living intelligence is not the prisoner of its conclusions. It leaves room for new truth.

Often, while proving 'I am right',

a person walks farther from truth.

Ego wants victory; truth wants clarity.

If debate becomes a game of winning,

both sides may lose.

Dialogue is born when listening comes before answering.

Let the other person's sentence finish. Perhaps within it one may find a small mirror of one's own error.

East and West are not two skies. The sun does not inspect passports. Human suffering asks no direction. Love belongs to no geography.

Knowledge has travelled from here to there and there to here. Civilisation has always been a river of exchange.

One who closes the house is deprived of air. One who tears down every wall loses shelter.

Open the windows. Preserve the house.

Let another's light enter,

but do not extinguish one's own lamp.

Imitation is not dialogue. Rejection is not self-respect.

Learning is not slavery if discernment remains one's own.
 Tradition is a tree: roots deep in earth,
 new leaves every spring.
 One who clings only to the roots misses the greenness. One who sees only leaves and forgets the roots may be
 uprooted in the first storm.
 Living tradition is a meeting of memory and renewal.
 Let worship not kill questions. Let criticism not dry up love.
 See inheritance in a mirror, not upon a crown.
 Accept what is bright. Name what is dark.
 Truth does not change in order to preserve the prestige of ancestors.
 Modernity is not the name of new clothing.
 A new mind can live inside old fear. Machines can be modern while relationships remain bound by centuries
 of inertia. Science can move ahead while consciousness remains in an old cave of hatred.
 Such development is a half-built bridge.
 When outward convenience joins inner freedom,
 the human being undertakes the fuller journey.
 Language is a very close companion on that journey.
 In the language the heart hears directly,
 even a difficult truth can enter like something belonging to home.
 If philosophical words become only high walls,
 thought moves away from people.
 A difficult matter does not require difficult language. A deep river can be clear. A simple sentence need not be
 shallow.
 One simple question can shake an entire life:
 'Are you happy?'
 It asks neither position nor wealth nor fame,
 only an unknown temperature within.
 Joy is not merely the common name for pleasure.
 Pleasure often arises from a cause, an object,
 a situation. Joy can sometimes be a causeless quiet radiance - nothing acquired, yet no burden of lack.
 A moment in which the human being is not quarrelling with one's own existence.
 Such a moment cannot be bought. The market sells convenience,
 not joy. Society can give order,
 not inner music.
 The music must be heard inwardly.
 How much discord lives inside: desire says 'more';
 comparison says 'like that person';
 fear says 'hold on'; ego says 'show them';
 and silence quietly says, 'Only look.'
 Seeing can slowly become liberation.
 What has been seen no longer remains the unquestioned master of the unconscious.
 See anger, and a subtle distance arises between anger and 'I'. See greed, and greed is no longer fate. See fear,
 and fear becomes not the whole sky but a passing cloud.
 'Witness-consciousness' may be a term,
 but the experience is simple: see the cloud;
 do not mistake yourself for the cloud. The sky remains beyond it.
 The human mind has many layers.
 Outwardly a civil smile;
 inwardly dissatisfaction. Outwardly moral instruction;
 inwardly suppressed desire.
 Suppression is not character.
 Fire pressed down in darkness makes more smoke.
 Acceptance is not indulgence; it is recognition.
 First see what exists truthfully. Then transformation becomes possible.
 False holiness divides the mind into two - one part displayed,
 the other hidden.
 In this division guilt grows, fear increases,
 hypocrisy becomes a mask.
 True holiness is not a mask. It hides nothing from itself.
 The body is not the enemy. Desire is not sin merely because it is desire.
 The question is whether I am its slave or its aware companion.
 The energy of life can become distorted through suppression. Awareness can change its direction.

Blocking a river with stones is one method,
 but water will break out somewhere. Give it banks,
 give it direction, let it flow to the sea.
 Human energy is such a river.
 Love may be one of its higher forms.
 Love is not possession.
 By saying 'you are mine' again and again,
 one can make another person's sky smaller.
 True love is closeness without cutting wings.
 Two trees can share one another's shade,
 but neither becomes the other's root.
 Freedom is love's hidden breath.
 Where there is fear,
 love slowly dies. Where ownership becomes heavy,
 intimacy can become prison.
 Let love be the meeting of two whole persons,
 not the bargain of two incomplete slaves.
 Solitude is not loneliness.
 Loneliness is the pain of another's absence;
 solitude is the capacity to be complete in one's own company.
 One who cannot sit with oneself - how can that person remain free with another?
 Love born from fear of loneliness can cling. Love born from the fullness of solitude can share.
 Joy does not diminish when shared.
 One lamp lights another without becoming less.
 Here inward wealth differs from outward wealth. Money divides when distributed; love can grow by being
 shared. Knowledge becomes clearer when shared. Compassion deepens. Joy is contagious light.
 If society seeks only outward equality while leaving inner envy untouched, new conflict will arise again.
 Inequality is not only of wealth. Talent,
 temperament, interest,
 strength and sensitivity - nature is full of differences.
 Justice does not erase difference;
 it removes exploitation.
 Let no one's labour become another's servitude. Let no one's talent become another's humiliation. Let no
 one's prosperity build a palace upon another's hunger.
 But making walls of exactly the same height for everyone can also destroy the living forest.
 Equality is equal right to soil,
 not identical colour of flowers.
 Spiritual equality may lie in a deeper awareness:
 within everyone is a doorway to the same unknown mystery.
 No one's inner sky is smaller. No one's self-worth is lower on the scale of the market.
 King, worker, scholar,
 unlettered - in silence everyone's breath comes and goes from the same unknown source.
 This awareness does not mean accepting social injustice. On the contrary, one who sees inward dignity in
 everyone - how can that person tolerate outward humiliation?
 Inner equality can become a deep root of outward justice.
 But roots do not write policy. Social arrangements still need reason, facts, experience and institutions.
 Meditation cannot replace economics. Economics cannot replace meditation.
 One concerns outward arrangement,
 the other inward life.
 The human being lives in both worlds at once.
 The problem begins when one tries to seize complete authority over the other.
 Use outward means for outward questions,
 inward means for inward questions. Yet the two must remain in dialogue.
 A hungry mind may find meditation difficult. A disturbed mind can suffer even amid prosperity.
 A full life makes room for both bread and silence.
 Politics loses the soul when it sees human beings only as numbers. Spirituality loses the earth when it refuses
 to see social wounds.
 We need both sky and soil: feet upon earth,
 eyes in the open sky.
 Values are not merely declarations upon paper.
 Truth, freedom, love, compassion,
 joy - they become values when lived.

Say 'truth' and live falsely - the word is empty. Say 'love' and possess - the word is wounded. Say 'freedom' and suppress another voice - the word is humiliated.
 Value shines more through conduct than speech.
 To become outside what one is within is difficult. Authenticity lives in that difficulty.
 Fewer masks, more face. Less performance, more life.
 To keep changing oneself only to please others slowly becomes self-forgetting.
 But saying 'this is simply how I am' and becoming rigid is not freedom either.
 Authenticity means seeing one's present truth and keeping the door open to becoming better.
 Acceptance is not the final halt; it is the proper beginning.
 Inner change may be gradual, sometimes sudden.
 A vessel fills drop by drop and at the final moment crosses the rim.
 Long questioning, long dissatisfaction, long searching can one day meet in one simple recognition: 'What I was seeking is not outside.'
 If that recognition is real, the outside world does not disappear. On the contrary, it becomes visible clearly for the first time.
 A flower is a flower, a human being a human being, love love. The veil of projection becomes lighter.
 The world is not something to abandon but something to see while awake.
 If renunciation is opposition to life, it is incomplete. If letting go is fear, it is incomplete. If liberation means running from the world, the question remains.
 Perhaps liberation is to remain within the world without inward bondage.
 The lotus is in water, but water does not remain upon its petal.
 Walk through the market, but do not let the market own the heart. Remain in relationship, but let ownership not rule the soul. Earn wealth, but do not let wealth determine value. Receive honour, but do not make honour the sole foundation of identity.
 Detachment within life is not escape; it is inward freedom.
 Laugh. Dance. Sing.
 Seriousness is not truth's compulsory clothing.
 Sometimes laughter is the sharpest medicine for ego. One who can laugh at oneself worships one's own image less.
 If religion means only a sad face, half of life's colour is lost.
 Joy is not impure. Celebration does not oppose discipline.
 Why does a flower bloom? No command. Why does a bird sing? No reward.
 Life carries within itself an impulse toward celebration. Why should human beings cover it with guilt?
 Awake joy is not the frenzy of indulgence. It is full presence in the moment.
 Eat, but do not become a slave of the tongue. Love, but do not possess. Dance, but do not forget yourself.
 Where joy has awareness, there is depth. Where there is unconscious running, there is exhaustion.
 Life is a vast dance of opposites: day and night, birth and death, love and separation, silence and word, body and consciousness.
 One side cannot erase the other completely.
 What is dawn without night? The value of the moment without death? Music without silence? Nearness without distance?
 Opposition is not always unity's enemy; sometimes it is its rhythm.
 The mind chooses one side and fights the other. A deeper vision gives both room inside a larger circle.
 This acceptance is not moral indifference. It does not mean good and bad become indistinguishable.

But life's fundamental tensions can sometimes be complementary,
like the two opposing forces of a bow giving direction to the arrow.

Tension can also create.

The problem is not tension itself but unconsciousness.

In the end we can write many thoughts and construct many arguments. Yet a moment may come when the
mind grows tired of words and sits quietly.

In that quiet no doctrine wins, no path loses.

Only breath comes and goes.

The sky says nothing,

yet is complete. A tree declares no philosophy,

yet root and leaf belong to one life. A river asks no certificate and flows toward the sea.

Perhaps here the deepest philosophy within the human being leaves words and becomes life.

A truth not lived remains thought. A truth that enters the blood and changes vision becomes awakening.

Awakening is not memorising another person's name.

It is seeing oneself clearly. Seeing the world without fear. Living love without possession. Preserving freedom
without arrogance. Accepting difference without humiliation. Understanding equality without uniformity.

It is sharing bread without forgetting the soul,

and seeking the soul without forgetting hunger.

Laughter and silence, body and consciousness,

earth and sky - seeing them as different lights of one life.

Then perhaps the inner door opens slowly.

No new world appears outside at once. But the one who sees becomes new.

And before that new vision,

the old world itself appears for the first time alive,

immeasurable and free.

A New Dawn in the Courtyard of Humanity

Dawn rises first not in the sky but within the human being.

When one mind asks itself,

'Why should my happiness rest upon another's suffering?' - when one hand, breaking bread, notices another empty hand - there the new day of society begins.

Society is not merely the name of a crowd. A thousand bodies may stand in one field and still remain far from one another. Society is the living weave of relationships: one thread parents, another children, another friend, neighbour, labour, trust, responsibility. When one thread breaks, the whole cloth grows a little weaker.

A human being is not a solitary lamp. We find our light among many lamps. The language we speak came from others. The grain we eat was grown by someone else's hands. The road we walk holds someone's sweat mixed into its earth.

We have never been as alone as we sometimes imagine ourselves to be. Society is the memory of this invisible debt.

Yet debt is not slavery,

and relationship is not a fetter. If society swallows the individual's voice, it becomes not a home but a prison. If the individual sees only private happiness, that person is not free but an isolated island. Between the two a bridge is needed - dignity and responsibility.

The home is society's first school. A child learns first not from books but from watching: how bread is shared, how elders are addressed, whether women's labour receives respect, whether the person who works is called by name or only commanded. Home is the first stage of ethics; there the teacher is daily conduct, not a lecture.

Living jointly under one roof is not in itself community. Community is the habit of carrying a shared burden: one person's illness becoming everyone's concern, one person's examination everyone's hope, one person's grief everyone's silence.

But shared life must not suffocate individual breath. Let the family be a courtyard of love, not a court of fear.

Why should son and daughter be weighed on different scales? Why should labour inside the home remain invisible? Why should decision-making become the private empire of age or gender? Respect is not a one-way command. Respect is a river flowing in both directions.

One of society's oldest walls stands in the name of birth. No child is born high or low; a child arrives only as a new breath. Earth does not ask the caste of the feet it supports. Rain does not read the name upon a roof before falling. The sun does not give more or less light after examining lineage. Why, then, did human beings build the wall of birth so high?

The labour of hands does not diminish anyone's dignity. Knowledge in the head does not enlarge anyone's humanity unless the heart is awake. When birth closes the door of opportunity, that is injustice.

Temple steps, the water of a well,
the classroom of a school,

a row at a meal - wherever human touch has been treated as a crime,

how deeply has the name of religion been wounded. No one is untouchable by birth. If anything is untouchable, let it be cruelty, injustice, hatred and exploitation.

Equality is not uniformity. Not every tree in a forest has the same height; still the earth gives room for every root. One tree has broad leaves, another a small flower, another sweet fruit, another dense shade. Difference is one ornament of life. Unequal dignity is injustice. Equality does not dress everyone in one garment; it gives everyone an open sky.

Let no one's talent become another's humiliation. Let no one's wealth become another's hunger. Let no one's power become another's silence. Human worth is greater than the market price.

A labourer's tired palm and a scholar's ink-stained fingers are different forms of human work. Bread reaches every table after travelling through countless unseen hands: the farmer converses with soil; the weaver with thread; the craftsperson with wood, metal and stone; the teacher with the future; the worker joins the bones of the city. Society is the shared body of all this labour.

Wealth is not itself a fault;

blind accumulation is the question. The more one receives,

the more one wants,

until hunger belongs no longer to the stomach but to the ego. Simplicity is not poverty. Simplicity is knowing the difference between need and craving.

Let wealth remain in the hand,

not in the heart. Prosperity that enlarges shared well-being is a social strength. Poverty is not holiness.

Hunger is not spiritual discipline.

Society's task is to give human beings the opportunity to unfold their capacities. Education, health, employment and security are not charity but foundations of a dignified life. Yet help should take the hand and help a person stand, not keep that person bent forever.

Self-reliance is not isolation;

it is trust in one's own labour. Cooperation is not begging;

it is society's shared strength. One drop is small,
yet a river can cut through mountains.

When society forgets cooperation,
it becomes a merciless field of competition - everyone trying to get ahead of another, without asking where
the race is going. The race is not the destination. Sometimes the greatest victory of humanity is to take the
hand of one who has fallen behind.

Morality is not fear of the law. Character is born when no police officer is watching and still one does not
steal; when no one praises and still one stands by truth; when profit is possible and still one refuses injustice.
Character is invisible wealth. It has no bank account,
yet every social institution stands upon it. Rules on paper can multiply endlessly. If a person is dishonest
within, new ways around rules will be found. If inward awareness is alive, life can remain orderly with fewer
rules.

Corruption is not merely the secret exchange of currency notes. It is theft of trust. When an official sells
duty, not only money changes hands; public trust shrinks. When a trader gives short measure, the ethical
ground of exchange is cut away. When a teacher practises partiality, injustice is taught to the future.

Corruption begins in the mind as a small compromise:

'What difference will this little thing make?' One day that small sentence can become a great darkness.

Communal hatred is another fire. If the language of prayer differs,
why should hearts become enemies? Bell, azaan,
bhajan, kirtan, silence - the sky hears all sounds within the same vastness.

Faith that awakens compassion within is sacred. Faith that rains hatred outward must be questioned. Let
religion raise the human being, not the wall. Let disagreement remain disagreement without breaking
human relationship. Let dispute become dialogue, not weapon.

Culture is not a crown but a root. The root takes strength from soil while leaves open toward the sky. Read
your tradition with love, but see its darkness too. Preserve what gives life. Change what diminishes the
human being. Age is not proof of truth; novelty is not proof of superiority. The touchstones are human
welfare, dignity, justice and truth.

Modernity is not merely the speed of machines. If phones are fast while the mind remains caught in old nets
of prejudice, modernity is incomplete. If cities rise higher while women are less safe, development is
incomplete. If production grows while rivers die, prosperity is incomplete. If education expands while
character shrinks, knowledge is incomplete.

Development is the whole expansion of the human being:

body healthy, mind awake, intellect discerning,
heart compassionate, society just,
nature protected.

Woman is half the sky of society. How can a full dawn arrive while half the sky remains shut? Education,
decision-making, property, security, respect - these are not favours but human rights. Worship is no
substitute for equality. Before offering flowers, give dignity in daily conduct.

A child is not an empty vessel of the future;

a child is a complete human being today. The child's question is not small. Education should awaken
sleeping powers, not merely fill examination papers. Let the teacher be not a guard of fear but a gardener of
curiosity. Discipline is not humiliation; it is the slow practice of self-regulation.

Youth are not merely society's problem;

they are energy. Without direction,

energy wanders. Without trust,

it becomes despair. Without opportunity, anger. Young people need living examples - people whose lives
match their words.

Politics is not separate from social character. Leaders do not descend from the sky; they mirror the society
from which they arise. Democracy is not voting on one day. It is daily citizenship: asking questions,
knowing facts, listening to disagreement, guarding public money as carefully as one's own.

Words can become weapons very easily. A rumour moves like fire. Truth walks slowly; falsehood runs. The
alert citizen asks first: 'Where did this come from?' 'What is the evidence?' Spreading falsehood is not merely
an informational error; it can become social violence. A rumour can burn a house and divide a community.
Speech carries responsibility. Silence too can sometimes carry responsibility. When injustice is before the
eyes, silence is not neutral. Courage is not a sword. Sometimes courage is one clear sentence at the right
moment: 'This is wrong.'

But seeing another's fault is easy;

seeing the same seed within oneself is hard. Social reform is not only cleaning outside. Without self-reform,
new institutions can catch old diseases. Yet do not free institutions from responsibility by saying, 'Change
yourself first.' Both directions must be worked at together: inward character and outward justice; inward
compassion and equal opportunity outside; inward restraint and rules that prevent exploitation outside. One
wing cannot make a flight.

Spirituality that flees society is incomplete. Social reform that never examines greed, ego and hatred within is incomplete. Spirituality is not a supernatural display; it is the awakening of values within the human being: truth, love, compassion, restraint, service.

Where prayer becomes service in the hands,

religion is alive. Where meditation becomes a pause in the instant of anger, discipline is alive. Where knowledge reduces arrogance, learning is alive.

An ideal society will not be built by drawing a straight line on paper. Human beings are complex: desire, fear, love, selfishness and sacrifice live in the same heart. Change is gradual, patient and many-sided - law, education, economy, family, culture, character, each connected with the others.

Yet one small right action is not wasted. A child raised without discrimination - one seed. A trader remaining honest - one seed. A family giving equal opportunity to a daughter - one seed. A village breaking caste rows and sharing a meal - one seed. A young person refusing to spread an unchecked rumour - one seed. Society is a long forest of such seeds. Revolution is not always a flame. Sometimes it is the slow greening of a thousand small right actions.

'Nothing will change' is injustice's easiest protection. History is filled with change. Walls that seemed eternal broke; customs that seemed immovable changed. Change is possible. But mere change is not progress. If one injustice is replaced by another, revolution remains incomplete.

The final question returns to the human being:

technology grew - but compassion? wealth grew - but justice? education grew - but discernment? power grew - but service? freedom grew - but responsibility?

Peace is not merely the absence of war. Fear in the home,

humiliation in the street, injustice in the office,

hatred in the mind - even if guns are silent,

where is peace? Peace is the shadow of justice.

Non-violence is not merely refraining from killing. Humiliation is violence. Exploitation is violence.

Keeping people hungry is violence. False propaganda is violence. Taking opportunity away in the name of birth is violence. Non-violence is the wider discipline of life.

The health of society is not only buildings,

roads and industries. It is trust, dignity,

security and participation. Can a woman walk at night without fear? Can a child ask questions? Can a

woman make decisions? Can a poor person reach justice? Can a dissenter speak without fear? Such questions measure society's inner health.

Civilisation gives convenience. Culture gives discernment in using it. Society is relationship. Spirituality is the deep awareness of unity within relationship. A full life is the discipline of balance.

Every age brings new questions,

yet the fundamental ones remain:

How shall human beings live with one another? How shall we remain free and still build shared life? How

shall we remain different and preserve respect? How shall we earn wealth without becoming slaves of greed?

How shall we hold power and remember service? How shall we keep faith without producing hatred? How

shall we advance and still preserve the earth?

One direction can remain clear:

human dignity. Move toward what enlarges dignity. Be wary of whatever turns the human being into an object, whatever rests order upon fear, whatever builds unity upon hatred, whatever builds development upon greed.

Let love of society be such that pride is not blind,

criticism is not hatred,

and new construction is humble.

In the end society's fundamental substance is the human being;

the human being's fundamental power is consciousness;

consciousness is tested by value;

value receives a body in action; action bears fruit in relationship; relationship breathes through trust; trust grows in the soil of truth; truth receives warmth from compassion. Truth without compassion is harsh.

Compassion without truth is blind. Together they become humanity.

From this humanity dawn descends not only in the sky but into the courtyard: one home a little more just, one village a little less discriminatory, one city a little more honest, one country a little more tolerant, one earth a little safer.

Dawn does not become complete at once. First a fine line,

then the sky lightens, then a bird calls,

then the doors of homes open. Society's dawn is like this:

one mind changes, then one relationship, then one family, then one institution, then one generation.

Humanity is not anyone's one-day victory. It is a value that must be chosen again each day.

Choose again today: truth over hatred,

cooperation over envy, justice over privilege,

dignity over humiliation, service over lust for power,

simplicity over blind consumption, dialogue over violence, compassion over indifference - and the human being before every idea, every institution, every profit.

Then dawn in the courtyard will be more than light. It will be a new social breath in which each person can say: I am not alone, yet I am not erased. I am different, yet I am not lesser. I am free, yet not without responsibility. I belong to myself, yet I am not a stranger to another's suffering.

Between these four sentences a new society will slowly build its home.

Where One Human Being Is Another's Light

A house is made not only of walls but of voices:

a child's laughter in one room,

an elder's cough in another courtyard,

the warmth of tired hands beside a hearth. Between them the house receives its meaning.

Society too is such a house. Here each human being is not a separate room but a window opening toward another.

My breath is not mine alone;

it shares silently with trees. My food is not only my labour but the cooperation of countless unseen hands. My language is not merely my throat but a river flowing through generations. My life is not a solitary story but one line written among innumerable lives.

Why, then, should a human being act so utterly alone? Why build walls around private happiness? Why imagine another person's suffering to be outside one's own house?

One day someone's tears become wind and reach our door. One day someone's hunger meets our feet in the dust of the road. One day someone's humiliation becomes history and stands before our children. Society is also the name of this return.

What we give becomes, after circling through the world,

the world in which we ourselves must live. Give hatred,

and the air grows heavy. Give trust,

and roads open. Give fear, and doors close. Give respect, and eyes rise.

Human beings make one another's future.

Still many old walls stand in the middle of the courtyard - in the names of birth, caste, wealth, gender, occupation, language, belief. Some walls are so old that people have mistaken them for nature.

But does the sun ask anyone's lineage? Does rain ask anyone's row? Is earth made impure by anyone's touch? One earth supports all feet. One air fills all lungs. One water flows as blood in all bodies. Why, then, should human beings fear one another's shadow?

No human being is untouchable. If anything deserves that word, let it be injustice, hatred, cruelty and pride.

When distance between human beings itself becomes religion,

how dark must religion's eyes have become? How can purity mean shutting another person outside? Purity may instead be the water of the heart that washes away the dust of division.

A child is born. No caste is written upon the palm. The cry does not ask which language it should use. It is simply life. Society later places so many heavy crowns of identity upon that head.

Let identity be memory, not a fetter. Let community be shelter,

not a fortress. Let tradition be root,

not chain. Let family be shade, not darkness.

Home is the first school of humanity. A child learns less from instruction than from scenes: how much room for a daughter? how much freedom for a son? whose work is the work of the home? whose voice decides? whose plate receives bread first? when a guest arrives, a smile; when a worker arrives, only command?

Children remember all this.

The daily conduct of the household writes the future society within them. If home teaches equality, fewer feet will walk in discrimination upon the street. If home teaches respect, fewer humiliating words will be spoken in offices. If home listens to questions, the state will fear questions less.

Shared life is not only one roof. It is a rhythm of shared burden:

one person ill - everyone's concern;

one unemployed - everyone's courage;

one elder - everyone's memory; one child - everyone's future.

Yet shared life must not take away anyone's personal sky. Love is not ownership. Support is not control. In a family where commands always descend from one direction, how will dialogue ever rise?

Respect is not a coin tossed downward from above. It is a river flowing both ways. The elder's experience gives shade; the young person's question gives air. Without shade there is exhaustion; without air there is suffocation. Let the home make room for both.

Society must not suppress talent,

and talent must not diminish another's dignity. A tree may touch the sky without making grass less real.

One flower may be more fragrant without making leaves useless. Nature is beautiful through difference.

Equality does not erase difference.

Equality is equal dignity, equal opportunity,

equal sunlight, equal water. All flowers need not be one colour. But why should any flower be locked in darkness from birth?

Let education be sunlight, health be water,

employment be soil,

safety be a bank that holds the river. Then each life can sprout according to the possibility within its seed.

Poverty is not holy. Hunger is not discipline. Bare feet are no proof of moral height. Illness is no religious seal of destiny. If deprivation arises from an unjust social order, preaching patience to the deprived is cruelty. First food. Medicine. Education. Work. Then speak of the mind's wider sky. Yet food does not automatically grow contentment. Wealth does not guarantee joy. A palace can hide loneliness but not erase it. Society's outward prosperity and inward emptiness are different questions; each needs its own treatment.

On one side, just distribution; on the other, limits upon greed. On one side, opportunity; on the other, restraint. On one side, production; on the other, humanity.

Wealth is a means, not a throne. The market is a servant, not a master. Things may make life easier but must not decide life's meaning.

Greed is a thirst that grows while drinking:

one house gained, another desired;

one position gained, a higher one;

one praise received, more noise sought. In the end a person can collect everything and lose oneself.

Simplicity is not deprivation. It is awareness of what is enough, a conscious distance between what is needed and what is endlessly desired. A rich heart can live among few things; a poor mind can live among many.

True poverty may sometimes lie not outside the treasury but within it. Yet do not use this sentence to hide social poverty. To tell a hungry person, 'Make your soul rich', is not bread. Both inner and outer truths must be held together.

The health of society depends upon both. Labour is one of its central heartbeats.

A farmer's palm reads soil. A craftsperson knows the grain of wood. A weaver knows the patience of thread. A labourer joins the city's bones. A teacher sows letters into the future. A nurse gives up sleep for another's life.

A sanitation worker keeps the city's breath clean.

Labour is not merely wages;

it is civilisation's invisible foundation. Why then is the labourer placed behind in the line of respect? Why should the hands that built society's house remain outside its door?

To honour labour is not to praise it in speeches but to give fair wages, safety, rest and respect. Let the ethics at the dining plate not differ from the ethics proclaimed on the stage.

Honesty is society's quiet capital. Its bank is trust.

One small lie is a small crack. One bribe a small hole. One deception a faint tremor. Crack joined to crack, one day the whole bridge grows weak.

Corruption is not only a bundle of notes. It is the price tag placed upon duty. When justice, office, education and service are sold, how many pieces of its soul does society sell?

When an official asks a secret price for rightful work,

one person is not merely robbed;

public trust is reduced. When a teacher shows partiality,

a child's self-respect is wounded. When a trader shortens the measure, the ethics of the market shrink.

A citizen who says, 'Everyone does it',

offers darkness its easiest pardon. But light never counts how many stand with it. One lamp remains a lamp even when alone. Honesty may stand alone, yet its light can become direction for others.

Morality is not fear of law:

do what is right even when no one sees;

keep a promise even when no one praises;

refuse injustice even when profit lies before you; hear the small voice of discernment even when the crowd moves elsewhere.

Character is formed in these invisible moments. Great speeches come afterwards; first come small decisions.

How separate can public life be from private character? One who practises lying at home will not become truthful merely by receiving office. One who sells principle for small gain - why will that person stop at a greater opportunity?

Leadership is not a title written in gold. Leadership is the extension of character. Power used as service creates public trust; power used for self-interest creates public fear.

An ideal is not a speech on a high platform. It is an example visible in daily life.

Young people learn less from words than from lives. They see:

the one who speaks of morality - how moral is that life? the one who speaks of service - how much comfort does that person relinquish? the one who speaks of equality - how equal is that home? the one who speaks of truth - how long does that truth survive before profit?

The eyes of youth are sharp. Hypocrisy is quickly seen. An ideal inspires only when it is alive; otherwise it becomes a joke.

Youth are not the problem. They are unshaped energy. With trust, direction, opportunity and room to create,

that energy can become a forest. With unemployment, humiliation, confusion, empty time and propaganda of hatred, the same energy can become fire. What tools will society place in the hands of youth? A book? Skill? Work? Song? Sport? Service? Or only a flag of anger? The future depends upon this choice.

Education is not a factory of examination papers. It is the long process of becoming human: let questioning awaken, reasoning mature, the heart become sensitive, the hands skilled, the body healthy, citizenship responsible.

If education is only a ticket to employment, the human being has been only half educated. Where knowledge touches character, it becomes learning. Where knowledge merely enlarges pride, it remains information.

A child's question is not insolence. 'Why?' is one of civilisation's oldest stairs. A school that fears questions fears the future.

Discipline is not the killing of questions. Discipline is the art of governing oneself. Fear can silence a child but cannot awaken one. Humiliation can produce obedience but not responsibility. Where respect and freedom live with limits, self-discipline is born.

The spirituality of society opens slowly from here. Spirituality is no miracle in the sky; it is a subtle light in conduct.

Anger arose, but no violence. Profit was possible, but no deceit. Humiliation came, but no hatred. Power arrived, but no arrogance. Such inward discipline changes outward society.

Prayer is incomplete if it does not become compassion. Meditation is incomplete if it does not create awareness in daily life. Knowledge is incomplete if it does not teach us to see another's suffering. Religion is incomplete if it builds higher walls between human beings.

Spirituality should not teach flight from society. It should teach us to become more human within society. Inner peace is not an excuse for silence before outward injustice.

Where there is hunger, give food. Where there is illness, medicine. Where there is ignorance, education. Where there is fear,

courage. Where there is discrimination, equality. Let service be worship brought down to earth; let action become the hand of prayer; let faith become the daily language of compassion.

Then society itself can become a vast place of worship beyond temple walls.

But hatred in the name of religion? If the language of prayer differs, why should the heart become an enemy? One home rings a bell, another carries the azaan, somewhere bhajan, somewhere silence. The sky gathers all sounds. Why cannot the human being?

Let belief be a lamp within, not a fire for burning another's home. Disagreement is possible; hatred is not inevitable. Two roads may differ while travellers still give one another water.

Tolerance does not mean, 'What do I care?' It is the dignified acceptance of another's existence: 'You are different, yet your place beneath this sky is complete.' Within this sentence lies a seed of peace.

The nation is the wider house of this peace. Love of one's house does not give the right to burn a neighbour's. Self-respect is not hatred. Culture is not a crown; it is a root.

The root draws strength from earth while leaves open toward a new sun. Tradition is root; novelty is leaf. Without either the tree is incomplete. One who clings only to the old and rejects every new season will dry. One who sees only new leaves and cuts the root will fall in the first storm.

Living culture is the confluence of memory and change. Read the past with love, but name its faults. Pride is not diminished by criticism; truth is pride's strongest foundation.

Preserve what is beautiful. Change what is unjust. Do not call what is dead sacred and force it upon the living.

Modernity is not merely new machinery. If communication becomes faster while the mind remains inside an old cave of prejudice, modernity is incomplete. If buildings rise while human dignity sinks, development is incomplete. If industry grows while the river dies, prosperity is incomplete. If knowledge grows while compassion shrinks, civilisation is incomplete.

Development is a whole word: body, mind, intellect, heart, society, nature - the health of all together.

Nature is not outside society. Air enters us as breath. Water enters us as blood. Soil becomes grain and body. Trees are distant companions of the lungs. Rivers are ancient veins of civilisation.

To treat nature merely as a resource is like treating one's own organs as market goods. Cut forests, but count the breath. Dam rivers, but understand the current of life. Build industry, but look also at the future of smoke. Let today's profit not steal tomorrow's child's air.

Responsibility extends beyond the present into future generations. How complete can society's spirituality be without compassion for the earth?

Before cutting a tree,
remember for one moment its shade. Before polluting a river,
remember the pots filled at its ghats through generations. Nature is not private property; it is life's shared inheritance.

Woman is not only half of society but half of society's experience. Why is her labour invisible? Why must her decisions depend upon another's permission? Why should her 'safety' become imprisonment?

Dignity is not favour but right. Do not call woman a goddess and take away a human being's freedom.

Worship is no substitute for equality. Before offering flowers, change conduct at home.

Men too carry a cage of prescribed hardness:

'Do not cry.' 'Do not be weak.' 'Always be hard.' Why? Tears are human water. Tenderness belongs to no single gender. A full human being laughs, cries, fears, shows courage and loves.

Society's ready-made moulds shrink the whole shape of the person.

A child is a human being today,

not merely tomorrow's citizen. The child's laughter matters today. Fear is real today. Questions are necessary today. Childhood is not the waiting room of the future but one full season of life.

Youth is another season,

old age a third. Every season has its colour. The elder may move slowly but carry sharp memory, a living book of history. Yet respect does not grant unlimited power over the young person's life.

Again: love and freedom;

support and autonomy. Every age has its dignity.

A disabled body is not an incomplete human being. If road,

school and office are designed for only one kind of body,

the defect lies not in the body but in the arrangement. Inclusion is not charity but justice.

Let roads be such that every foot, every wheel,

every pace receives respect. Society grows more human where it makes room for difference.

Mental suffering is not shame. The mind can become ill just as the body can. Listening is the first step of medicine. To laugh and call someone 'mad' deepens darkness. Words there too are moral acts. One respectful form of address can restore a person's place in society.

Society should not throw people away in weak moments,

because all of us become weak at some time:

illness, grief, unemployment, old age,

failure. Life changes roles. Today we give support; tomorrow we may need it. This memory lightens pride.

Social security is a shared umbrella. But let the umbrella not become the sky. Support should restore freedom, not make dependency a permanent fate.

Politics is not a distant stage. It is the extension of our daily choices. Leaders grow from the same soil in which citizens plant values. If voters choose through fear, caste, greed and hatred, the same seeds will flower in power.

Democracy is not a vote on one day but daily responsibility:

know facts, ask questions, guard public money as one's own,

listen to disagreement. Criticism is not enmity. Dissent is not treason.

A society that fears questions hides its weakness. A society that hears questions opens the door of reform. Yet opposition should not become delight in destruction. Breaking is easy; building is difficult. Criticism should come with fact, reason and alternative - not only fire, but bricks.

Language reveals a society's temperature. How do we speak to those who disagree with us? to the poor? the labourer? women? children? elders? service workers? Speech is the most immediate examination of dignity.

One insult can remain a wound for years;

one respectful sentence can remain courage for years. Words are not light.

Rumour is fire. Truth walks slowly;

falsehood rides a fast horse. The alert citizen asks:

'Where did this come from?' 'What is the evidence?' 'Who benefits?' Verification is not only the journalist's work; it is an ethical practice of modern citizenship.

One false report can divide communities. One rumour can burn a home. Then even the small button used to share a message can become a moral decision. Technology is new; responsibility toward truth is ancient.

Social reform is not merely a list of other people's faults. Turn the mirror toward oneself as well. Shall we give bribes and ask for a corruption-free country? Practise discrimination at home and ask for an equal society?

Insult labour and ask for prosperity? Spread rumours and ask for peace?

Change begins with oneself but must not end there. Do not free unjust institutions by saying, 'Change yourself first.' Inward character and outward justice; inward compassion and equal opportunity; inward restraint and outward rules against exploitation - two wings of one flight.

Self-reform alone will not change structure. Structural change alone will not purify greed. Both must move together.

Society's complex illnesses do not require one pill. Poverty has economic causes, educational causes, health causes, historical causes. Violence grows from fear, humiliation, hatred, propaganda, power, inequality.

Corruption grows from greed, weak systems and social acceptance.

Problems are many-layered;
 solutions require patience. Slogans move quickly;
 complexity is understood slowly. A physician cannot understand an illness from temperature alone. Society cannot be understood from one statistic.
 Production increased - but distribution? Schools increased - but education? Hospitals increased - but access? Roads increased - but safety for people on foot? Cities grew - but what of air? Development must find faces behind numbers.
 Every percentage can mean the lives of millions of families. Look not only at policy on paper but at its feet upon the ground. Who benefited? Who lost? Whose voice was not heard? Whose home was treated as empty space upon a map?
 Justice begins with listening.
 A village has its own intelligence. Local experience can often see what a distant office cannot. Let knowledge from above meet experience from below. Let command not be one-way; let dialogue move in both directions. Let people participate in decisions about their own lives. That is dignity.
 But locality must not become a narrow wall. Village joins district, district joins nation, nation joins world. The small circle is part of the larger. Family is part of society, society of humanity, humanity of Earth's living web.
 The world is no longer distant. Disease does not see borders. Pollution asks no passport. The smoke of war darkens a distant sky. One country's economy touches another's bread. Humanity shares one boat; a hole in one corner affects all.
 World-brotherhood is not merely a sweet poem but a practical understanding required for survival.
 Yet distant humanity is often easy;
 the neighbour is difficult. Discrimination in the courtyard and world-love from a platform - reduce this distance first.
 Let the circle of compassion widen slowly:
 self to family, family to neighbourhood,
 neighbourhood to society, society to nation,
 nation to humanity, humanity to all life.
 Wholeness may mean this widening - making more room for another without erasing oneself.
 Service is born here. Service is not looking downward from above. Today I am able; tomorrow I may need support. Life changes roles. Mutual help is a human cycle.
 Sometimes service is a seat on a bus,
 paperwork for an elder, a child's school fee,
 medicine for a sick neighbour,
 sharing the work of a tired colleague. Small services warm society's blood.
 Greatness does not always require a place in history books. Many great acts never become news: a mother's night without sleep, a father's silent sacrifice, a worker's honest labour, a teacher's extra hour, a neighbour's selfless help. Society stands upon such anonymous actions. History remembers names; life moves on the shoulders of the unnamed.
 Gratitude is one of society's forgotten languages. How much of what we have comes through others? Remember for a moment. A grateful mind carries less arrogance; less arrogance makes more cooperation. Society's spirituality may live partly in this ordinary gratitude.
 An ideal society is not a painted heaven. It is a direction of continual repair: where mistakes can be admitted, questions heard, injustice named, the harmed given voice, the wrongdoer made responsible, the door to reform kept open.
 Justice is not another name for revenge. Justice is restoring balance: returning dignity, opening rights, limiting power, assigning consequences to wrongdoing, and also healing society's wounds.
 Forgiveness does not erase truth. Truth does not forbid forgiveness. The two can meet in their proper time. First hear pain. First acknowledge injustice. First establish responsibility. Then perhaps the endless chain of hatred can be broken.
 Peace is not merely that bullets are not fired. Fear at home, humiliation in the street, injustice in the office, hatred in the mind - silence amid these is not peace. Peace is the shadow of justice. Where dignity, safety, listening and participation grow, peace takes root.
 Non-violence is not merely laying down weapons. Humiliation is violence. Exploitation is violence. Keeping people hungry by force is violence. Taking away opportunity is violence. Spreading the fire of falsehood is violence. Non-violence is the wider discipline of life: fewer wounds, greater opportunity, greater respect.
 Society's health is not only buildings, roads and factories. It is trust, dignity, safety and participation. Can a woman walk without fear at night? Can a child ask without fear? Can the poor reach justice? Can a minority live its belief without fear? Can a dissenter speak without humiliation? These questions measure invisible social health.

Civilisation is convenience. Culture is discernment in using convenience. Society is relationship. Spirituality is the deep experience of unity within relationship. When these four separate, the human being becomes fragmented.

Civilisation without culture can become glittering cruelty. Culture without justice can become rigid custom. Society without individuals becomes crowd. Individual without society becomes loneliness. Spirituality without earth becomes escape. Earth without sky becomes suffocation.

A full life is the continual discipline of balance.

Each age brings new questions: technology changes, family forms change, ways of work change,

cities move differently. Yet the old core remains - How shall human beings live with one another? How remain free and still share life? How remain different and preserve respect? How earn wealth without becoming slaves of greed? How hold power and remember service? How keep faith without hatred? How advance while protecting the earth?

One direction returns again and again:

human dignity. Move toward what enlarges dignity. Be wary of whatever makes the human being an object, whatever bases order on fear, whatever builds unity on hatred, whatever builds development on greed, whatever builds education on imitation, whatever builds discipline on humiliation.

Love society without blind pride. One can love a house and still say the roof leaks. Repairing the roof is not insulting the house; it is a practical form of love. Love society in this way: see its faults, repair them, preserve its beauty, change its injustices, build anew. Let gratitude and criticism live together.

In the end society's fundamental substance is the human being;

the human being's fundamental power is consciousness;

consciousness is tested by value;

value takes a body in action; action bears fruit in relationship; relationship breathes through trust; trust grows in the soil of truth; truth receives warmth from compassion. Truth without compassion is hard.

Compassion without truth is blind. Together they become humanity.

From this humanity dawn descends one day into society's courtyard:

first a fine light, then one home a little more just,

one village a little less discriminatory,

one school a little more welcoming of questions, one office a little more honest, one family a little more equal, one city a little more compassionate, one country a little more tolerant, one earth a little safer.

Dawn does not become complete at once. One mind changes,

then a relationship, then a home, then an institution,

then a generation.

Humanity is not anyone's one-day victory. It is a value chosen again each day.

Choose again today: truth over hatred,

cooperation over envy, justice over privilege,

dignity over humiliation, service over lust for power,

simplicity over blind consumption, dialogue over violence, compassion over indifference - and the human being before every institution, every profit, every prestige.

Then one day each person may say: I am not alone,

yet I am not erased. I am different,

yet I am not less. I am free,

yet not without responsibility. I belong to myself, yet I am not a stranger to another's suffering.

And between these four living sentences society will slowly build its real home - where one human being is not another's darkness, but another's light.

The Light of the Invisible Balance

An invisible balance keeps moving within the mind day and night. Whom shall I choose? Whom shall I leave? For whom shall I put my own convenience a little behind? No market can write the exact price of this balance.

Gold is heavy, yet sometimes a truthful word weighs more than gold. A palace may be high, yet the trust within a small home can stand higher than the sky.

Before hunger, bread is the greatest value. But once hunger is satisfied, the human being does not remain merely a stomach. One asks for respect, love, justice, truth, beauty - a light that remains within even when the eyes are closed.

Life is a long stairway of values. The first steps are breath, water, food, bodily safety, freedom from illness, rest for the tired body. These are not small things.

One does not climb toward the sky by neglecting the body. Roots need soil. Yet roots alone are not the whole tree: above them come leaves, flowers, fruit, shade, and a home for birds.

Human life is like this too: first, to live;

then, to live well; then,

to live in such a way that another life too receives a little more light.

Values are not a list in a book. They show their faces in small daily decisions: returning a lost object when no one is watching; taking medicine to a sick neighbour when no one will praise us; refusing to lie though profit is possible; not joining the crowd when it mocks the weak.

Here value becomes action rather than word.

Are human beings born with values, or do they slowly learn them? A child first knows crying, then smiling, then 'mine', then 'yours', and one day asks, 'What is just between mine and yours?'

On this journey, home, village, language,

custom, song, story, punishment,

affection and reward all become measures within the mind. Society says: this is good, this is bad, this is acceptable, this is shameful.

But the human being is not merely society's echo. One day the received measure itself is questioned: 'Is this just?' 'Is it sacred only because it is old?' 'Everyone accepts it - but is it right?'

Then value begins to move from borrowed rule toward personal understanding.

Yet personal understanding is not whim. 'I like this' and 'This is good' are two different sentences. Preference may be a flower of one moment; value may demand an entire season.

Sweets please the tongue;

health is a long-term value. Rest gives immediate comfort;

labour can bear fruit in the future.

It is easy to call whatever desire wants 'good'. But value does not fulfil every demand of desire. It questions desire: 'Why do you want this?' 'Whom will this desire hurt?' 'Will someone else pay the price of this gain?'

In these questions the balance begins to move.

Value is not merely an external command. Slowly it becomes the voice of conscience: first, 'Do not do this or you will be punished'; then, 'Do this because everyone says so'; and one day, 'Do this because it is right.'

On that day morality moves a little beyond childhood.

But 'right' is not one solitary stone. Circumstance changes its shadow. Telling the truth is a value; yet when truth would needlessly destroy a life, discernment raises a question. Rule and circumstance must continue to look at one another.

Values are not buttons on a machine. Life is complex:

duty on one side, compassion on another;

justice on one side, forgiveness on another;

individual freedom on one side, social safety on another.

The balance may search a long time for equilibrium. Yet equilibrium does not mean a compromise without truth.

Sometimes one pan is clearly heavier. Violence and non-violence are not equal alternatives. Exploitation and justice are not two equal colours. Hatred and love are not two steps of the same height.

Values discriminate. That is their work.

Like north marked upon a compass,

value gives direction. The compass does not walk for us,

but it tells us where we are facing. Our feet are our own;

the road is difficult; the needle of direction is within.

Sometimes the stomach says,

'Food first.' Sometimes dignity says,

'Not bread bought with humiliation.' Sometimes love says,

'Give part of what is yours to another.' Sometimes justice says, 'Even when the wrongdoer is your beloved, call wrong wrong.'

Values are not always at peace with one another. They too can conflict.

A mother wishes to protect her son,

but if the son is guilty,

justice weighs on the other side. A friend wants to preserve friendship, but how far can friendship travel with falsehood? An employee wants to keep a job, but what if the order is unjust?

Life is the night-school of such questions. The answer is not always written beforehand in a book.

Discernment must wake again in every new circumstance.

One ground of value is joined directly to the body:

health, safety, capacity for labour,

preservation of life, freedom from hunger.

For an infant drinking milk,

philosophy's first value is milk. For the exhausted worker,

rest. For the sick person, medicine. These are foundations;

without foundations the palace hangs in the air.

But the human being does not stop at the foundation. One climbs to another social storey: respect, friendship, recognition, cooperation, trust.

Safety is not only bodily safety but safety within relationship. That a child can speak without fear at home is a social value. That a woman can return at night without fear is a social value. That an old person is not abandoned is a social value. That a poor person can be heard in court is a social value.

Money is a useful social means,

but it is not the final value. With money one can obtain food,

a house, education and medicine. Trust? No. A true friend? Not with certainty. Self-respect? Sometimes

money helps, but purchased respect is not self-respect.

Some things are means;

some are desired in themselves. A boat is a means for crossing a river; the farther bank is the destination. Yet sometimes a person builds a house upon the boat itself.

Then the means becomes the destination.

Money was meant to make life easier,

and life becomes a means of increasing money. Position was meant for service, and service becomes a tool for preserving position. Knowledge was meant for truth, and truth becomes an ornament for fame.

In such reversals the order of values becomes distorted. Recognise the means as means and the end as end.

But ends too are many: small and large,

immediate and long-term, personal and shared.

A student may want to pass an examination - one goal. To gain knowledge - another. To build character - a third. To become capable of serving society - a more distant one.

If the first goal is pursued through cheating,

a greater value is sacrificed for a smaller goal.

This is the difficulty of the balance. Life keeps asking:

What shall I preserve? What shall I leave? Sometimes a small gain must be left for a long truth; immediate pleasure for health; fame for integrity; the crowd for discernment.

Values can stand in a kind of hierarchy,

one above another, but the stairway does not look exactly the same to everyone.

For one person family is the deepest immediate value;

for another truth; for another nation, religion,

humanity or freedom. History has been made again and again from collisions among such higher values.

When truth is suppressed in the name of the nation,

which pan weighs more? When a human being is injured in the name of religion, which pan? When one member's freedom is crushed to preserve family honour, which pan? When an individual's freedom destroys another person's safety, which pan?

Values are not decoration. They are heated iron held at the moment of decision. It burns the hand, yet the hand must still hold it.

Some values rise from life's biological pulse,

some from society's shared memory,

some from the high sky of imagination.

Truth does not directly fill the stomach. Beauty does not reduce fever. Justice is not an immediate plate for hunger. Yet without these, the human being is not fully human.

A painting is not bread,

yet it can help the heart remain human. A poem is not medicine,

yet it can carry a despairing mind through the night. One truth does not build a house, yet it can preserve the foundation of trust in society. One just rule is not a flower, yet it can give sunlight in which a thousand lives may bloom.

The higher storeys of value open beyond utility.

There the human being asks:

'Is whatever is useful always good?' A poison can be useful for murder. A lie can avoid a crisis for a moment. A bribe can make work happen quickly.

Utility alone is not king of values.

Some things are useful and still immoral. Some things seem immediately useless and yet are necessary for humanity: song, friendship, beauty, thought, free questioning, solitude, celebration.

These do not always increase factory output. They increase the meaning of life.

Humanity is not only efficiency. A machine may work faster than a person; if production alone determined human value, would the machine therefore be higher? No.

One extraordinary region of the human being is sensitivity - the power to create and recognise value.

The human being can say: this is not merely an event,

it is injustice. This is not merely colour,

it is beautiful. This is not merely a rule,

it is oppression. This is not merely profit, it is greed.

Nature gives events;

the human being makes a sky of meaning.

Yet meaning is not wholly private. When many minds accept a belief,

it acquires social power. Respect, prestige,

law and custom all stand upon shared belief.

A paper note is paper,

yet society gives it value. A title is letters,

yet society gives it prestige. A uniform is cloth,

yet society makes it a sign of authority.

Value is often the invisible power of shared agreement.

But shared recognition is not always right. Many ages approved discrimination. Many societies called the silence of women modesty. Many times slavery was called order.

Therefore 'everyone accepts it' is not enough. We need a higher touchstone: human dignity? justice? truth? compassion? the expansion of life?

That higher light reveals the shadow of lower habits.

Many values form a stairway within society:

first preservation of life, then safety,

then relationship, then respect,

then free self-development, then an awareness that does not stop at 'I'.

But this is not a rigid table. Life can move upward and downward at the same time. A poor poet can live a high experience of beauty. A wealthy and secure person can be impoverished by lack of love. A sick body can remain steadfast for truth. A healthy body can remain enslaved by fear.

Values depend upon one another,

yet they do not form a completely closed staircase. Life is more complex, and more beautiful.

The person is a living organisation of values,

filled with many desires and many goals. If these remain wholly separated from one another, the mind becomes fragmented.

One person speaks of love in the family and practises ruthless exploitation in the office - two worlds of value.

A leader speaks of truth in public and lives deceit privately - two worlds. A devotee speaks of compassion in prayer and hates the neighbour - two worlds.

Conscience hears the dissonance.

Maturity may mean bringing values into relation with one another:

the same truth in temple and market;

the same justice on the platform and at home;

the same respect for the guest and the service worker; some shadow of the love reserved for one's family extended toward another human being.

Where values find one rhythm throughout life,

personality becomes more integrated.

Personality is not clothing changed according to occasion. It is a long-term organisation of values.

What we repeatedly consider important slowly makes us who we are. One who puts wealth above all turns life toward wealth. One who puts prestige highest seeks one's face in other people's eyes. One who puts truth above comfort may reject falsehood even when alone. One who puts compassion high finds it difficult to ignore another's suffering.

Values are the invisible architecture of life:

actions are bricks, habits the mortar,

ideals the plan, personality the house.

One wrongly placed brick does not collapse the house,

but repeated wrong direction makes the wall lean. Small habits become future character.

Truth is not the heroism of one day but small truthfulness every day. Compassion is not merely one

magnificent donation but small acts of listening every day. Justice is not only the courtroom but the plate at

home, the classroom, wages, opportunity. Beauty is not only the museum but one clean flower in the courtyard, gentleness in speech, care in work.

Great words demand daily life.

Sometimes the opposite of a value takes active form:

hatred against love, falsehood against truth,
injustice against justice, exploitation against cooperation,
ugliness against beauty.

These are not always mere absences. Hatred is not simply an empty place where love is missing; it can become an energy that wounds. Injustice is not silence where justice is absent; it takes away someone's rights.

Falsehood is not merely the absence of truth; it breaks trust.

Values become clearer through their shadows. Light reveals the meaning of darkness.

But the shadow within a human being does not always come only from outside. Envy, fear, humiliation, deprivation and failure can slowly grow opposite values.

If society only punishes and never looks at causes,
the illness may return.

A thief is responsible. Yet hunger, unemployment,
inequality and a culture of greed are also questions. The individual is answerable; society is answerable for the environment it creates.

Values therefore look not only at moral judgement but also at social circumstances. Circumstance does not completely excuse wrongdoing; yet to make circumstance invisible is incomplete justice.

The human being is free,

but not in a void. Choice takes place within history,

family, education, class,

language and community. Values seek direction within this web.

Society teaches values to human beings,

and human beings later change society's values.

What one age called normal may later be named injustice. What once seemed impossible may later become a right. Values move through history.

But if everything changes,
does anything remain stable? This question is deep as night.

Does truth change entirely with time? Is justice merely the preference of the majority? Does dignity depend upon society's permission?

The mind seeks a higher light - one capable of questioning even the blind consensus of an age; one able to say: everyone accepts this, yet it is wrong; this is law, yet it is unjust; this is profitable, yet it is inhuman.

Whatever name we give that higher measure,
it is among the brightest aspirations of human consciousness.

Truth upon which the dust of self-interest settles less. Beauty that is not mere decoration but harmony. Love that is not possession but creation. Justice that is not revenge but restoration of dignity.

These higher values are not only distant stars. They guide daily action.

Truth can stop one lie today. Love can stop one insult. Justice can stop one act of partiality. Beauty can inspire the cleaning of one neglected place.

A high value becomes meaningful when it touches the earth.

An ideal completely separated from life remains only a picture. The ideal must converse with life's incompleteness.

A human being is not perfect,

but can carry a direction toward greater completeness. That direction can make today's self a little better than yesterday's.

Value is not a finished state;
it is an invitation to develop.

A child does not mature through obedience alone. Slowly the child understands reasons, chooses and accepts consequences.

Maturity is not morality produced by fear of punishment. It is the free assent of conscience: 'I shall do this because I understand it to be right.'

But in this 'I understand',

there must be not ego alone but discernment and social responsibility.

A mature mind recognises its own desire without making desire the final king. It also sees another person's desire.

Freedom for oneself and control for another is not a value. Respect for oneself and humiliation for another is not a value.

A value becomes more trustworthy as it touches universality.

Can I accept for another the same rule I want for myself? This is one severe test of the invisible balance.

I want a safe school for my child. What of another's child? I want freedom for my religion. What of another's belief? I want respect for my language. What of another's language?

When value moves beyond its own circle,
it becomes humanity.

Not merely 'what is good for us',
but what accords with a wider life.

Love is an extraordinary force in this widening. First a mother's lap, then family, then friendship, then community, and then even the suffering of a stranger begins to touch the heart.

Love widens the circle. Self-interest narrows it. Higher value may be the capacity to make the circle into sky. But love is not merely feeling. Sometimes love speaks a hard truth. Sometimes it stops a beloved person from a wrong path. Sometimes it stands against an unjust tradition in society.

Love is more than pity. It recognises the dignity of the other. True love does not turn another person into an object; it creates room in which the other can unfold possibility.

This is love's creative power. Where love lives,
life expands. Where hatred lives,
life contracts.

Love can be a social force,
not merely private emotion. It grows trust,
increases cooperation,

reduces fear and makes society more human.

But love must not swallow justice. Love for one person does not give permission to take away another's rights. Compassion cannot wholly replace law; law must not become compassionless stone.

Let the two meet.

Values need not be enemies when they converse in their proper order. Yet that order is not a fixed table but a living balance.

Preservation of life generally comes first,

yet sometimes a person gives life for truth. Safety is a value,

yet freedom may at times be placed above safety. Family is a value,

yet humanity can cross the narrowness of family. Wealth is valuable, yet justice sets its limits. Prestige is dear, yet truth may require us to abandon it.

This is what a higher value means:

it does not erase lower values;

it gives them order.

A house needs foundation, wall, roof and window,
each in its place. Make the roof the foundation and the house will not stand.

Make wealth the final goal and life bends. Despise the body and life weakens. Separate spirituality from daily duty and life fragments.

Wholeness is the proper placing of values.

Inner peace grows where one's values fight one another less.

One voice in the mind says, 'Be honest.' Another says,

'Leaving profit is foolish.' If they fight every day,

the mind grows tired.

Once honesty truly becomes a primary value,
the decision becomes clearer. There may be sacrifice,
but there is less inward fragmentation.

A stable organisation of values gives personality direction. Yet stability is not rigidity.

New experience deepens the meaning of value. A young person may understand freedom as doing whatever one wishes; later responsibility teaches freedom a new meaning.

A child may understand justice as 'the same for everyone';

later one learns that sometimes giving more support to the weaker person is justice. Meaning matures.

Values grow with adulthood. Experience deepens their definitions.

Pain teaches compassion. Failure, humility. Love,

sacrifice. Death, the value of time. Old age,

the value of memory. Childhood, wonder. Nature,

balance.

Life is the greatest school of values.

Sometimes we choose the wrong hierarchy:

fame above truth, profit above justice,

fear above freedom, tradition above humanity.

Then the results arrive slowly:

the mind becomes disturbed, relationships break,

trust declines, society hardens.

A wrong value does not remain only a private mistake. It can become an institution.

If profit is highest,

a factory can kill a river. If prestige is highest,

a school can sell marks instead of knowledge. If power is highest, the state can fear truth. If religious identity is placed above humanity, a neighbour can become an enemy. Values are also the soul of institutions.

Policy is the visible form of invisible values. A budget tells us what a society considers important.

How much for schools? Health? Weapons? Art? The poor? Nature?

Numbers on paper become the public language of values.

What society says and what it spends are not always the same. A speech says education is important; the budget says how important. A speech says women deserve respect; the street says how safe they are. A constitution says equality; daily behaviour says how true that equality is.

Values are tested in conduct.

A society proves that someone is valued not merely by saying so but by making room.

If elders are honoured,

is health care accessible to them? If children are the future,

are schools safe? If workers are respected,

are wages fair? If nature is mother, why poison the river?

Values measure the distance between word and action.

How great is that distance in our society? The question is uncomfortable but necessary.

Another mystery of values is that they do not live separately.

Truth supports justice; justice supports dignity;

dignity supports freedom; freedom supports creation;

creation supports beauty; beauty supports joy;

love gives human warmth to all of them.

Like a tree whose root, trunk, branch,

leaf and flower are different and yet one life,

a value-system is such a tree.

If the root is poisoned,

how long can bright colour remain on the leaves? If the foundation of a home is hatred, how long can polite words survive above it? If an institution is unjust within, how long can decoration conceal it?

Values are the inner structure;

civilisation is the outward form.

Sometimes society declares two values at once while tension remains between them: freedom and equality, competition and cooperation, tradition and innovation, person and community, safety and openness.

It is easy to turn them into enemies. Balance is difficult.

But a living society learns difficult balances. If one side wins completely, the human need represented by the other can be crushed.

Equality that erases individuality is incomplete. Freedom that ignores the protection of the weak is incomplete. Tradition that forbids questions is incomplete. Innovation that cuts away memory is incomplete.

Balance is not compromise; it is wholeness.

Music is not the tyranny of one note. Many notes find their proper places. Society too can become such music.

Values are the grammar of the raga;

living human beings remain the musicians who seek new rhythm in every moment.

Perhaps the highest human aspiration is a life in which truth,

beauty, love and justice do not remain too far apart.

Truth that is not cruel. Love that is not blind. Justice that is not revenge. Beauty that is not mere decoration.

Where these can become one wide human light.

The highest value may not be imprisonable in a single word. It is more like a horizon: the farther we go, the farther it opens, yet it gives direction.

An artist follows beauty, a scientist truth,

a servant compassion, a judge justice;

but a fuller human being may gather some light from all four directions.

Such a person is not the blind devotee of one value but strives toward wholeness: truth warmed by love; love clarified by truth; justice made human by compassion; beauty deepened by truth.

The meeting of these lights is a higher culture of humanity.

Values do not only make the individual;

they determine the direction of society.

Where wealth is supreme,

worth becomes a price-tag. Where prestige is supreme,

display dominates. Where power is supreme,

fear spreads. Where knowledge is supreme without love, a cold pride grows. Where love is supreme without discernment, blind partiality grows.

Society needs a balanced order of values and mature citizens capable of examining that order again and again.

What have we placed above what? Why? What are we sacrificing?

For a new road, whose house? For a new industry,
 whose river? For a new dam,
 whose forest? For a new rule of security,
 whose freedom?

Every development is a choice among values. Every policy is a balance: how much benefit, whose cost?
 Value is the silent background of decision. Where that background remains obscure, decisions become confused.

Therefore society needs the courage to state its values openly. What do we place first: human beings, profit, nature, power, the future?

A truthful answer will appear in budgets,
 laws, schools, roads and markets.

Value is a public mirror.

It is a personal mirror too. We say family matters - how much time do we give? Health matters - what are our habits? Truth matters - what happens before profit? Friendship matters - where are we in a friend's difficult hour?

The distance between speech and conduct reveals our real values.

A human being is known less by what one declares than by what one chooses.

Choice is the signature of value. All day we keep making small signatures: where does time go? money? attention? anger? love?

Life finally becomes a vast document of these signatures.

Yet the document can be revised every day.

A human being can change values. This is hope.

The greedy can become generous;
 a hateful mind compassionate; the coward courageous;
 the discriminatory mind egalitarian;
 the harsh become gentle.

Values are not permanent inscriptions in stone. They can be transformed by practice, experience, love, pain and education.

Change rarely comes in one night: first a question,
 then discomfort, then one small alternative action,
 then habit, then character - until one day the former self seems distant.

This is how values create the maturity of personality.

Society changes in a similar way. One generation calls discrimination normal. Another questions it. A third changes the law. A fourth inherits a new normality.

History is a long development of values.

But a new society can create new opposite values. Vigilance remains necessary.

Let one injustice not return under another name. Let one superiority not rise again in new clothing.

Values require continual self-examination.

If a highest value is living,
 it does not demand worship of its name;
 it teaches us to question lower self-interest.

Truth says: do not lie in my name. Justice says:
 do not carry revenge beneath my flag. Love says:
 do not practise possession in my name. Religion,
 if it is a home of higher values, says: do not hate in my name.

If spirituality is real,
 it will change the value-order of daily life:
 less greed, more compassion; less display,
 more truth; less fear, more trust.

Otherwise high words become curtains for low conduct.

Perhaps the brightest form of value is a love that creates.

A teacher's love lights the lamp of knowledge in a student. A mother's love gives a child secure confidence. A friend's love joins a broken mind again. A society's humane love gives opportunity to the deprived.

Love is not merely an embrace. It opens capacity;
 it raises; it frees; it makes room.

This creative love is a high confluence of values. It enlarges both person and society.

Where love makes a person smaller,
 it is not love but fear under another name. Where love cuts wings,
 it is possession.

True love opens wings.

In the end, one touchstone remains:
 in which direction does a value open life?

Be cautious of what shrinks life, lowers dignity,
 increases fear or deepens hatred.

What enlarges life, clarifies truth, deepens love,
awakens beauty and gives justice may belong to a higher light.

One lamp lights another without losing its own brightness. Values are such lamps.

Truth does not diminish by being shared. Love does not diminish. Knowledge does not diminish. When
another person receives justice, my justice does not become less. Shared dignity raises everyone's height.

This is the strange economy of values.

What increases by being shared can be given even by the poorest person in the world: a smile, a truthful
word, forgiveness, courage, one small just decision, one compassionate touch.

Value can live without a palace. It can light a lamp in a hut.

But do not romanticise the poverty of the hut. We need both light and bread.

Humanity asks for both hands:

one to sustain material life,

the other to sustain inward value. Together they make the human being more whole.

If one day our society can place truth a little above profit,

dignity above birth, love above hatred,

justice above partiality, beauty above blind consumption,

the dawn will slowly change.

Then the school will not be only for employment but also for character; the market not only for profit but
honest exchange; the state not only power but justice; the family not only blood but respect; religion not
only identity but compassion; culture not only pride but self-examination; the individual not only desire but
responsibility.

Then value will leave the dictionary and begin to flow in the blood of life.

The balance within will still move,

because life keeps bringing new questions.

But perhaps there will be more light upon its pans. We will know what we are weighing, what we are pricing
too cheaply, what we have made needlessly expensive.

What is means? What is end? What is momentary? What is enduring? What is only mine? What belongs to
all?

What preserves life? What gives life meaning? And which value makes me a little larger than myself?

Perhaps the brightest pan of the invisible balance is the one upon which my good does not depend upon
another's humiliation; my truth is not without compassion; my love is not without justice; my justice is not
filled with hatred; my freedom does not steal another's breath; my development does not devastate the earth;
my religion does not make another human being smaller; my knowledge increases humility; and my life
does not remain only mine but becomes a shared light.

Then perhaps the balance will never become perfectly still.

But its pointer may slowly turn toward humanity.

And that may be the truest light of value.

Many Skies in a Broken Mirror

Once I believed there was one straight road,
 one centre, one truth, one history,
 one voice that would give the final answer to every question.
 I had drawn the map as though the earth could be seen through a single eye.
 Then one day the mirror broke.
 The face did not disappear.
 It appeared in many fragments, from many angles.
 Then I understood how many viewpoints one face can bear.
 One event - how many memories.
 One word - how many meanings.
 One history - how many silences.
 One city - how many invisible lanes.
 The sky is one, but the windows are many.
 Someone looks from the east,
 someone from the west.
 For one it is dawn; for another, evening.
 One sees blue, another cloud.
 One fears the rain;
 another waits for it as the hope of the field.
 The sky belongs privately to no one.
 A viewpoint may belong to one person.
 If truth is vast, how can a single sentence contain its whole house?
 How many grand narratives have sat upon the throne of time and declared: 'I alone am the direction. I alone
 am the future. I alone am the one meaning of all humanity.'
 The crowd cheered.
 But those standing at the edge asked,
 'Where is my story?'
 A woman asked.
 A labourer.
 A small language.
 A displaced family.
 A person of a minority faith.
 A child whose home is only a line upon the map.
 How many small courtyards does the broad road of a grand narrative erase?
 Where history records the king's victory,
 how many lines does the soldier's widow receive?
 The palace is recorded;
 who records the name of the one who carried the bricks?
 The year of war is remembered;
 what date belongs to the one who ploughed the field in peace?
 A book can sometimes become the most beautiful graveyard of silences.
 Then history is not only 'what happened'.
 History is also: 'Who said it?'
 Whose pen?
 Whose language?
 Whose selection?
 Whose silence?
 When an event becomes memory,
 it has already passed through some eye.
 The eye is not always innocent glass.
 Fear, love, class, language,
 inherited habits and desire all mix their colours within it.
 How then can a narrative be a plain copy of the event?
 A narrative is the meeting of event and viewpoint.
 A riot in a city has one form in a police report,
 another in a mother's memory,
 a third in a journalist's account,
 a fourth in a child's fear at night.
 Which shall we call the 'complete truth'?
 Perhaps complete truth does not live in a single room.

It must be sought among fragments of evidence,
 memory, reasoning, pain, documents and silence.
 But fragment does not mean falsehood.
 Incompleteness does not mean meaninglessness.
 A broken earthen pot cannot hold water,
 yet one fragment can still tell the history of an old house.
 A fragment can be a witness.
 Completeness can sometimes be another name for arrogance.
 The one who says, 'I have understood everything,
 ' may have failed to see the largest region of the unknown.
 Doubt does not murder every truth.
 Sometimes doubt is truth's guard at the doorway,
 asking: 'Evidence?' 'Why?' 'Whose interest?' 'Whose voice is missing?'
 But if doubt becomes only negation,
 it too becomes a new tyrant.
 'Everything is false. Everything is illusion. Everything is the same.'
 That too is an enormous claim.
 If there is no truth at all,
 why call injustice injustice?
 If every viewpoint is equally right,
 do the murderer's story and the victim's wound weigh the same upon the balance?
 No.
 Openness is not lack of direction.
 Plurality is not moral blindness.
 To hear many voices does not mean declaring every voice correct.
 Listen.
 Examine.
 Look at the evidence.
 Look at power and pain alike.
 Then decide through discernment.
 One truth can sometimes endure many viewpoints.
 A court hears many witnesses,
 yet judgement remains possible.
 Plurality is not the death of decision.
 It makes decision humbler.
 'I may be wrong' - this sentence is one of the cleanest windows of intelligence.
 How many civilisations considered themselves final?
 Then time wrote cracks upon their walls.
 New machines.
 New cities.
 New markets.
 New communication.
 A distant country enters the home through a small screen.
 One advertisement touches a million eyes in a single moment.
 An image can run faster than truth.
 Consumption knocks at the door like a new religion:
 'You are what you buy.'
 'Your clothes, your car, your phone,
 your brand - these are your identity.'
 Slowly the human being begins to search for a face among objects.
 The market does not fulfil desire;
 it manufactures new desire.
 Before one object has grown old,
 the next is already shining.
 Time speeds up.
 Memory shortens.
 Attention breaks into fragments.
 One screen, twenty doors.
 One moment, news.
 The next, laughter.
 The third, war.
 The fourth, advertisement.
 In what rhythm is the mind living?

The world is no longer one long sentence.
 It is a crowd of clippings, pictures, links,
 flashes, sounds and broken contexts.
 Where, within this crowd, is meaning?
 Perhaps meaning will not come ready-made.
 The human being will have to join it:
 a story from fragments,
 direction from experience.
 But the power to join is not only private.
 Language has already made a home within us.
 We choose words, but words also choose us.
 How many old meanings ride upon the backs of words:
 'civilised',
 'savage',
 'pure',
 'impure',
 'high',
 'low',
 'normal',
 'deviant'.
 How many social walls can one word carry inside it?
 Language is not only a mirror.
 Sometimes it draws the plan of the house.
 When we name something, we give it a boundary.
 But the thing may be greater than its name.
 A child is called 'weak'.
 Repeated again and again,
 the word begins to make the child visible in that form.
 A community is called 'backward'.
 How many meanings accumulate inside that single word?
 Naming can become a force that shapes reality.
 So lift the curtain of words.
 Which word makes whom smaller?
 What has been called natural but is really the old habit of power?
 In one home, the man decides and the woman obeys - it was called 'nature'.
 In one society, one caste commands and another serves - it was called 'order'.
 One empire plundered another land - it was called 'civilisation'.
 How often words dress violence in fragrant clothing.
 So open the layers of language.
 What is hidden inside a sentence?
 Not only what is said.
 What is not said is meaning too.
 Silence can be the heaviest part of a sentence.
 'All citizens are equal.'
 A beautiful sentence.
 But which citizen remains invisible upon paper?
 Who cannot reach justice?
 Who can speak but is not heard?
 If the sentence is true,
 search for its footprints upon the earth.
 How wide is the crack between word and conduct?
 A new gaze measures this crack.
 It does not look only at the main gate of the great building.
 It also looks at the narrow lane behind it.
 The kitchen.
 The basement.
 The place where waste is thrown.
 The servant's room.
 The places where civilisation's invisible labour stands.
 How much does the brightness of the centre depend upon the darkness at the edge?
 The capital upon the village's grain.
 The factory upon the miner's labour.
 The university upon the sanitation worker.

The palace upon the one who carried the bricks.
 Yet the main page of history writes the name of the centre.
 The edge becomes a footnote.
 One day the footnote rises and asks,
 'Why is my story not the main text?'
 With that question the map changes.
 The margin is not merely something deserving pity.
 It can become a new centre of knowledge.
 Where sight did not go before,
 a new dimension of truth can appear.
 Why is a woman's domestic labour outside economics?
 Why is an indigenous community's forest knowledge called 'unscientific' when it has preserved life across generations?
 Why is a people's language called 'impure' when millions of hearts dream in it?
 Knowledge does not live in one palace alone.
 It lives in the field.
 In the kitchen.
 In the workshop.
 In folk song.
 In bodily memory.
 In experience.
 Books are important.
 But books are not the whole of knowledge.
 The laboratory is important.
 But life is larger than the laboratory.
 Democratising knowledge does not mean insulting expertise.
 It means the expert is not the only god.
 Questions must be public.
 Knowledge must become a subject of dialogue.
 The farmer's experience can meet scientific testing.
 Local memory can meet historical documents.
 The patient's experience can meet the physician's knowledge.
 Each can correct the other.
 One-way knowledge can create blind spots.
 The idea that a mirror simply returns nature exactly as it is - how simple that seems.
 But what if the glass is coloured?
 What if it is curved?
 What if the light is weak?
 At what angle does the observer stand?
 Knowledge is glass, viewpoint and object together.
 We see the world, but our way of seeing has been shaped by our history.
 Therefore self-examination is part of knowledge.
 'Through which spectacles am I looking?'
 This question matters greatly.
 Someone who considers oneself wholly impartial may be among the most partial.
 Admit it: I have a location.
 I have a history.
 A language.
 An interest.
 This admission does not diminish knowledge.
 It clarifies its boundary.
 A viewpoint that knows its limits becomes more trustworthy.
 Once a person sees one's own spectacles,
 space opens for another person's sight.
 Look at one truth from two angles.
 Then a third.
 Then a fourth.
 The picture deepens.
 Plurality is not truth's enemy;
 it can be a means of depth.
 But endlessly multiplying angles can also prevent decision.
 How much must we see?

When can we say: 'On this evidence,
 this much is sufficient for now'?
 Life does not always wait for perfect information.
 Decisions must sometimes be made with incomplete knowledge.
 This is the human condition.
 A humble decision.
 Open to revision.
 'At present, this is how I understand it.'
 This sentence is not weakness.
 It leaves the door of the future open.
 A declaration of final truth closes the door.
 A provisional understanding opens a window.
 But if everything is provisional,
 are human rights provisional too?
 Can torture ever become right?
 Is slavery merely one historical viewpoint?
 No.
 If plurality makes a victim's pain light by calling it merely 'one perspective', plurality itself becomes unjust.
 Some human boundaries run very deep.
 Needless suffering is wrong.
 Human dignity is necessary.
 Freedom is valuable.
 Upon such ground many forms of life can bloom.
 A garden is not the tyranny of one flower.
 But poison and flower do not mean the same thing.
 Distinction must survive.
 Plurality is the maturity of distinction.
 A new time also questions the old word 'progress'.
 Progress for whom?
 Factories increased, but the river turned black.
 The city expanded, but the village emptied.
 Production accelerated,
 but the worker grew exhausted.
 Objects multiplied, but so did waste.
 Information increased, attention diminished.
 Connections multiplied, loneliness deepened.
 Why assume progress is a straight line?
 Sometimes while moving forward we leave something priceless behind.
 An old pond becomes a shopping mall.
 The mall shines.
 Where did the village's memory of water go?
 A forest becomes a road.
 The road saves time.
 Whose time?
 Whose home was lost?
 Progress needs a balance.
 Not speed alone.
 Science is an astonishing power.
 But power does not determine value by itself.
 Atomic energy can be energy and destruction.
 Data can be knowledge and surveillance.
 Medicine can preserve life and also serve market greed.
 Technology is neither innocent god nor demon.
 It is a tool in the hands of human values.
 Which hands?
 For what purpose?
 Under what control?
 These questions are necessary prayers of a new age.
 A camera can show truth, yet it chooses a frame.
 What lies outside the frame?
 A statistic can be exact,
 but which question does it answer?

An algorithm calculates,
 but which standards were already placed within its code?
 Technology is not without prior thought.
 Human choices can enter even the code.
 Therefore 'the machine said so' is not the final moral answer.
 Responsibility returns to human hands.
 A new world is filled with the shine of consumption.
 Advertising says: 'You are incomplete.'
 Then it displays an object:
 'Buy this and become complete.'
 We buy.
 A momentary pleasure.
 Then a new lack.
 The market sells incompleteness and the cure as well.
 The cycle continues.
 The human being begins to measure the self with price-tags.
 Brand becomes language.
 Fashion becomes identity.
 Image becomes a glittering curtain over reality.
 Sometimes we live less and display more.
 A picture before the meal is eaten.
 Display before a journey is experienced.
 Image before the privacy of love.
 'Being seen' becomes heavier than 'having lived'.
 Then where is the self?
 The face arranged upon a screen?
 Or the silence that meets itself after every image has been turned off at night?
 Identity is not a fixed statue.
 A human being inhabits many roles at once.
 A son at home.
 An officer in the workplace.
 Laughing among friends.
 Afraid in solitude.
 Language changes and the voice changes.
 Country changes and behaviour changes.
 Time changes and belief changes.
 Where is the absolutely solid stone of the 'real me'?
 Perhaps we are stories continually being made.
 But if we are only stories,
 is there no continuity?
 Memory is a thread.
 The body is a thread.
 Relationship is a thread.
 Moral choice is a thread.
 Something keeps joining one day to another.
 Identity is neither wholly fixed nor wholly fragmented.
 A river changes its water and remains a river.
 In this middle understanding,
 a human being can comprehend the self anew.
 Society too is a river.
 Tradition is water.
 Innovation, rain.
 History, the bank.
 Power, a dam.
 Rebellion, sometimes a flood.
 Society does not remain one form forever.
 In this changing world,
 think twice before speaking of an 'eternal order'.
 How many arrangements were called natural and later shown by history to be artificial?
 Monarchy eternal?
 Slavery?
 The silence of women?
 The immovable ranks of caste?

So much that was once called 'natural' time has revealed as constructed.
 History teaches humility.
 What is normal today may become tomorrow's question.
 But worship of change needs caution too.
 New does not mean right.
 Old does not mean wrong.
 The touchstone is life:
 dignity,
 justice,
 freedom,
 creativity,
 compassion.
 An old folk song can be humane.
 A new advertisement can be inhuman.
 Time is not the touchstone;
 the quality of life is.
 Fields of knowledge increasingly meet one another.
 Literature questions history.
 History questions sociology.
 Language meets politics.
 Science meets ethics.
 Art meets psychology.
 The walls weaken.
 The windows multiply.
 One problem rarely belongs to one discipline alone.
 Urban pollution is physics, economics, politics,
 health and ethics.
 Domestic violence against a woman is law,
 psychology, economics and culture.
 When a language dies, the problem belongs to linguistics,
 history, power, education and memory.
 When knowledge looks together,
 the picture deepens.
 But expertise remains necessary.
 A physician is not a musician merely by being a physician.
 A poet is not a surgeon merely by being a poet.
 Do not erase boundaries; increase dialogue.
 Open doors in the walls of knowledge.
 A new age also questions the distance between expert and ordinary person.
 Difficult language can sometimes be less a protection of knowledge than a wall of prestige.
 If thought concerns human life,
 why close the road by which it reaches human beings?
 Depth is not obscurity.
 A deep river can be clear.
 Let ideas enter the language of the people.
 Let the people's experience enter the platform of ideas.
 Let dialogue travel both ways.
 Then knowledge becomes less a royal court and more a village square.
 But the square must not become a home of rumour.
 Popularity is not the measure of truth.
 A statement shared a million times may still be false.
 The democracy of knowledge does not mean the death of evidence.
 On the contrary, it means everyone has the right to understand the evidence.
 The expert is accountable.
 The public is curious.
 This relation is healthy.
 Power often stands very close to knowledge.
 Whoever gives names,
 makes classifications and sets standards also helps build systems.
 Who is 'normal'?
 Who 'ill'?
 Who 'criminal'?
 Who 'qualified'?

Who 'unqualified'?
 Definitions are not only words.
 They can open or close doors.
 A certificate can give employment.
 A diagnosis can change identity.
 A legal category can take away rights.
 Knowledge is not always without power.
 But power does not mean oppression alone.
 Knowledge also saves life.
 The danger begins when it cannot tolerate questions.
 Transparency is a door.
 Accountability a window.
 When an institution can say, 'We may be wrong,
 ' it becomes more human.
 Infallibility may belong to gods;
 for institutions it is dangerous.
 A new gaze repeatedly questions the 'centre':
 Why this centre?
 Why this standard?
 Why this language?
 Why this history?
 Why this body as 'normal'?
 Why this family as 'ideal'?
 Why this way of life as 'civilised'?
 The question is not asked merely to destroy,
 but to reveal invisible alternatives.
 Why must a doorway always be made for only one kind of body?
 Where a wheelchair cannot climb the steps,
 is the problem in the body or in the building?
 Where a textbook repeatedly makes one community great and another silent, is the problem in history or in
 selection?
 'Natural' is often thought's armchair.
 Shake it.
 See what dust lies underneath.
 But smashing every chair is not knowledge either.
 Sometimes one must sit.
 Deconstruction is one way of understanding the house.
 Which bricks make the wall?
 Where did the bricks come from?
 What weight do they carry?
 Where are the cracks?
 But the final purpose of deconstruction is not rubble alone.
 Within the rubble lies the possibility of another plan.
 Open old meanings, but also create new meanings for life.
 Breaking alone is not the whole work.
 Creative deconstruction breaks an old prison and opens a new door.
 The word 'woman' carries how many inherited expectations?
 Open them.
 Then create a new sky for the person.
 How many chains of fate are carried by the word 'caste'?
 Open them.
 Then create a new relation between community and dignity.
 How much destruction of nature is hidden beneath the word 'progress'?
 Open it.
 Then create a new balance between development and earth.
 Deconstruction without creation becomes exhaustion.
 Creation that refuses criticism becomes orthodoxy.
 The two move like a wheel:
 break,
 look,
 join,
 test again.
 Life is endless revision.

A manuscript that never reaches its final proof.
 But endlessness is not despair.
 It is a sign of life.
 Dead things do not change.
 Living things do.
 A society that can revise itself is alive.
 A religion that can endure questions is alive.
 Science that changes with new evidence is alive.
 Philosophy that questions its own ground is alive.
 A person who can say, 'I was wrong,' is alive.
 Perfection can become a grave.
 Incompleteness is room for growth.
 A new vision also refuses the straight railway of history:
 'Past is this station, present this one,
 future fixed in that direction.'
 But trains change tracks.
 Accidents happen.
 Rebellions.
 Inventions.
 Pandemics.
 Nature intervenes.
 Human beings make unexpected decisions.
 The future is not a prewritten text.
 If the future were fixed,
 how meaningful would our moral choices be?
 Uncertainty is fear, but also freedom.
 Tomorrow is not ready-made.
 It will slowly be formed by today's decisions.
 History is not destiny.
 Human action stands between memory and possibility.
 This awareness increases responsibility.
 We cannot drop our hands and say,
 'It will happen this way anyway.'
 The future is open.
 But open does not mean arbitrary.
 Today's destruction of climate can become tomorrow's boundary.
 Today's education can become tomorrow's possibility.
 Today's hatred can become tomorrow's war.
 Today's dialogue can become tomorrow's peace.
 Openness is an invitation to responsibility.
 A new world also needs humour.
 A light smile before grand claims.
 At oneself too.
 One who treats one's own theory so solemnly that it cannot endure laughter may already have become an idol.
 Irony can sometimes puncture the swollen balloon of power more sharply than a speech.
 One satire can uncover more truth than a proclamation.
 But humour is not humiliation.
 Another person's pain is not entertainment.
 Let humour rise upward against arrogance,
 not downward against the wounded.
 Satire should lighten the crown of the powerful,
 not deepen the wound of the weak.
 A new literature often prefers broken forms.
 A story without a straight beginning and end.
 Many voices.
 An unreliable narrator.
 An unfinished ending.
 The reader is not merely listener but participant.
 'Meaning is not singular here.'
 A poem opens a door;
 the reader enters carrying personal experience.
 But a work is not completely empty.

Words set limits.
 Meaning may be many, but it is not arbitrary.
 Many boats may travel a river,
 but the water is real.
 Art receives the instability of a new age.
 Collage.
 Fragment.
 Quotation.
 An old image in a new context.
 Folk melody beside machine sound in one song.
 Deity and advertisement within one frame.
 The wall between the 'high' and the popular grows lower.
 Art leaves the court and enters the street.
 The street enters the museum.
 Value categories shift.
 'High art', 'low art' - whose judgement?
 Is folk song lesser?
 Cinema?
 Comics?
 Digital art?
 The question opens a democracy of form.
 But popularity is not greatness.
 Ten million viewers do not guarantee depth.
 A small audience does not guarantee lesser value.
 The touchstones return: the work itself,
 its effect, honesty, creation, beauty,
 questioning, human depth.
 A new vision places a double-edged question before religion too.
 On one side, suspicion toward claims of final monopoly.
 On the other, room for the privacy of spiritual experience.
 Faith can be personal.
 But once faith becomes public power,
 it must endure questions.
 One belief may be sacred for oneself.
 Why impose it upon another?
 Many beliefs can live within one society if each accepts its limits.
 But do not abandon the search for truth.
 'Everything is right' is easy to say,
 but some beliefs can teach violence.
 Then human dignity becomes the touchstone.
 Faith that awakens love,
 compassion and humility gives life.
 Faith that produces hatred,
 domination and fear deserves questioning.
 Plurality requires an ethical foundation.
 Without it, plurality becomes disorder.
 A new politics listens to small identities.
 The centre says: 'One nation, one voice.'
 The edge asks: 'Our language?'
 'Our land?'
 'Our memory?'
 'Our particular way of life?'
 If unity swallows difference,
 it is not unity but uniformity.
 One country can sing many songs.
 One constitution can protect many languages.
 One citizenship can hold many cultures.
 Unity is alive where it increases room.
 It becomes hard where it decreases room.
 But small identities too can build their own fortresses.
 A community can silence minority voices within itself.
 There are margins within margins.
 How free is a woman within her community?

How equal is a Dalit within a religious group?
 How much is a child heard within a family?
 Power does not live only in the capital.
 It lives in the home.
 In the school.
 In the office.
 In the community.
 In language.
 At every level, a question.
 For this reason new thought does not always want a fixed centre.
 Let the centre move.
 Listen to this voice today.
 That voice tomorrow.
 Carry a lamp wherever light has not reached before.
 But lack of a fixed centre is not disorder.
 Coordination is necessary.
 Shared rules are necessary.
 Justice is necessary.
 Otherwise every small power can become its own small tyranny.
 Plurality requires the art of agreement.
 A shared public ground where we can remain different while recognising one another's rights.
 A new vision also questions the word 'human'.
 Which human being has served as history's standard?
 Male?
 Urban?
 Affluent?
 Educated?
 From one particular culture?
 If the 'normal human' is really the form of one particular group,
 why must everyone else become an exception?
 Let the definition of the human widen.
 Bodies differ.
 Genders differ.
 Languages.
 Abilities.
 Beliefs.
 Ways of life.
 Across all these diverse forms,
 the human being remains human.
 Dignity does not demand uniformity.
 Humanity may be a vast umbrella,
 but not so heavy that it crushes the individual.
 Universality and particularity are not enemies.
 'All human beings possess dignity' - universal.
 'Every human being lives within particular circumstances' - particular.
 Together they make truth deeper.
 Universality alone can erase difference.
 Particularity alone can forget shared humanity.
 The bridge lies between them.
 A new thought questions objectivity but also rejects total privacy.
 If everything were merely my personal experience,
 how could science exist?
 If everything were wholly impartial,
 why would history have blind spots?
 Perhaps the answer lies in process:
 open evidence,
 repeatability,
 criticism,
 many viewpoints,
 revision.
 Use public method to reduce the limits of private location.
 Objectivity is not a god's-eye view.
 It is the discipline of shared testing.

In this form truth and humility can meet.
A new philosophy also laughs gently at its professional walls.
If philosophy lives only in philosophers' language,
where is life?
The greed of the marketplace is a philosophical question.
War.
Love.
Media.
Technology.
Environment.
Gender.
Language.
Memory.
The body.
Small daily decisions.
Let philosophy not abandon life and become only a game of words.
But not everything in life becomes philosophy merely because it happens.
Depth and discipline remain necessary.
Popular simplicity does not mean shallowness.
Difficult language does not mean depth.
Thought must clean its own mirror.
'I do not sit upon a final throne.'
This admission keeps philosophy alive.
A new vision is cautious with the word 'end'.
The end of history?
Of thought?
Of art?
Of religion?
Of the human?
Behind every 'end' a new form can grow.
Greenery after a forest fire.
One empire disappears,
another form of power appears.
One idea passes, another language comes.
Human culture does not accept a full stop.
It prefers a comma.
Parentheses.
A question mark.
Sometimes a dash.
Sometimes a blank line.
The story continues.
But an endless story does not mean lack of direction.
We can choose chapters.
Revise them.
Rewrite a bad page.
The future is an open book.
Hope lives in that openness.
Yet a new vision carries fears too:
'Everything will break.'
'Values will disappear.'
'Truth will disappear.'
'Family will disappear.'
'Culture will disappear.'
Every change frightens an old arrangement.
Some fears may be justified.
If doubt breaks every foundation,
a human being can fall into meaninglessness.
If identity fragments without limit,
shared society can weaken.
If consumption hides every value,
culture becomes market.
If image outweighs truth,
democracy becomes illusion.

If satire consumes all seriousness,
 commitment weakens.
 These risks are real.
 But risk is not a reason to close questions.
 Openness with caution.
 Windows with roots.
 Revision with memory.
 Plurality with values.
 Humility with the search for truth.
 Difference with unity.
 This difficult balance is the art of a new age.
 Let society preserve some fundamental values:
 dignity,
 justice,
 freedom,
 the search for truth,
 and upon this ground let many forms of life bloom.
 A garden where paths are shared and flowers many.
 Water shared, colours many.
 Sunlight shared, fragrances many.
 Let the gardener not uproot every other flower after declaring one flower the only one.
 But let the gardener also recognise disease.
 Where a poisonous vine kills another plant,
 set a boundary.
 Freedom and responsibility remain companions again.
 A new self-understanding says: 'I am a story,
 but I am not my only author.'
 Society wrote me.
 Language.
 History.
 Family.
 But I am not merely a character written by others.
 Some part of the pen is in my hand too.
 I can cross out an old sentence.
 Add a new word.
 Reject a definition imposed upon me.
 Create my identity.
 But I am not a wholly blank page.
 Something is written already.
 Freedom is dialogue with what is already written.
 Neither complete destiny.
 Nor complete whim.
 Creation lies between.
 This is the deep poetry of human life.
 One day the mirror broke,
 but I did not throw away the fragments.
 One fragment held Mother's memory.
 One, history.
 One, language.
 One, a body.
 One, a dream.
 One, society.
 One, the unfamiliar viewpoint of another.
 I placed all the fragments upon one table.
 The face did not become perfectly clear.
 But it became deeper than before.
 So many angles.
 So many shadows.
 So much unknown.
 So much possibility.
 Perhaps completeness is like this:
 not uniform, but related.
 Many fragments acknowledging one another's presence.

A picture that remains in the making.
A truth capable of enduring questions.
A society that hears voices from the edge.
A history that recognises its own silences.
A knowledge that knows its limits.
A language that sees the shadow of its own power.
A progress that counts its values.
A technology that remains the servant of human beings.
A plurality that does not destroy the foundation of justice.
A freedom that enlarges another person's room.
A doubt that awakens rather than destroys.
A deconstruction that creates a new door.
A humour that punctures arrogance, not wounds.
An art that lowers walls of high and low.
A philosophy that meets life again.
A human being able to say:
'My viewpoint is one viewpoint,
not the whole sky.'
And behind that sentence another window opens.
Another person says,
'My sky too is not the whole sky.'
Then both come outside.
Into the courtyard.
Where the sky is not smaller than anyone's window.
Where the broken mirror is not a curse.
It is a reminder:
one face can bear many angles.
One world, many stories.
One humanity, many lives.
One search for truth, many questions.
And in the open sky of questions,
perhaps the most beautiful sentence is not 'I have understood.'
But:
'Look again.'
'Listen again.'
'Test again.'
'Create again.'
And between these four small lines,
may the future continue opening its many doors.

The Blazing Threshold of Decision

Life does not always meet us in the clean rooms of theory.
 It meets us at dawn in a hospital,
 where the faint sound of a machine may be the final support of someone's breath.
 It meets us in the unseen darkness of the womb,
 where a possibility is searching for the road toward becoming a body.
 It meets us at the edge of a forest,
 where the blade of an axe weighs bread, profit,
 development and the century of a tree upon the same invisible balance.
 It meets us inside the home,
 where a woman's unseen labour holds together the rhythms of food,
 children and family,
 while her chair at the table of decision remains empty.
 Life does not ask its questions slowly.
 It says: 'Answer now.'
 'What is right?'
 'Whose right?'
 'Whose pain?'
 'Whose voice should be heard?'
 'Whose life should be saved?'
 'Whom should be left free to choose?'
 A book may offer direction,
 but the moment has its own heat.
 A rule can look clean on paper.
 But life is not the straight edge of paper.
 It is made of wounds, memory, fear, hope,
 relationships and layers of circumstance.
 Therefore ethics is not merely the sentence,
 'Do this.'
 It is a blazing threshold upon which a human being places bare feet while making a decision.
 Sometimes duty weighs in one pan.
 Sometimes consequences in another.
 Sometimes compassion.
 Sometimes justice.
 Sometimes freedom.
 Sometimes the preservation of life.
 Sometimes the individual's wish.
 Sometimes society's fear.
 The balance does not always stand still.
 But refusing to weigh is not an answer.
 One voice says: rules must be the same for everyone.
 Another asks: are everyone's circumstances the same?
 One says: look at the result.
 Another: look at the intention.
 A third: character.
 A fourth: conscience.
 Life seats them all at one round table.
 No chair is permanently a throne.
 Sometimes a rule protects humanity.
 Sometimes blind obedience to a rule wounds humanity.
 Sometimes an exception is compassion.
 Sometimes an exception is favouritism.
 Discernment guards the fine line between them.
 'This is how it seems to me' is not enough.
 Ask: 'Why?'
 'If this were not someone dear to me but a stranger,
 would I make the same decision?'
 This question is a stern mirror of conscience.
 Bias comes so easily.
 My protection, another person's duty.
 My freedom, another person's restraint.

My suffering, exceptional; another person's,
 ordinary.
 Ethics makes us step for a moment outside our own circle.
 It says: 'Look once through another person's eyes.'
 Perhaps this is the first lesson of compassion.
 But compassion must not be blind.
 A patient in agony says, 'Enough.'
 A family says, 'One more day.'
 A physician looks at the machine's numbers.
 A nurse has heard the moaning through the night.
 What is the decision?
 Does the continuation of breathing always mean the continuation of life?
 Can the dignity of life sometimes become a question larger than breathing alone?
 In the darkness of unbearable suffering and terminal illness,
 the 'right to live' and the 'wish to choose death' look at one another.
 Where is the easy answer?
 Death is not merely a private decision of one individual.
 It also cuts threads of relationship:
 mother,
 child,
 friend,
 society,
 law,
 medicine.
 The ending of one body sends waves into many lives.
 How far then does freedom extend?
 When can assistance become killing?
 When can compassion become haste?
 When can unbearable pain obscure all meaning in life?
 And when might society abandon a weak life by saying,
 'No longer useful'?
 This fear is deep.
 The value of a life must never be measured by productivity,
 youth, wealth or health.
 An old life.
 A disabled life.
 An unconscious life.
 An infant life.
 All belong within the circle of human dignity.
 But dignity does not mean refusing to see suffering either.
 Care is not only attaching machines.
 Sometimes it is holding a hand.
 Sometimes reducing pain.
 Sometimes telling the truth gently.
 Sometimes preparing a family.
 Sometimes sitting together in silence.
 Medicine is not science alone;
 it is human companionship too.
 Before an operation a signature appears upon a form.
 But consent is not merely a signature.
 Did the patient understand?
 Were the alternatives explained?
 Did fear silence the patient's voice?
 Was the decision truly free?
 The body belongs to the patient.
 The knowledge belongs largely to the physician.
 Between them lies a fine bridge of trust.
 If knowledge becomes power,
 the patient becomes an object.
 If freedom rejects knowledge,
 the decision becomes blind.
 Dialogue joins the two.
 'We know' and 'I am living this' must hold one another's hands.

A hospital is a quiet city of ethical questions.
 Who receives the bed first?
 Who receives the expensive medicine?
 Who receives an organ for transplantation?
 Who receives the final ventilator?
 Resources are limited.
 Life is immeasurably valuable.
 How then do we decide?
 By wealth?
 By age?
 By probability of survival?
 First come, first served?
 By social role?
 No single answer is innocent.
 When one pan rises,
 another face can disappear into darkness.
 Justice here is not mathematics.
 Yet calculation is necessary.
 Compassion is necessary.
 Equality.
 Transparency.
 Standards decided in advance.
 Otherwise decisions will pass through hidden doors of money,
 influence and identity.
 The value of life must never become the amount of a bribe.
 A poor person's breath is not lighter than a rich person's breath.
 An unlettered body is not less human than a scholar's body.
 Ethics must keep writing this truth upon the white walls of the hospital.
 The womb is another silent world.
 A woman's body carries within itself the possibility of two heartbeats.
 One is clear.
 One is still becoming.
 Where does one right begin and another deepen?
 How fundamental is a woman's authority over her own body?
 At what point does the developing life in the womb acquire a stronger claim?
 Day, week, month - time changes the ethical weight here.
 The first cell and the infant near birth stand at two ends of the same question.
 Between them lie many layers:
 health,
 rape,
 the mother's life,
 serious foetal abnormality,
 poverty,
 social pressure,
 an unwanted pregnancy,
 desired motherhood.
 Can a single rule bind all these circumstances with one cord?
 It is difficult.
 But freedom does not mean refusing ever to see the possibility of another life.
 Compassion must open its eyes in both directions.
 A woman is not merely a vessel for pregnancy.
 She is an autonomous human being.
 Her health, future, fear,
 dignity and aspirations are real.
 But before calling the foetus merely tissue,
 look at the development unfolding through time.
 Ethics here is not a slogan.
 It is slow listening.
 Circumstance.
 Medical fact.
 Legal boundaries.
 Human compassion.
 Why does society make the greatest noise precisely where a decision is most private?

Sometimes outward noise does not hear inward pain.
A woman may carry the weight of such a decision for the rest of her life.
That weight deserves respect.
Motherhood can be great,
but forced motherhood is not greatness.
Birth is beautiful,
but justice must also be among the conditions surrounding birth.
A hungry mother, an unsafe home, no medical care,
no education - merely saying 'give birth' does not complete responsibility.
Life does not end at the moment of birth.
After birth come food, vaccination, education,
safety and love.
If society claims to stand for life,
the life of the child already born is also its responsibility.
The forest is another chamber of these questions.
Trees do not speak.
Rivers do not vote.
Birds cannot reach a court.
Then who will speak for their rights?
Human beings have travelled far while calling themselves masters of the earth.
Forest: timber.
River: water resource.
Mountain: mineral.
Animal: product.
Soil: production.
Nature becomes a vast warehouse.
But does a warehouse give us breath?
A forest is not merely the count of timber.
It is rain.
Soil.
Shade.
Living creatures.
Seeds.
Scent.
The source of rivers.
The memory of communities.
A living web of relationships.
When one tree is cut, more than one trunk falls.
How many nests?
How many insects?
How much shade?
How much moisture in the soil?
How many seeds of the future?
The web trembles.
The human being is not outside the web.
We are one knot within it.
We may be the cleverest knot,
but we are not separate.
Polluted air becomes our lungs.
A poisoned river, our blood.
Dead soil, our food.
A vanished forest, our seasons.
Where is nature 'outside' us?
Our body is a small house within it.
Even if human welfare is placed highest,
long-term human welfare still depends upon protecting nature.
But the question goes deeper.
Is nature valuable only because it is useful to us?
Does a rare bird with no immediate human use possess no value of its own?
Is a forest into which no human enters merely a future resource?
Is a river only an irrigation channel?
Can life itself possess some dignity?
With this question the human being moves slightly away from the centre.

The sky widens.
 We are living beings,
 but not the only living beings.
 Many forms of life make the earth's shared poem.
 One line is not the whole poem.
 Human beings matter, but we are not the whole.
 A deeper ecological vision reminds us that roots are intertwined.
 One species disappears,
 and a hole opens in the web.
 One river dies, and an entire region falls ill.
 One forest disappears, and the seasons change.
 Nature is a fine music of balance.
 If the human being plays one instrument too loudly,
 the raga breaks.
 Let development become music, not noise.
 We need factories.
 Roads.
 Houses.
 Energy.
 Work.
 But at what price?
 How much forest?
 How much water?
 How much smoke?
 How much future?
 Development is not merely today's production.
 It is tomorrow's life too.
 A project may bring profit while taking away five generations of water - the balance moves again.
 Environmental concern is not sentimental decoration.
 It is an ethical question.
 We borrow from future children without their consent.
 We extract minerals.
 Spend water.
 Cut forests.
 Release carbon into the air.
 Tomorrow's child will pay our bill.
 How just is that?
 Can generations not yet born possess rights?
 If so, the present has no unlimited freedom to consume.
 We are heirs of the past,
 but trustees of the future as well.
 The earth is not our title deed.
 It is a borrowed home.
 Stewardship is a value.
 Many old practices of Indian villages once understood something of this without philosophical terminology.
 Trees were sacred.
 Rivers, mothers.
 Earth, the bearer.
 Food, prasada.
 These images were not merely poetic.
 They also placed limits upon consumption.
 But tradition is not always environmentally friendly.
 Age alone is not a touchstone.
 Where old knowledge preserves life, keep it.
 Where custom causes harm, change it.
 Modern science gives measurement.
 Traditional experience gives local memory.
 Let them meet.
 Why should the spiritual importance of a tree and the scientific importance of biodiversity be enemies?
 If a river's sacredness protects it from pollution,
 that is valuable.
 If we call it sacred and still throw waste into it,
 the word is empty.

Faith demands conduct.
If earth is sacred, why plastic?
If water is life, why poison?
Love of nature must descend from poetry into policy.
Agriculture.
Energy.
Cities.
Industry.
Consumption.
Restraint is needed in all.
Animal life is another dimension of the environmental question.
How many forms do human beings assign to animals?
Food.
Labour.
Experiment.
Entertainment.
Companion.
And also: a living creature capable of pain.
If pain matters when it is ours,
why should another creature's pain be meaningless?
Does lack of language mean lack of suffering?
How much grammar does a cry require?
How much grammar is needed by fear in the eyes?
An animal is not a human being.
But pain is pain.
This similarity opens an ethical door.
How much suffering are we entitled to inflict?
Need for food?
Available alternatives?
Tradition?
Taste?
Scientific research?
How much weight does each reason carry?
An experiment that may save a thousand lives places one kind of weight upon the balance.
Needless suffering for a cosmetic product places another.
Ethics must discriminate.
Not every use of animals is the same.
But no use is automatically beyond question.
A living creature is more than an object.
Remembering this can reduce human cruelty.
Let compassion cross the boundary of species.
A hand that stops for the injured leg of a dog may also preserve something in the human heart.
Compassion toward animals can become practice for compassion toward human beings.
But compassion must walk with facts.
Health, nutrition, circumstance and environment must all be seen.
A slogan is not enough here either.
Ethics must move with the actual complexity of life.
Another wall is the inequality constructed between woman and man.
Bodies differ.
But why should dignity differ?
Nature gave certain bodily differences.
Society built many stairways upon them.
Someone above.
Someone below.
Someone deciding.
Someone obeying.
Someone outside in the world.
Someone confined within walls.
Where difference hardens into a role that steals freedom,
a question must be asked.
A woman may be a mother.
But she is not only a mother.
She is a scholar.

A worker.
 An artist.
 A leader.
 A friend.
 A citizen.
 A person who dreams.
 Motherhood is one possibility,
 not her entire definition.
 A man may be a father.
 But why should hardness be his only duty?
 Tears carry water in both kinds of eyes.
 Gentleness belongs to no single gender.
 Nor does courage.
 Equality is not uniformity.
 It is not necessary that everyone perform the same work.
 But why should the doors of opportunity be predetermined?
 'You are a woman, therefore not this.'
 'You are a man, therefore not this.'
 How much talent do these two sentences keep in darkness?
 Equality means room for choice.
 If a woman chooses the home, respect.
 If she chooses a profession, respect.
 If she chooses motherhood, respect.
 If she does not, dignity still remains.
 If a man chooses caregiving, respect.
 If he weeps, respect.
 If he earns less, his human dignity is not less.
 Roles should grow from free consent, not pressure.
 The invisible morality of society is often most visible in domestic labour.
 Who washes the dishes?
 Who looks after the child?
 Who cares for the old person?
 Who continues employment?
 Who is allowed to be tired?
 Why does a woman return from paid work to begin a second shift?
 If invisible labour runs the household of society,
 its value should be made visible.
 Equality is not merely a line in law;
 it is also the division of time in the kitchen.
 Wages.
 Inheritance.
 Safety.
 Education.
 Decision-making.
 Authority over one's own body.
 Respect.
 In all of these, equality takes bodily form.
 A law says, 'Equal.'
 But the street says, 'Fear.'
 The home says, 'Silence.'
 The workplace says, 'Less pay.'
 Tradition says, 'Endure.'
 How far has equality on paper actually travelled?
 Measure ethics upon the earth of conduct.
 Social inequality often arrives dressed as religion,
 culture, family or honour.
 The clothing may be beautiful.
 Oppression may live beneath it.
 Discernment must look beyond the garment.
 'This is tradition' does not end the question.
 Tradition is for human beings.
 Human beings are not sacrifices laid before tradition.
 Where tradition increases dignity, preserve it.

Where it humiliates, change it.
 But change need not become hatred.
 The older generation is not the enemy.
 It lives with the language of its own time.
 Dialogue is necessary.
 A bridge must be built between new freedom and old relationships.
 Sometimes revolution is not one day.
 It is small change across generations.
 One daughter went to school.
 One woman wrote property in her own name.
 One father stood in the kitchen beside his son.
 One family listened to a daughter's decision.
 These are quiet revolutions of history.
 Ethics is not only a great declaration.
 It is also the small habit of a household.
 Another question returns: are all values equal?
 If on one side stands one person's happiness and on the other another person's life, which weighs more?
 If profit and truth collide?
 If tradition and dignity?
 If scientific progress and nature?
 If freedom and public safety?
 We need an order among values.
 But that order cannot be a rigid machine.
 Preservation of life matters.
 Dignity.
 Freedom.
 Justice.
 Compassion.
 Truth.
 Shared welfare.
 These are many strings of one ethical veena.
 If one string is pulled too tightly,
 the raga can break.
 Balance is a living art.
 One rule cannot govern every time.
 But no rule at all is darkness too.
 Ethics walks between two extremes:
 rigid absolutism and total arbitrariness.
 On one side: 'Always this.'
 On the other: 'Whatever one feels.'
 Between them:
 discernment,
 evidence,
 circumstance,
 value,
 consequence,
 human dignity.
 Sometimes conscience gives an immediate signal.
 We see a scene and the mind says, 'Wrong.'
 Cruelty toward a child.
 Humiliation of a helpless old person.
 Needless torment of an animal.
 We do not first construct an argument.
 The heart trembles first.
 This moral intuition has value.
 But is intuition always innocent?
 The prejudices society teaches can also feel 'natural'.
 Once many people considered caste discrimination natural.
 The subordination of women, natural.
 So the inward voice too is educated by history.
 We need both intuition and criticism.
 Let the heart tremble.
 Let the intellect ask: why?

Let history ask: where did this feeling come from?
 Let another person's experience say:
 this is how it feels to me.
 Then the decision becomes deeper.
 An ethical life does not exist only inside the individual.
 Society creates the circumstances in which choices are made.
 If a poor child cannot attend school,
 how free is the child's choice?
 If a woman is completely economically dependent,
 how free is her 'consent'?
 If a patient cannot afford treatment,
 how real is the patient's 'choice'?
 Freedom is not merely an option written on paper.
 It is actual capacity.
 Opportunity.
 Resources.
 Safety.
 Information.
 Without these, saying 'you are free' does not create freedom.
 Ethics must see both individual decision and social structure.
 It is easy to blame only the individual.
 It is equally easy to blame only society.
 Truth is more complex.
 The human being is influenced by circumstance,
 but not a complete puppet.
 Choice remains possible.
 Yet the meaning of choice depends upon which real alternatives exist.
 A hungry person and a prosperous person do not make 'free choices' upon the same ground.
 Justice must see this difference.
 The law may be the same,
 yet equality may sometimes require extra support because circumstances are unequal.
 In a race, one person may begin upon a straight track while another begins inside a pit.
 Saying 'the rules are the same for everyone' does not make the race just.
 Sometimes greater support is itself equality.
 Ethics is not the arithmetic of one-for-one.
 It reads life's inequalities.
 But support must not become permanent dependency.
 The goal is capability.
 Self-reliance.
 Self-respect.
 Opportunity.
 An ethical policy takes the weaker person's hand and helps them rise, but does not keep that hand imprisoned forever.
 The person must stand upon one's own feet.
 This too is dignity.
 Ethical life is not only a field of problems.
 It has beauty as well.
 A physician returns to the ward at three in the morning.
 A blood donor gives blood for a stranger.
 A woman helps another woman whom the community mocks.
 A farmer refuses to cut an old tree in the forest.
 A young man lifts an injured animal from the road.
 A family sits quietly through the final night beside a gravely ill relative.
 These are poems of ethics.
 No great theory, and yet humanity writes some of its clearest letters there.
 Then ethics is no longer a burden.
 It becomes a rhythm that gives dignity to life.
 The question 'What should I do?' slowly grows into another:
 'What kind of human being should I become?'
 An action belongs to one day.
 Character is long-term.
 One right decision matters.
 But the disposition to make right decisions repeatedly matters even more.

Compassion can begin in one moment and become a trait.
Truth can begin in one sentence and become character.
Justice can begin in one decision and become a way of seeing.
The external rule becomes an inward voice.
Then even when no one is watching, the hand stops.
Even without praise, service happens.
Even without punishment,
falsehood becomes difficult.
This is autonomous morality.
Not fear.
Not approval.
But mature inward assent.
Yet the inward voice does not always allow comfort.
It asks again:
Where did your food come from?
Whose labour?
Whose animal?
Whose water?
Whose forest?
Whose hands made your clothes?
Where did the minerals in your phone come from?
Whose invisible cost produced your convenience?
Modern life hides ethical relationships at a distance.
The object is clean upon the shop shelf;
its history is invisible.
Behind a cheap garment - whose low wages?
Behind a glittering object - whose polluted river?
Behind a plate of meat - whose life?
Behind rapid delivery - whose exhausted body?
The consumer too is a moral agent.
To pay money is also to vote for a system.
Whose production do we support?
Under what labour conditions?
At what environmental cost?
Distant relationships form a new map of ethics.
The whole earth now surrounds the home.
One click touches a factory in a distant country.
One purchase may add to waste in the sea.
One choice is small,
but millions of small choices can become an enormous force.
The individual is not alone.
Groups have power.
Ethics is both personal and collective.
One citizen, one vote.
One consumer, one purchase.
One family, one habit.
One institution, one policy.
One state, one law.
Every level is joined to the others.
Environmental justice raises another question here.
Whose lungs breathe the smoke?
Whose settlement stands beside the waste?
Whose home does the flood take first?
Will everyone pay equally for climate change?
Sometimes those who polluted least suffer most.
Justice is not only between human beings,
but between nations and between generations.
The consumption of a wealthy society can raise the water level around a poor coastal village.
Then ethics crosses borders.
The nation matters,
but the atmosphere does not recognise borders.
One earth is shared.

Responsibility is shared too,
 but not necessarily equally.
 Should those who caused more harm carry a greater burden?
 The balance moves again.
 Development and justice look at one another once more.
 An ethical view of women's position in society looks not only at law but daily life:
 school enrolment,
 wages at work,
 decision-making at home,
 safety on the street,
 health care,
 the burden of motherhood,
 the double shift of labour,
 a voice in politics.
 Equality has many levels.
 A law can open the door.
 But prejudice may remain as the guard inside.
 Law is necessary.
 Education is necessary.
 Economic independence.
 Cultural change.
 Participation by men.
 The voice of women.
 All together.
 Ethical transformation is not one wheel.
 It is a chariot with many wheels.
 If one wheel stops, the journey staggers.
 If a family says 'equality' but gives no property to the daughter,
 the sentence is incomplete.
 If a school says 'equal' but has no toilet for girls,
 the opportunity is incomplete.
 If a workplace says 'merit' but punishes motherhood,
 justice is incomplete.
 If society says 'goddess' but the street is unsafe,
 respect is incomplete.
 Ethics removes the decoration of words and looks at the body of conduct.
 At this threshold human beings fail again and again.
 Wrong decisions.
 Truth understood too late.
 A wound given to someone loved.
 The silence of someone weak left unseen.
 Ethics is not a prize for perfect human beings.
 It is a road of correction for imperfect human beings.
 Admit the mistake.
 Ask forgiveness.
 Repair harm where possible.
 Change the habit.
 Guilt that merely burns the self may achieve little.
 Repentance that changes action becomes moral creation.
 A human being is not a prisoner of one's own history.
 New decisions can be made.
 This is ethical hope.
 A cruel mind can become compassionate.
 A prejudiced person can change after hearing another person's story.
 A greedy person can learn restraint after seeing harm.
 Change is possible because values are alive.
 Ethics is not a fixed stone.
 It is a compass that moves with life while preserving direction.
 New problems arrive.
 New technologies.
 New medicine.
 New environmental crises.
 New forms of family.

New claims concerning bodily rights.
New biological possibilities.
Old rules will not answer every question.
But old values still give us some lamps:
compassion,
dignity,
justice,
truth,
non-violence,
responsibility,
freedom,
equality.
With these lamps we enter new tunnels.
The tunnel is new; the root of the light remains human.
Sometimes science says: 'We can do this.'
Ethics asks: 'Should we?'
Between these two sentences lies the future of civilisation.
To be able to do something and to be justified in doing it are not the same.
A technology may select traits in an embryo.
A machine may prolong life.
Data may open a person's privacy.
An experiment may alter a species.
Power is swift.
Discernment must not fall behind.
If civilisation increases capacity without increasing values,
it becomes a sharp sword in a child's hand.
Ethics does not always stop the hand.
Sometimes it directs the hand rightly.
Science and ethics are not enemies.
One asks: 'What is possible?'
The other: 'What is right?'
One: 'How?'
The other: 'Why?'
Together they can create human progress.
Progress in which power and compassion grow together.
Knowledge and responsibility.
Freedom and restraint.
One day we will again stand upon the blazing threshold of decision.
We will hold no perfect book.
But we may have some lamps.
One lamp for seeing another person's suffering.
One for recognising our own bias.
One for seeing nature not as an object but as a web of life.
One for seeing equal dignity in women and men.
One for listening to the patient's voice.
One for weighing seriously the possibility of unborn life.
One for recognising the significance of animal pain.
One for remembering the rights of future generations.
One for seeing justice while distributing resources.
One for balancing our freedom with another person's breath.
Each lamp is small.
But the darkness will not remain complete.
We may be wrong.
We can test again.
Listen to another voice.
New facts may change a decision.
Humility is one necessary lamp of ethics.
The claim to be infallible can be among the most dangerous forms of darkness.
One who says, 'I am never wrong,'
'can stop hearing the pain of others.
Ethical life needs open ears.
Eyes that see the margins.
A heart that feels suffering.

An intelligence that weighs consequences.
 Discernment that joins rule and circumstance.
 Courage that can make a difficult decision.
 And humility that can ask again: 'Was I right?'
 Perhaps keeping this question alive is one of humanity's safest guards.
 The threshold will remain blazing.
 Life will not become simple.
 But where decisions see not only profit but humanity,
 there will be a little more light.
 Where nature is not merely resource but coexistence - light.
 Where a woman is not merely a role but an autonomous person - light.
 Where a patient is not merely a case number but a human being - light.
 Where unborn life and the mother's life are both heard seriously - light.
 Where an animal is not merely an object but a sentient being - light.
 Where the future is not merely tomorrow but our responsibility today - light.
 Where rules protect humanity and compassion keeps rules humane - light.
 And where, before making a difficult decision,
 one human being pauses for a moment and asks:
 'Whose life is hidden within this choice?'
 In that moment ethics leaves the book and becomes breath.
 And crossing the blazing threshold,
 the human being perhaps becomes a little more human.

Our Breath in the Pulse of the Earth

The first air of dawn does not knock at the window;
it enters straight into the lungs and makes its home there.
I think: this is my breath.
But where did half of this breath come from?
Which leaf spent the whole night preparing green light for me in the darkness?
Which forest, far away upon a mountain,
has invisibly been filling my chest?
The vapour of which river became cloud and came to my courtyard?
Where am I a solitary body?
There is water in my blood.
The salts of earth in my bones.
The gift of trees in my breath.
The ancient fire of the sun in the warmth of my body.
I am not outside the earth;
I am one moving part of the earth.
Yet for a long time I called myself master.
I called the forest a resource.
The river, irrigation.
The mountain, mineral.
The animal, utility.
The soil, production.
The sky, an empty roof for industry.
By attaching one name after another,
I turned the living world into a warehouse.
But does a warehouse ever become rain?
Does a warehouse nurture a bird's nest?
Does a warehouse make the tiny tunnels of earthworms beneath the soil?
Does a warehouse know spring?
A forest is not a count of timber.
A forest is thousands of secret relationships existing at once.
One leaf shelters an insect.
One insect becomes food for a bird.
One bird carries the seed of a distant forest.
One seed becomes a new tree.
One tree holds the soil.
The soil stores water.
Water keeps the village alive.
The village makes songs.
Songs preserve memory.
When one tree is cut,
it is not merely one trunk that falls.
How many invisible threads break with it.
Our eyes see the trunk;
the earth feels the whole web.
A river is not merely water.
It is the melted memory of the mountains.
The journey of clouds.
The home of fish.
The farmer's hope.
A woman's water-pot.
A child's play.
A lamp at the ghat.
The thirst of a city.
When a river flows,
a civilisation hears its own pulse.
When the river turns black,
it is not merely the water that is polluted.
The laughter of the village grows faint.
Fish disappear.
Wells turn brackish.

The soil grows tired.
 Bodies fall ill.
 The smoke of our development returns to our own lungs.
 The earth does not take revenge.
 It merely follows the simple law of relationship.
 What we put into the air returns in breath.
 What we put into water returns in blood.
 What we put into soil returns in food.
 We write smoke upon the wall of our own home and imagine it will remain outside.
 Where is this outside?
 This is the greatest illusion.
 A home is not only four walls.
 The home extends to the sky.
 To the forest.
 To the source of the river.
 To the waves of the sea.
 To the distant white silence of snow.
 One earth is our extended home.
 The gas burning in my small kitchen writes its smoke upon the same page of sky.
 A factory in one city can melt ice in a distant land.
 A forest fire can dim the sun above a faraway city.
 Borders exist on maps.
 The air does not read maps.
 Water asks for no passport.
 Birds take no visa.
 The seasons know no nationality.
 The earth is one indivisible body.
 We are one cell within it.
 Yet we have mistaken ourselves for the whole body.
 This is the first disease of arrogance.
 If one cell grows only for itself and forgets the balance of the rest of the body, it can become disease.
 If development means only growth,
 it cannot necessarily mean life.
 A tree grows, yet knows a limit.
 Its roots take only the water they need.
 Its leaves drink sunlight without swallowing the sky.
 A bird eats fruit without claiming the whole forest as its own.
 Why did the human being begin to treat limitless desire as a right?
 One house.
 Then a bigger house.
 One car.
 Then another.
 A garment still perfectly usable,
 but a new fashion appears.
 A phone still working, but a newer glitter calls.
 The market whispers into the ear:
 'You are not complete yet.'
 'Buy more.'
 'More.'
 'More.'
 At one edge the earth, exhausted, asks:
 'How much?'
 Desire has no final plate.
 But the earth is finite.
 Minerals are finite.
 Water is finite.
 Forests are finite.
 The patience of soil is finite.
 Between limitless greed and a limited earth,
 who will win?
 If greed wins, the human being loses.
 For the defeat of the earth means the defeat of our extended body.
 Simplicity is not deprivation.

It is harmony with the limits of the earth.
 'Enough' is a beautiful word.
 Our older languages once carried the fragrance of this word.
 Take from the plate only what is needed.
 From the well, only what is needed.
 Take fruit from the tree, not the root.
 Milk from the cow, not life itself.
 Food from the earth, not its fertility.
 Take, but also return.
 This old exchange is an ethics of life.
 The seed returns seed to the soil.
 The fallen leaf becomes manure.
 The river goes to the sea, the sea becomes cloud,
 the cloud becomes river.
 Nature creates very little waste.
 The end of one thing becomes the beginning of another.
 Human beings have created things that will not become soil even after centuries.
 We have broken the cycle and made a straight line:
 extract,
 make,
 buy,
 throw away,
 then extract again.
 One day that straight line will halt against a mountain of waste.
 It is time to relearn the circle.
 Make things that can return.
 Metal back into metal.
 Paper into paper.
 Water into clean water again.
 Food waste back into soil.
 Let life return to the work of life.
 The earth teaches us circularity.
 The seasons are circular.
 Day and night.
 The water cycle.
 Life and death.
 Why can we not make the economy circular too?
 Development does not mean only taller buildings.
 A clean river is development too.
 A fertile field.
 A protected forest.
 Clean air.
 A village where young people find work without killing the river.
 A city where buses run and the sky remains visible.
 An industry that provides employment without giving the neighbour's child asthma.
 Development is not war between human beings and nature.
 No one will win such a war.
 If we fight the earth,
 where upon the earth shall we live after victory?
 True development is an art of relationship.
 One hand holds human need.
 The other, nature's endurance.
 Let both work together.
 Build roads, but do not sever every blood-vessel of the forest.
 Build dams, but understand the life of the river.
 Produce energy, but do not poison the sky.
 Increase food, but do not kill the soil.
 Build homes, but do not close the breathing of ponds.
 Science is not the enemy here.
 It gives us extraordinary eyes.
 How much carbon?
 How much water?
 How much heat?

How many species have disappeared?
 How much soil has eroded?
 Measurement is one form of truth.
 But numbers alone do not make an ethical decision.
 How many rupees is a forest worth?
 Calculate the timber.
 But the birdsong?
 The cool shade for a child?
 The beauty of a mountain?
 The sacred memory of a community?
 The water of unborn generations?
 The balance passes beyond rupees.
 Some values cannot be measured by the market.
 And often these immeasurable things are among life's most necessary:
 peace,
 clean air,
 pure water,
 the silence of a forest,
 the morning song of birds,
 the smell of soil.
 They seem free only until they disappear.
 Once they vanish, we understand their price.
 If a city begins selling air in bottles,
 how successful was our development?
 If a village lives on tanker water after its old pond became a shopping mall, whose progress was that?
 The questions must be difficult.
 Easy answers can cost too much.
 Nature does not exist only for human beings.
 This thought opens a heavy door in human arrogance.
 What use is a blue-throated bird to us?
 What work is performed by a wildflower whose name we do not know?
 Why should a tiny insect, which no one photographs,
 remain alive?
 If the only answer is 'because it is useful to us',
 how many forms of life will be declared unnecessary?
 Why assume a living being is born only for our use?
 It has its own life.
 Its own struggle.
 Its own fear.
 Its own food.
 Its own offspring.
 Its own sky.
 Life itself may be a value.
 With this recognition the human being changes from king to fellow traveller.
 The earth is not a kingdom but a community.
 Human beings, animals, trees, rivers, soil,
 microorganisms - all belong to one vast coexistence.
 No one is alone.
 No one is absolutely independent.
 Freedom must not forget relationship.
 A tree is free, yet depends upon soil.
 A bird is free in the sky, yet needs a forest.
 The human being is free in thought,
 yet breath is shared.
 This dependence is not slavery.
 It is the music of life.
 The note is our own; the raga is shared.
 We are one note in the raga.
 We need not be the loudest.
 We need the right place and the right rhythm.
 The silence of the forest teaches this humility.
 An old tree may stand longer than our entire lifetime.
 How momentary we are beside it.

Yet the axe is in our hand.
It is difficult for power and humility to live together.
But this is precisely ethics.
Because we can do something does not mean we must do it.
We can cut - but should we?
We can dam - but how much?
We can mine - but how far?
We can conquer - but whom are we conquering?
Science gives the hand;
discernment gives direction.
Power may be swift; value is the rein.
The rein is not meant to kill the horse,
but to keep it upon the right road.
A modern society that teaches only consumption may leave an empty earth to its children.
Let schools teach mathematics,
but also the value of a tree.
Teach science, but also relationship with a river.
Teach history, but where is the history of the forest?
Teach geography as map,
but what of the touch of soil?
If education cuts us away from the earth,
knowledge hangs in the air.
Let a child plant a seed.
Watch it grow for a year.
See the leaves fall.
The birds arrive.
The insects move.
Then the child learns not an ecology outside the book,
but a living relationship.
Nature is not merely a 'subject'.
It is a teacher.
A slow teacher.
It teaches patience.
A seed planted today bears fruit years later.
It teaches limits.
Summer says: preserve water.
It teaches cycles.
A fallen leaf is not dead; it becomes soil.
It teaches diversity.
A field growing only one crop can be more vulnerable to disease.
Diversity gives resilience.
And society?
Only one language?
Only one idea?
Only one way of life?
Nature creates balance through plurality.
Society too can remain alive through plurality.
Ecology is not only about forests;
it is a mirror for society.
When one species takes everything in a forest,
balance breaks.
When one class takes all resources in society,
balance breaks.
When the flow of a river is blocked,
villages downstream dry up; when wealth stops flowing,
the lives at the lower levels of society can dry up too.
As soil tires under the same crop again and again,
human beings can tire under the same work,
the same race, the same consumption.
Nature gives metaphors for balance.
But metaphor does not mean identity.
Social justice requires conscious human decisions.
The forest does not make laws.

Human beings do.
 Therefore our responsibility is even greater.
 We can understand nature's patterns and create an ethical direction.
 One deep view says the whole web of nature has value.
 A shallower view says:
 protect nature because the human being is in danger.
 Sometimes both lead to the same action.
 Protect the forest.
 Protect the river.
 But the reasons in the heart differ.
 One says: 'I need oxygen.'
 The other: 'The forest has a life of its own.'
 The first is not wrong.
 But the second widens the circle.
 From self-interest toward coexistence.
 From 'nature is for us' to 'we are within nature'.
 This small change in a sentence can change a civilisation.
 If a child at home says, 'This tree is ours,
 ' we can answer: 'Yes - and we are its too.'
 Its shade is ours.
 Our care is its.
 Relationship moves in both directions.
 Ownership moves in only one.
 The earth needs less ownership,
 more participation.
 Law too can learn this relationship.
 A river is not merely property.
 A forest is not merely revenue.
 Soil is not merely a plot.
 Some things are a shared inheritance of life.
 Where private right destroys a common future,
 limits are needed.
 A person may cut trees on private land,
 but the air is not private.
 A factory may release smoke on its own premises,
 but the sky is shared.
 An industry may take water,
 but thousands of homes live downstream.
 Nature is a bridge between private and public.
 Rights demand responsibility.
 Behind the word 'mine' stretches the enormous shadow of 'ours'.
 The old common grazing ground of a village once knew this shadow.
 A pond belonged to no single person.
 Some parts of a forest were shared.
 Water was shared.
 Sharing is not only economics; it is ethics.
 Who cares for what is shared?
 Call it 'no one's', and it may be destroyed.
 Call it 'everyone's',
 and if responsibility is divided into nothing,
 it may still be destroyed.
 Common resources require common institutions.
 Rules.
 Public participation.
 Trust.
 Monitoring.
 Limits.
 Protecting nature is not only the work of a distant government.
 The village knows the rhythm of its water.
 Local communities know the rhythm of the forest.
 But local knowledge is not infallible.
 Market pressure, poverty and population can alter it.
 Therefore let local experience meet scientific knowledge.

One says: 'Graze less upon this hill in this month.'
The other measures how much the soil has been damaged.
Together they make policy.
Let knowledge become cooperation, not arrogance.
A laboratory does not contain the whole truth of the earth.
Nor does a folk tale.
Both are windows.
The sky is wider.
Development raises another question:
development for whom?
A village river is dammed to provide electricity to a city.
A mountain forest is cut for urban housing.
Mining supplies industry while an indigenous community is displaced.
Benefit in one place.
Loss in another.
If the balance calculates only total wealth,
someone's suffering may disappear.
Development is also distribution.
Who gains?
Who loses?
Whose consent?
Whose land?
Whose memory?
For one community a mountain is not a mineral deposit but the home of ancestors.
A river is not merely megawatts but a religious and cultural axis of life.
Meaning has many layers.
Policy that sees only one value can crush the others.
Environmental justice says that harm to nature does not fall equally upon all.
The rich can buy a cool room.
The poor live beneath a burning roof.
The rich buy bottled water.
The poor drink from a polluted well.
The rich can move away.
The poor may remain trapped upon a floodplain.
The climate is one; its effects are unequal.
How then can protection of nature be separated from social justice?
How just is a green city that pushes the poor outside?
How ethical is a national park that expels communities who have lived there for generations without dignity or respect?
Conservation must not become anti-human.
But every human desire must not rule over nature either.
Balance is difficult again.
Let the forest survive.
Let the community live.
Let livelihoods remain.
Let hunting be regulated.
Tourism restrained.
Knowledge shared.
Benefits shared.
This is a living agreement.
Environmental ethics is not a rigid slogan.
It is a long dialogue:
nature and society,
today and the future,
human and other life,
local and global,
need and greed,
freedom and restraint,
development and conservation.
Look at both pans.
Yet some boundaries are clear.
We cannot pour poison into a river and call it development.
We cannot strip a forest bare and imagine 'employment' will remain sustainable forever.

We cannot erase species and call that progress without impoverishing the future.
 One day nature itself will impose limits.
 Resources will be exhausted.
 Soil become barren.
 Water dry up.
 Heat increase.
 Then there will be no choice, only compulsion.
 Wisdom is to choose restraint before compulsion arrives.
 Voluntary restraint is more beautiful than forced deprivation.
 A little less consumption today can mean more life tomorrow.
 Save one tree today,
 and there may be shade tomorrow.
 Save one pond today,
 and there may be water for a village tomorrow.
 Save one species today,
 and perhaps an unknown medicine tomorrow.
 But even without future usefulness,
 life can still deserve protection.
 This is deeper compassion.
 If devotion to the earth means anything,
 it is not merely offering flowers.
 Reduce waste.
 Preserve water.
 Plant trees.
 Do not poison the soil.
 Do not inflict needless cruelty upon animals.
 Question consumption.
 This is daily worship.
 We call the river Mother and turn it into a drain - how sorrowful the word must become.
 We call the earth Mother and poison the soil - where is devotion?
 Faith that does not change behaviour is only sound.
 Reverence for nature demands action.
 But do not create superstition in the name of nature-worship.
 Reverence with knowledge.
 Love with measurement.
 Restraint with science.
 This is a new synthesis.
 An old story says there is life in the tree.
 Science speaks of photosynthesis,
 systems and biodiversity.
 The languages differ,
 but both can lead toward one practice:
 do not treat the tree merely as an object.
 If culture carries memories of relationship with nature,
 those memories can gain new meaning today.
 But not every old custom is green.
 Let criticism remain.
 Let love remain.
 Both together.
 A sacred grove where trees have not been cut for generations may preserve biodiversity.
 A festival around a pond can preserve memory of water.
 A harvest festival can preserve gratitude toward soil and season.
 These are bridges between culture and ecology.
 A festival that leaves behind a mountain of plastic breaks the bridge.
 Tradition must learn new responsibility.
 Religion a new consciousness of earth.
 Festival a new cleanliness.
 Devotion a new restraint.
 Culture remains alive when it sees the wounds of its time and corrects itself.
 The state too is responsible toward the earth.
 Law can protect trees.
 Keep rivers clean.
 Measure the air.

Make industry observe limits.
But law alone is not enough.
The paper says: 'Do not cut.'
At night the axe moves.
The law says: 'The river shall remain clean.'
A drain releases poison.
Until citizens' values change,
the law will grow tired.
Without law, goodwill alone can become weak.
Consciousness within.
Institutions outside.
Two wings.
An ecological society is not merely a green flag.
It changes the economy.
Energy.
Transport.
Housing.
Agriculture.
Industry.
Education.
Consumption.
Waste.
In everything, an accounting of the earth.
A city makes room for pedestrians.
For bicycles.
For buses.
For trees.
For rainwater to reach the soil.
A roof is not merely concrete.
A park is not decoration but the lungs of a city.
A drain is not merely waste;
it is part of the water cycle.
A city too is an ecology.
Concrete does not stand outside nature.
Our design can converse with nature.
Nor is a village automatically 'natural'.
Excessive chemical use,
groundwater extraction and deforestation can wound the earth in villages too.
No place is sacred by itself.
Conduct creates sacredness.
A farmer looks at the soil and sees its colour has changed.
It has hardened.
There are fewer insects.
The water lies deeper.
The farmer understands: production has increased,
but the soil is growing tired.
For the sake of the next harvest,
look beyond today's crop.
Agriculture is a long relationship with soil.
Land is not a factory.
It is a living system.
Organic matter.
Microorganisms.
Water.
Air.
Roots.
Earthworms.
Together they make fertility.
A chemical may give immediate yield,
but what does it do to soil over the long term?
Again the balance.
The immediate and the future.
Production and balance.

Agriculture is not war against nature.
 It is cooperation with nature's rhythm.
 The weather is changing, partly because of us.
 The farmer often suffers its wounds first.
 Rain comes late.
 Then suddenly too much.
 Heat arrives before its time.
 New pests appear.
 Climate discussion is not a distant conference.
 It is the crack in the field.
 The flooded house.
 The labourer's body in extreme heat.
 Temperature is one number,
 but its human faces are many.
 Where environmental philosophy asks about the moral relationship between human beings and earth,
 questions of class, gender and poverty arrive too.
 For environmental harm does not fall equally upon all.
 A woman walks farther for water when a well dries.
 A poor person labours outdoors in the heat.
 A fisher loses livelihood when a river is polluted.
 When an indigenous community loses a forest,
 it loses not only employment but culture.
 Justice for earth and justice for human beings are intertwined.
 A green policy that does not see the weak is incomplete.
 A social policy that does not see nature is incomplete.
 Wholeness joins the two.
 The 'human being' is not an isolated island.
 A person exists in extended relationship with family,
 society, nation and nature.
 Personal development is not only income.
 It is health.
 Education.
 Freedom.
 Culture.
 A clean environment.
 Inner balance.
 If income rises while the air is poisoned,
 how rich is life?
 If employment comes but requires twelve hours in smoke,
 how developed is that life?
 If the house grows larger while the nearby river dies,
 what kind of life is this?
 Prosperity has many dimensions.
 Let a society measure progress not only by production but by quality of life.
 How much clean water?
 How much green space?
 How much rest?
 How much community?
 How much trust?
 How much biodiversity?
 How much equality?
 How much future still remains?
 The numbers will change.
 The vision will change.
 An old economy says: 'More.'
 A new earth-consciousness asks: 'Enough?'
 'Balanced?'
 'Just?'
 'Sustainable?'
 These four questions stand like four lamps before every large project.
 More is not always better.
 Sometimes less means more life.
 Less waste.

Less smoke.
Less needless travel.
Less overconsumption.
Less poison.
And more health.
More time.
More relationship.
More peace.
More trees.
Values change the direction of calculation.
Happiness is not the number of objects.
An evening with no electricity,
yet a full moon in the courtyard.
An old banyan beneath which four generations have sat.
A pond where children swim.
A field where the smell of soil is still alive.
In which account are these forms of wealth written?
In the account of the heart.
Of culture.
Of ecology.
But do not become romantic.
The hardships of poverty are real.
Electricity is needed.
Roads.
Medical care.
Communication.
Modern conveniences save lives.
The question is not 'no development'.
The question is: 'What kind of development?'
Development that reduces village poverty without destroying village water.
That lightens women's labour without creating mountains of waste.
That extends medicine without toxic production.
That gives communication while serving both human beings and nature.
Technology can be redesigned.
Solar energy.
Wind.
Water conservation.
Recycling.
Local production.
Public transport.
Buildings that use natural light and air.
Science can become a tool for saving the earth.
The problem is not science.
It is direction.
Greed.
Policy.
Values.
A knife in the hand can perform surgery or murder.
In whose consciousness does the tool rest?
That is the fundamental question.
An ethics of earth finally asks for inward transformation too.
Law protects water,
but do I leave the tap running?
The government plants trees,
but do I replace furniture needlessly every year?
The city separates waste,
but do I keep increasing single-use things?
The individual and the institution both matter.
One small habit alone will not save the ocean.
But millions of habits become an effect.
And without changing large industries and large policies,
blaming only individuals is unjust too.
Responsibility must correspond to level and power.

The emissions of a poor household and those of a vast industry do not belong on the same pan of the balance.
 Justice sees the difference.
 Yet everyone must see one's own part.
 The earth is a shared task.
 A school.
 A village council.
 A municipality.
 A company.
 A state.
 A country.
 A world.
 All levels are connected.
 The environment crosses borders,
 so cooperation must cross borders too.
 A river flows through two countries.
 Air across five.
 The sea belongs to all.
 The climate is one.
 Then national interest and planetary interest may sometimes collide.
 True leadership looks beyond the next election toward generations not yet born.
 If politics thinks only in five-year terms,
 how will a forest that takes fifty years survive?
 A tree cannot vote.
 Neither can a child of the future.
 Yet policy determines both their lives.
 Democracy must hear invisible voices too.
 Who represents nature and the future?
 Scientific evidence.
 Local communities.
 Moral discernment.
 Courts.
 Public consciousness.
 Together they can carry the silent voice toward human ears.
 A tree does not say, 'Save me.'
 It simply stands.
 Its silence tests our responsibility.
 A river does not write a petition.
 Its colour changes.
 Its smell changes.
 Fish disappear.
 This is its petition.
 Can we read it?
 Nature writes suffering through signs.
 Leaves dry before their season.
 Heat becomes abnormal.
 Birds diminish.
 Insects disappear.
 Rain grows irregular.
 Ice melts.
 The sea rises.
 These are letters from the earth.
 How long shall we leave them unopened?
 One day the letter can become an order:
 storm,
 flood,
 drought,
 extreme heat.
 Then the time for voluntary change becomes shorter.
 Listen today.
 Before gentle signals turn into harsh crisis.
 The earth is not an enemy.
 It is a home giving warning.

When the roof leaks,
 a wise person repairs the hole.
 One does not go to war against the roof.
 The earth is not merely our roof but our foundation.
 We live within it.
 If a philosophy deepens our understanding of life's relationships,
 it must pass beyond words into behaviour.
 Otherwise it remains a green sentence upon paper.
 Turning off a household light is small.
 Not wasting water is small.
 Choosing local goods is small.
 Planting a tree is small.
 Separating waste is small.
 But small actions change conscience.
 Once we learn to see the turtle's throat when throwing plastic,
 action is no longer merely obedience to a rule.
 It becomes relationship.
 Once relationship is visible,
 responsibility becomes natural.
 The earth is not a distant subject.
 We need not call it Mother, but we need nearness.
 Take soil into the hand.
 Smell it.
 Touch the bark of a tree.
 Let the first drop of rain touch the face.
 Sit beside a river.
 The more nature becomes experience,
 the less abstract it becomes.
 How will a child who has seen a tiger only on a screen understand the silence of a forest?
 Experience awakens compassion.
 A city child too should be able to touch the earth.
 A small garden.
 Watching birds.
 Looking at the sky.
 Feeling the seasons.
 This education is no less than any syllabus.
 Soil humbles the human being.
 All our food comes from it in the end.
 Our bodies return to it in the end.
 Between birth and death we borrow a form from earth for a little while.
 One day this body becomes soil again.
 Then how small is the thought that calls soil merely property.
 We are not masters of soil;
 soil is our final shelter.
 In this remembrance arrogance melts a little.
 The root of a tree tells us: connect below.
 The branch: open upward.
 The leaf: receive light.
 The fruit: share.
 The dry leaf: let go.
 The seed: preserve the future.
 A tree is like a complete ethical poem.
 It takes and gives.
 It occupies space and gives shade.
 It lives its own life and shelters many others.
 It grows old, and after death becomes soil.
 The circle becomes complete.
 How much could the human being learn by slowing down for a moment before a tree?
 The earth does not move in haste.
 The seasons do not hurry.
 Seeds do not obey deadlines.
 A river follows its slope.
 We have accelerated everything.

Fast production.
 Fast transport.
 Fast consumption.
 Fast news.
 Fast waste.
 The mind too has become fast.
 The earth says: slow down.
 Some things require time.
 Soil forming.
 A forest growing.
 An aquifer filling.
 Human trust being built.
 Slowness is not backwardness.
 Sometimes it is the speed of life itself.
 A sustainable society will know the proper place of both speed and slowness.
 Rapid medicine in an emergency.
 But forest restoration is slow.
 Communication can be fast.
 Decision should still be thoughtful.
 Technology can be fast.
 Values take time to mature.
 Civilisation must learn this balance.
 The future is an unborn face.
 We do not know its name.
 What language will it speak?
 In which city will it live?
 But its lungs will need air.
 Its body, water.
 Its heart may wish to see a green world.
 Can we see its rights?
 It cannot vote yet.
 But our vote today writes its tomorrow.
 The unborn generation is our most silent neighbour.
 Ethics extends neighbourhood across time.
 The water we save today may quench its thirst.
 The forest we preserve today may cool its sky.
 The species we save today may make its world richer.
 How much did we receive from those before us?
 Seeds.
 Language.
 Ponds.
 Fragments of forest.
 Fertile soil.
 Will we hand forward an empty account?
 Inheritance is not only money.
 It is the earth too.
 Write an ethical will:
 'We did not spend everything.'
 'We kept something for you.'
 This may be the most beautiful gift to the future.
 In the end the question is not only how to save the earth.
 The earth may remain in some form without us.
 The question is: what kind of human being do we wish to become?
 One who takes everything?
 Or one who understands relationship?
 One who displays power?
 Or one who knows limits?
 One who only measures the earth?
 Or one who can hear its silence?
 Our civilisation is ultimately an extension of our character.
 A greedy mind builds a greedy city.
 An arrogant mind builds an empire over nature.
 A compassionate mind builds coexistence.

An attentive mind builds restraint.
 The fundamental change must therefore happen within as well as without.
 Change policy.
 Change technology.
 Change the economy.
 And examine desire itself.
 For no green technology can satisfy limitless desire forever.
 Even clean energy, if made to serve limitless consumption,
 will still demand resources.
 'How much is enough?' is a spiritual question,
 an economic question,
 and an ecological question at once.
 Where enoughness appears, gratitude can be born.
 Where gratitude lives, exploitation can diminish.
 Look at one plate of food:
 the sun,
 soil,
 water,
 seed,
 farmer,
 animals,
 microorganisms,
 transport,
 the kitchen.
 How many lives meet in a single morsel.
 Once this becomes visible,
 wasting food becomes harder.
 Gratitude is an ethical way of seeing.
 It sees relationships behind objects.
 A tree behind paper.
 Water behind cloth.
 Minerals behind a phone.
 A mountain behind a building.
 Once relationships are visible,
 choices can change.
 This awakening should not be based only upon fear.
 A human being will not change for long merely because we say,
 'Destruction is coming.'
 Love is needed too.
 We protect the earth because we love it.
 The scent of a river.
 An evening upon a mountain.
 A mango grove in a village.
 The sky over a desert.
 The endless rhythm of the sea.
 Beauty awakens ethics.
 What we experience as beautiful,
 we begin to wish to protect.
 But not only beautiful scenery matters.
 A marsh is life too.
 Thorny scrub.
 Mud.
 Insects.
 What we do not find beautiful may still be an essential note in the ecological raga.
 Human aesthetic taste is not the only measure of nature's value.
 The forest does not exist for our picnic.
 It exists for itself too.
 Upon this humble sentence civilisation can build a new home.
 A home where the human being is less owner and more keeper.
 Less consumer, more participant.
 Less conqueror, more fellow traveller.
 And where, when the first air of dawn reaches the window and enters the lungs, we remember only this
 much:

this breath is not mine alone.
Within it is the greenness of forests.
The vapour of rivers.
The smell of soil.
The heat of the sun.
The invisible labour of countless forms of life.
It is a shared breath.
If we learn to breathe in this way,
perhaps the earth will cease to be an external object.
It will become our extended body.
Then before cutting a tree,
the hand may pause for a moment.
Before throwing waste into the river,
the eye may see its own blood.
Before buying something unnecessary,
the mind may ask: 'How much is enough?'
When drawing the map of development,
we may keep the face of a future child upon it too.
And soil may teach us again its ancient lesson:
remain connected.
Take, but return.
Grow, but do not break the balance.
Live, but leave room for another life.
And one day, when my final breath merges into the air and my body returns toward soil, perhaps the earth
will not call me a stranger.
It will say:
'You were always within me.'
And our breath within the pulse of the earth will rise green again as some new leaf.

Dawn Through One's Own Eyes

Dawn rises in the eyes before the sun rises in the sky.

It begins when a human being removes borrowed spectacles for the first time and looks at one's own earth through one's own eyes.

The sky is the same,

yet the colours change. The village is the same,

yet the smell of its soil feels one's own for the first time. The language is the same, yet its words suddenly begin to seek a home within the heart.

For a long time we walked with borrowed eyes:

another person's map, another person's standards,

another person's beauty, another person's shame,

another person's pride. We kept measuring our home upon the staircase of another person's history.

They said, 'This colour is beautiful.' We began washing away our own colour.

They said, 'This language is civilised.' We lowered the voice of our mother.

They said, 'This gait is modern.' We became ashamed of the rhythm of our own feet.

They said, 'This thought is progressive.' We threw away our old questions without even examining them.

Subjection is not merely a chain around the hands. It can make a home inside the eyes as well.

When slavery leaves the hands but a guard remains seated inside the mind, ordering, 'Think this way. See this way. Regard yourself as lesser,' freedom may reach the doorway and still fail to enter the house.

A political dawn may arrive. The flag may be ours. Power may be ours. Law may be ours. But if the mind stands at the window day and night waiting for another's approval, the house is still not entirely our own.

An invisible capital continues to live within us,

sending orders: 'Doubt what is yours. Whatever comes from elsewhere is superior. Your own memory is backward. Your language is small. Your thought is inadequate.'

Then we are not citizens of our own minds;

we remain subjects.

Freedom asks another question:

'Where is the capital of your mind?'

This question does not stand at a border. It lives inside the classroom, upon the page of a book, in the language we choose, in our taste for beauty, in our standards of knowledge, in the measure of confidence we place in ourselves.

What do we read? In what language do we think? Whose examples seem 'normal' to us? Whose life appears 'ideal'? Whose history becomes 'main history'? Whose poetry is called 'great'? Whose philosophy 'serious'?

Whose folk knowledge 'unscientific'?

Such questions open the map of the mind.

A child goes to school. At home the mother speaks one language. At school another. In the textbook there is a world coloured by a third language.

Slowly the child learns:

the language of home belongs only to the home;

the language of knowledge belongs elsewhere. The heart becomes one room, the intellect another.

How subtle this division is.

Mother's words are good enough for affection - but what of science? Philosophy? Politics? Art?

Can that language not climb these higher stairs?

If a language is allowed to remain only a lullaby,

in whose hands will the house of knowledge remain?

A language denied the power to think slowly loses confidence as well, because thought needs words. If words must always be borrowed from outside, the gait of thought too can become borrowed.

Yet to think in one's own language does not mean closing the doors of other languages.

A river can become richer by receiving tributaries. But seawater cannot simply be poured directly upon a field. It must become cloud, become rain, touch the soil, and pass through a journey before it becomes life-giving.

Knowledge from elsewhere must also travel such a journey.

Not direct imitation.

Translation.

Examination.

Dialogue.

Digestion.

Transformation.

Roots in the soil of one's own life.

Then knowledge ceases to be a foreign seed and becomes one's own crop.

A seed may come from a distant land,

but it must still live with this soil,

this water, this sunlight and these seasons. If it bears fruit,
 receive it. If it destroys the soil, question it. If it enriches an old field with a new taste, welcome it. If one crop
 begins to erase every form of diversity, be cautious.
 The swaraj of knowledge is not a wall. It is the discernment of a gardener.
 Which seed should be planted? Where? How much? Alongside what? Which old seed should be preserved?
 Which diseased tradition should be abandoned? Which new plant should be received?
 We must make these decisions ourselves.
 That is the central point.
 Not because someone else commands,
 'Accept this.' Not because someone else commands,
 'Reject this.'
 Look for yourself. Weigh for yourself. Decide for yourself.
 But 'for yourself' does not mean arrogance. It means responsibility.
 If the judgement is wrong,
 the responsibility is ours too. Freedom places weight upon the shoulders.
 Subjection says, 'Obey the order.' Freedom says,
 'Give reasons.'
 Subjection says, 'Someone else knows.' Freedom says,
 'Learn, then decide.'
 Slavery can sometimes offer comfort:
 no trouble of thinking,
 no responsibility. But upon that comfortable bed the soul slowly falls asleep.
 Awakening is difficult.
 Questions awaken us.
 Doubt awakens us.
 Self-respect awakens us.
 When we accept an idea not because it carries foreign brilliance but because it carries truth, we are free.
 When we preserve one of our own traditions not merely because it is ours but because it carries a life-giving
 truth, we are free.
 When we can admit our own error without self-hatred,
 and acknowledge another's excellence without self-abasement,
 the mind finally stands upright.
 Self-respect does not smash the mirror and declare one's own face beautiful.
 Self-respect cleans the mirror.
 It sees the blemish.
 The eyes.
 The wound.
 The laughter.
 And says: 'This face is mine.'
 Not shame alone.
 Not pride alone.
 Truth.
 A nation too must look into such a mirror.
 Its achievements.
 Its injustices.
 Its creativity.
 Its rigid customs.
 Its scientific traditions.
 Its superstitions.
 Its poetry.
 Its oppression.
 Both at once.
 Pride alone can become intoxication. Shame alone can become another form of enslavement. Truth lies
 beyond both.
 How many societies polish their past into gold and say,
 'Everything of ours was superior.' This can be less self-confidence than another form of fear.
 One who truly has confidence can bear criticism.
 Such a person can say,
 'Here we were wrong. Here we should learn from others. Here an old custom of ours wounded human beings.
 Here our ancestors created something extraordinary.'
 Truth is mixed.
 Life is mixed.
 History is mixed.

Between black and white live innumerable colours.
 Swaraj does not choose one colour and erase the rest. It sees the whole palette of its own history.
 How many things once foreign have become part of us:
 words, clothing, food, music, science,
 political ideas, laws, artistic forms.
 Culture is not a sealed glass box.
 It is a river.
 A river that does not flow decays.
 Yet a river has its own current. If it spreads in every direction until it becomes a swamp, it ceases to be a river.
 We need both openness and direction.
 Learn from others, but think for yourself.
 Listen to another's song,
 but do not silence your own voice.
 Look at another's art,
 but do not close your own eyes.
 Receive another's science,
 but ask your own questions in the language of your own life.
 This exchange is the life of culture.
 Blind imitation is not exchange. It is surrender.
 Blind rejection is not exchange either. It is fear.
 An open self-confidence stands between them.
 A house opens its windows without uprooting its foundation. Air enters. Light. Fragrance from afar. Yet the house remains one's own.
 The window is not the enemy of the wall. The wall is not the enemy of the window. A house needs both.
 So does culture: roots and leaves,
 memory and novelty, home and journey,
 soil and sky.
 If an idea was born in a distant land,
 truth does not ask for its passport. Yet its application does ask about circumstance.
 One medicine does not have the same dosage for every body. One political arrangement is born from one society's history. Another society may receive its principles but must create its own form.
 Imitation is easy. Creation is difficult.
 Imitation says, 'It is done this way there,
 so do it the same way here.' Creation asks,
 'What is our life like? What is our problem? What is the shape of our society? What form can live here?'
 Creation takes time.
 Failure.
 Testing.
 Revision.
 But in the end the creation stands upon its own feet.
 A borrowed shoe may be beautiful,
 but if it does not fit the foot,
 the journey becomes painful.
 Let another's thought not become a borrowed shoe. Take the leather. Learn the craft. But make the shoe to the measure of your own foot.
 This transformation is the freedom of knowledge.
 Education can become the principal workshop of such transformation.
 But if education becomes only a copy of foreign ideals,
 the mind moves farther and farther from its own home.
 A child remembers the names of distant rivers but does not know the river beside the village. The child learns remote examples of climate but not the farmer's knowledge of local seasons. The child can repeat foreign definitions exactly but cannot find philosophical words in the mother tongue.
 The knowledge itself is not wrong.
 But where is proportion?
 Know the distant world,
 but do not remain a stranger to home.
 Read the world, but read your village too.
 Know distant history,
 but know the memory of your own soil.
 Receive the global wind,
 but do not forget the local breath.
 An education that teaches a child to despise one's own society is incomplete.
 An education that teaches only pride is incomplete too.

A better education says:
 'Look. Ask. Know. Love. Criticise too.'
 Love can bear criticism.
 Hatred and blind devotion cannot.
 To name the faults of one's own society is not to insult it. If the roof leaks, saying so does not make the house smaller. Repairing the roof is an act of love for the house.
 To name the injustice of caste does not destroy culture. It can preserve culture's humane form.
 To name the oppression of women does not insult tradition. Tradition can be purified.
 To question superstition does not destroy faith. Faith can become deeper.
 Criticism is inward cleaning.
 But criticism that becomes only mockery closes the mind.
 'Everything of yours is wrong' is not dialogue.
 Few people are transformed by the humiliation of their self-respect.
 Question with respect.
 Truth with compassion.
 This is the longer road of transformation.
 After a country becomes politically independent,
 perhaps its hardest task is to recognise itself again.
 Subjection creates the habit of seeing oneself in another's mirror. Now we must make our own mirror.
 But our mirror too must not lie.
 That is the hardest demand.
 We naturally want our own mirror to make us look beautiful. A foreign mirror may once have made us look ugly. In reaction, we must not create another mirror that erases every stain.
 The truthful mirror will show both stain and radiance.
 A society must recognise its strengths: art,
 literature, language, folk knowledge,
 scientific history, philosophical subtlety,
 community cooperation, experience of living with nature.
 These are seeds of confidence.
 But see the thorns too: caste hierarchy,
 inequality of women, untouchability, rigid custom,
 superstition, feudal arrogance.
 None becomes sacred merely because it is ours.
 We do not preserve rubbish inside the house merely because the rubbish is ours. We clean it.
 Swaraj is also cleaning.
 An inward sanitation.
 The rooms of the mind hold old dust deposited by subjection:
 'We are lesser. We cannot. Our language cannot. We have no thought of our own.'
 Self-respect is the broom for this dust.
 But another dust can collect as well:
 'Everything of ours is the best. Everyone else is inferior.'
 This is the dust of arrogance.
 Discernment is the broom for that too.
 The house becomes clean when both inferiority and arrogance diminish.
 Self-respect is the quiet lamp between them.
 When an idea from elsewhere arrives, ask:
 from what problem was it born? From what history? From what pain of that society? What human
 experience within it is universal? What is particular?
 Then place it upon your own earth.
 See where it fits.
 Where it collides.
 Where it opens a new question.
 Comparison of this kind is not enslavement.
 It enriches knowledge.
 Comparison becomes fruitful when both sides receive respect.
 If one side is already treated as the 'standard' and the other merely as an examinee, the comparison is unjust.
 Put both upon the same table.
 Their strengths.
 Their limits.
 Their histories.
 Then dialogue.
 An old philosophy may find a new meaning before a modern scientific question. A modern idea may deepen
 through an old discipline of the self.

Different ages can speak to one another.
 The past is not a cemetery.
 The future is not imported merchandise.
 The present is the meeting place of both.
 We shall converse with the past, not worship it.
 We shall create the future, not copy it.
 This is living freedom.
 Language again opens a door in this journey.
 When we try to express a difficult idea in our own language,
 we do not merely replace words. The idea itself is tested.
 Some foreign terms will not enter directly. We open their meaning. Search for nearby words. Coin new words. Awaken old words.
 Then language becomes richer,
 and thought becomes richer with it.
 Translation is not merely a bridge.
 It changes both banks.
 Another's thought touches our language;
 our language asks new questions of that thought.
 A word carrying the experience of a distant culture acquires a new shade when it enters our society.
 Translation is creation.
 If we merely replace word with word,
 the soul may remain stranded upon the bridge.
 Meaning must cross.
 And while crossing,
 meaning may alter the current of our own river.
 That is natural.
 Language is alive.
 Thought is alive.
 Living things change through contact.
 Purity does not mean untouchability.
 It can mean creative transformation.
 A culture that says, 'We shall take nothing,
 ' may dry up.
 A culture that says, 'We shall take everything exactly as it comes,
 ' may disappear into others.
 Discernment again finds the middle road.
 Select.
 Receive.
 Transform.
 Make one's own.
 Leave some things behind.
 Create something new.
 This is cultural digestion.
 The body does not preserve food exactly as received. It breaks it down, digests it, turns it into blood and energy.
 Culture too must digest knowledge.
 Otherwise food becomes stone in the stomach.
 Let another's thought not remain merely decorative,
 like a foreign statue placed in the drawing room to increase prestige.
 An idea should change life: help us understand a problem,
 alter a decision, enlarge language,
 reform an institution, deepen character.
 Otherwise knowledge becomes a heavy crown upon the head.
 Swaraj turns knowledge from crown into blood.
 How alive is the knowledge of a society whose scholars quote distant books but cannot understand the problems of their own village?
 If philosophy does not see the suffering of its own society,
 for whom is it?
 If economics does not read village hunger?
 If politics does not hear local experience?
 If education does not hear the child's language?
 Knowledge requires earth.
 Without earth, thought hangs in the air.

Yet locality is not a reason to close the world.
 The village question can join the global question:
 water, climate, poverty, labour, women,
 technology, freedom, truth.
 Human experience crosses boundaries.
 Look toward the world from your own earth,
 not toward your own earth only from the world.
 A tree keeps its roots in soil while touching the sky.
 A rootless tree cannot live.
 A root without sky cannot live either.
 Root and sky together:
 this is the image of free thought.
 A mind knows its own tradition and other traditions. It asks its own questions. It hears another's answers.
 Then it decides for itself.
 Neither blind nationalism.
 Nor blind adoration of the foreign.
 Neither self-hatred.
 Nor self-enchancement.
 An open self-respect.
 This balance is difficult.
 On one side: the wound of history,
 the memory of subjection, humiliation, plunder.
 On the other: the necessity of learning from the world.
 If, because of the wound, we reject everything outside,
 we make ourselves smaller.
 If, because of the wound,
 we regard ourselves as inferior and worship everything outside,
 subjection continues.
 To heal a wound is not to erase memory.
 It is to restore confidence while carrying memory.
 'Yes, we were wounded.'
 'But we are not only the wound.'
 'We have created too.'
 'We have a future too.'
 These sentences can become medicine.
 A nation cannot remain forever inside the memory of being wounded.
 It requires a creative future.
 Remember the past, but walk forward.
 Swaraj does not mean turning one's back permanently upon others.
 It means making the eyes level.
 Neither downward.
 Nor upward.
 Face to face.
 'I shall hear your thought.'
 'You shall hear mine too.'
 'Let us weigh them.'
 This is the dignity of dialogue.
 The world is a table.
 We should sit at it as equals.
 Not waiting outside the door.
 Not overturning the table and fleeing.
 Sit as equals.
 Speak.
 Listen.
 This is freedom of thought.
 A society should make its scholars not merely translators but creators.
 New questions.
 New words.
 New methods.
 New readings of old knowledge.
 New syntheses of knowledge from elsewhere.
 Creation is the fruit of freedom.

If freedom produces no creation,
it remains a slogan.

In a university where the highest prestige lies in quoting foreign names rather than creating one's own questions, the mind may still remain dependent.

Quotation is necessary.

Knowledge is a chain of inheritance.

But let the chain not become a fetter.

The ancestors spoke.

Foreign thinkers spoke.

The teacher spoke.

Now what do you say?

This question turns a student into a scholar.

A new sentence alongside memory.

In this way the lineage of thought remains alive.

If every generation merely repeats what the previous one said,
knowledge becomes a grave.

The new generation should disagree with respect.

'I see differently here.'

This sentence preserves culture.

Disagreement is not merely rebellion.

It can be one form of love.

Why question what we do not value?

A question says: 'This is my living inheritance.'

No one debates a dead object.

A living tradition can endure controversy.

In a household the family says,

'This custom has existed for centuries.'

A young person asks, 'Why?'

If the answer is only, 'Because it has existed for centuries,
'where is thought?'

Tradition must give its reasons.

Show its human value.

Otherwise change it.

Time brings new circumstances.

Old answers are not always sufficient.

But new questions need not throw away old wisdom.

The two can meet in new solutions.

An old village practice of water conservation can meet modern hydrology.

Folk knowledge of medicinal plants can meet scientific testing.

An old tradition of community cooperation can meet modern administration.

Synthesis is creation.

Neither blind revivalism.

Nor blind modernisation.

A living experiment between the two.

Swaraj is not a museum.

It is a workshop.

Old tools as well.

New machines as well.

We are the artisans.

The decision is ours.

The product must suit life.

The workshop remains open to air.

Yet the consciousness of ownership remains ours.

How many ideas do we accept without examination merely because they arrive dressed in modern words?

'Development.'

'Progress.'

'Modernisation.'

'Individualism.'

'Market.'

'Nation.'

'Secularism.'

'Tradition.'

Every word carries its own history.

Do not become enchanted merely by hearing the word.
 Open its meaning.
 What does it mean in our context?
 Whose interest does it serve?
 Whose harm?
 What image of the human being lies inside it?
 Less glitter of words, more meaning.
 Without such discernment,
 freedom of thought can become merely another slogan.
 Sometimes a foreign word gives a new name to a problem already present among us.
 That can be useful.
 Once named, the problem becomes visible.
 But sometimes a word can create a problem where life had been moving in another form.
 Therefore language and reality must remain in continuous dialogue.
 A name is not complete truth.
 Yet experience without language is not always easy to grasp.
 Let us create new words.
 Let us name the subtle distinctions of our experience.
 The richer the language, the freer the thought.
 If a language is regarded as incapable of expressing modern thought, its speakers can slowly be pushed away
 from knowledge.
 Language development, therefore,
 is not merely literary work.
 It is part of intellectual self-reliance.
 Scientific words.
 Philosophical words.
 Legal words.
 Technical words.
 And also the clarity of ordinary speech.
 Words are bridges carrying knowledge toward the people.
 If only one class can cross the bridge,
 knowledge is not democratic.
 A farmer should be able to understand policy.
 A worker, rights.
 A woman, health knowledge.
 A child, science.
 Knowledge in one's own language gives dignity.
 But learning another language is no fault.
 A multilingual mind has many windows.
 The more windows, the more sky.
 Yet let the main room of the house not remain dark.
 The mother tongue is the mind's first home.
 Let it become an intellectual home as well.
 Then the child may feel less torn between heart and intellect.
 Freedom is not only the outer state.
 It is unity within the mind as well.
 Let what we think find words that belong to us.
 Let what we feel reach the intellect.
 Let what we read meet life.
 This unity is inward swaraj.
 How many educated minds carry an invisible ranking inside them:
 home people - 'less'; city ideas - 'high';
 hand labour - 'low'; office work - 'respectable';
 folk song - 'rustic';
 foreign music - 'cultured'.
 Where did these rankings come from?
 What is the standard?
 Swaraj tests the balance again.
 No folk art is lesser merely because it is rural.
 No urban art is higher merely because it is modern.
 The touchstones are the work itself: depth,
 beauty, truth, life.
 Not class or place.

The mind becomes free in art as well.
A dance born in a village can touch the world.
A foreign work can speak a truth within our own heart.
Human experience crosses boundaries.
Swaraj does not mean sealing borders.
It means openness with equal self-respect.
A foreign poet can become our friend.
But friendship begins when we do not silence our own poem.
Two voices meet.
Neither disappears into the other.
That is dialogue.
Political freedom that does not break the slavery of the mind remains incomplete.
But freedom of mind does not come from patriotism alone.
It requires discernment.
Criticism.
Language.
Creation.
Education.
Self-respect.
Respect for others.
A society must create its own questions and test its ideals again.
No ideal is right merely because it is old or new.
Does it enlarge human life?
Freedom?
Dignity?
Truth?
Creativity?
Community?
Balance with nature?
Life is the touchstone.
Ideals exist for life.
Life is not a sacrifice laid before ideals.
How many ideologies try to force the human being into a pre-drawn map.
If the human being bends differently,
they cut the person to make the shape straight.
But if thought exists for human beings,
the map must change.
Life is primary.
Theory is a means.
A free mind is not the slave of any doctrine.
It can use a theory while keeping its eyes open.
It looks at consequences.
At suffering.
At circumstance.
Then it revises.
When an ideology says, 'I am complete,
' the mind should be cautious.
Life is always larger than theory.
One event in one village can change an entire book.
One human being's pain can reveal the blind spot of a great doctrine.
Swaraj listens to the voice of life.
Books matter.
But life does not exist beneath books.
A teacher from elsewhere can teach us much.
But we are not meant to remain that teacher's students forever.
One day we must become equals.
Then we too must have something to say.
A teacher succeeds when the student can think independently.
Education succeeds when a student does not merely remember answers but creates new questions.
A nation succeeds when its citizens can do more than cheer;
they can disagree with discernment.
A culture succeeds when a new generation recreates it in its own language.
Swaraj is not a final condition.

It is a continuing practice.
 Every generation must ask again:
 'Through whose eyes am I seeing? In whose language am I thinking? Whose standards am I accepting? Why?'
 These questions keep the door of the mind clean across generations.
 Subjection can return in new forms.
 Yesterday an empire.
 Today a market.
 Yesterday political power.
 Today an algorithm.
 Who decides what appears before our eyes?
 Which news do we see?
 Which ideas do we hear again and again?
 Which taste begins to feel like our 'own' taste?
 A new dependence can live inside the screen.
 Swaraj still requires the question:
 'Did I choose this, or was I made to choose it?'
 How fine the difference can be.
 Advertising shapes desire.
 Media, fear.
 Algorithms, attention.
 Society, prestige.
 Family, expectation.
 Where, among these, is one's own voice?
 Silence becomes necessary.
 Turn off every screen for a moment.
 Let the crowd remain outside.
 Sit with oneself.
 'What do I truly want?'
 'What do I believe?'
 'Why?'
 A small assembly of inward swaraj.
 No microphone.
 No cheering crowd.
 Only conscience and discernment.
 Yet conscience too has a history.
 Therefore examination must continue.
 Sometimes what feels like our 'own' idea is merely inherited prejudice.
 Swaraj does not mean rejecting outside influence while preserving injustice within.
 If caste discrimination came through our tradition,
 is it right merely because it is 'ours'?
 What of discrimination against women?
 Religious hatred?
 Untouchability?
 Swaraj is not the indigenisation of injustice.
 Freedom requires human values.
 'Belonging to us' and 'being right' are two different questions.
 'Coming from elsewhere' and 'being wrong' are two different questions too.
 This distinction is crucial.
 The touchstones are values:
 truth, justice, compassion, freedom, dignity,
 creation, life.
 Weigh both the local and the external against these.
 Then swaraj need not be narrow.
 It can become universal in its humanity.
 A person standing upon one's own feet does not fear another.
 Such a person can extend a hand.
 An insecure mind either worships the other or hates the other.
 A self-respecting mind enters dialogue.
 This is a fraternity of thought across the world.
 Keep your home, but speak with the neighbour.
 Keep your language, but learn another.
 Keep your tradition, but respect another's.
 Make your own judgement, but listen to evidence.

Walk your own path,
but remain within shared humanity.
This is open swaraj.
One day a child in school will ask a difficult scientific question in the mother tongue.
The teacher will say,
'Excellent. Now look at books in another language too.'
The child will read both.
Then say, 'This is how I understand it.'
How much future lives in that sentence.
Not imitation.
Not rejection.
Creation.
A researcher will read a theory from afar and place it beside the experience of the village.
Where the two do not fit,
a new question will be born.
The world will hear the answer.
Then the journey of knowledge will no longer move in only one direction.
From here to there too.
We will not remain only consumers.
We will become givers as well.
Exchange of thought among equals.
This is a mature moment of swaraj.
A poet will carry a folk melody toward a new global form.
An artist will place new colour inside an old line.
A scientist will make a global solution from a local problem.
A philosopher will use the fine distinctions of one's own language to ask a human question in a new form.
A society will share its experience with the world.
Then swaraj becomes creation,
not merely protection.
Protection is sometimes necessary.
Save the language.
Save memory.
Save art.
But preservation inside a glass box becomes death.
Living things take new forms.
Language gains new words.
Songs gain new melodies.
Custom gains new meaning.
Philosophy gains new questions.
Culture lives with time.
What never changes can become a mummy.
What changes everything while forgetting its roots can lose identity.
Again, balance.
Living roots, new leaves.
A tree makes new leaves every year but does not become a different species each time.
Identity is continuity within change.
So is culture.
We are not an exact copy of yesterday.
Nor are we entirely cut off from yesterday.
Memory is the thread.
Novelty the weave.
A new cloth.
Swaraj means weaving upon one's own loom.
Some threads are old.
Some new.
Some come from distant lands.
But the design must suit life.
The loom is ours.
The hands are ours.
The decision is ours.
Wearing that cloth, we meet the world.
Neither naked in mind.
Nor clothed only in borrowed garments.

Our own creation.
 There was a time when we were anxious for another's approval:
 'Will they call us civilised? Modern? Progressive?'
 One day we must ask instead:
 'What are we according to the touchstones of our own life?'
 Another's judgement matters, but it is not final.
 The world is not an audience giving us marks.
 We ourselves are participants in life.
 Respect is not alms.
 It comes through creation.
 Self-respect is not declaration.
 It grows from capacity and integrity.
 If we call our language great but create no knowledge in it,
 the sentence is empty.
 If we call our culture great but refuse to correct injustice within it, the sentence is empty.
 If we call our nation great while citizens remain hungry,
 the sentence is empty.
 Pride demands work.
 Create language.
 Improve schools.
 Research.
 Art.
 Justice.
 Science.
 Literature.
 Social reform.
 These are the bricks of self-respect.
 Declaration is only paint.
 Without bricks, what will paint cover?
 Swaraj is creative labour.
 One generation will write new textbooks.
 Another a new dictionary.
 A third, scientific experiments.
 A fourth, documents of folk knowledge.
 A fifth, new dialogue with the world.
 Slowly the house of the mind grows stronger.
 There is no single day of revolution.
 It is long construction: one brick each day,
 one question, one translation, one original idea,
 one criticism of an old rigidity,
 one new creation.
 This is the daily labour of swaraj.
 One day we will read our old texts again.
 Not for worship.
 To ask questions.
 Which idea remains alive there?
 Which historical limit?
 Which language still gives light today?
 Which part now appears unjust?
 Then we will read the world's new texts.
 Not in order to be dazzled.
 For dialogue.
 Which question is universal?
 Which belongs to a particular history?
 Which will enrich us?
 Which does not fit our life?
 Read both as equals.
 This is freedom of thought.
 Be the slave of no single source.
 Go wherever truth is found.
 But go with your own feet.
 Sometimes truth may stand against one's own tradition.
 Accept it.

Sometimes a distant ideal may stand against the truth of our life.
 Reject it.
 Sometimes both can join to form something new.
 Create it.
 Truth does not ask for nationality.
 Yet the expression of truth touches language,
 history and life.
 Understand this subtle difference.
 Truth can be universal.
 Form can be local.
 The life of a seed is universal.
 The colour of its flower arises with the soil.
 Swaraj is creativity of form.
 Let the world's truth receive the colour of one's own life.
 A democracy can find a form shaped by its own history.
 An education, by its own language.
 A science, by its own problems.
 An art, by its own memory.
 A philosophy, by its own questions.
 Yet humanity remains shared.
 Maturity is the capacity to hold both at once.
 One hand touching the soil.
 The other reaching toward the sky.
 Feet at home.
 Eyes upon the world.
 Heart with one's people.
 Intellect open in every direction.
 This is a beautiful human being.
 Neither enclosure.
 Nor self-forgetting.
 An open house.
 A strong foundation.
 Many windows.
 A door of one's own.
 What comes bringing knowledge - receive it.
 What comes bringing harm - set a boundary.
 What comes bringing arrogance - question it.
 What comes bringing love - enter dialogue.
 What comes bringing truth - receive with gratitude.
 What is wrong - reject without hatred.
 This is the house of swaraj within the mind.
 One day dawn will again stand at the window.
 We will remove the spectacles.
 But we will not close our eyes.
 We will see the distant mountain.
 And our own courtyard.
 We will call another's garden beautiful without declaring our own flower withered.
 We will love our own flower without setting fire to another's garden.
 We will say:
 'This is my soil' - but not 'only this soil is sacred.'
 'This is my language' - but not 'only this language contains knowledge.'
 'This is my tradition' - but not 'everything old is right.'
 'This is my future' - but not 'I shall learn nothing from others.'
 Freedom breathes within these four 'buts'.
 For swaraj is not a closed fist.
 It is an open hand.
 A hand that can make its own bread and share it with another.
 A hand that can light its own lamp without becoming jealous of another's light.
 A voice that can sing its own song and enjoy a distant song as well.
 A mind that asks its own questions and listens to another's answers.
 This is the free mind.
 A cultural swaraj in which identity is not a hard wall but a living rhythm.
 A swaraj of thought in which standards are tested rather than borrowed.

A linguistic swaraj in which knowledge breathes in one's own language too.
 An educational swaraj in which the student learns creation,
 not imitation.
 An ethical swaraj in which injustice is not forgiven merely because it belongs to us.
 A universal-human swaraj in which self-respect walks beside respect for others.
 Then dawn will become more than the rising of the sun.
 It will become a new direction of the mind.
 A gaze that does not need to borrow another person's eyes,
 yet does not reject another person's viewpoint.
 It opens its own eyes.
 Looks.
 Listens.
 Weighs.
 Accepts.
 Rejects.
 Creates.
 And then, in new light,
 examines its own decision once again.
 For freedom is not a prize received once.
 It is the practice of remaining awake every day.
 Every day asking oneself again:
 'Through whose eyes did I see the world today?'
 If the answer comes: 'Through my own,
 but with open eyes,'
 then the dawn will truly be ours.

A New Current in the Old River

An old river, yet every dawn new water enters it.
The mountain is old, the cloud new.
The ghat is old, the feet new.
The name is old, the question new.
Time sits upon the bank and asks:
'Are you still flowing,
or are you merely preserving your old map?'
The river laughs: 'If the water has stopped,
where is the river?'
Memory is necessary, but if memory blocks the flow,
it becomes a dam.
Tradition is necessary, but if tradition stops questions,
it becomes a wall.
Knowledge is necessary,
but if knowledge abandons life and becomes only dust upon books,
it becomes a museum.
Living thought walks all the way to people's suffering:
the school,
the marketplace,
the field,
the factory,
the home,
the laboratory,
the court of law.
If a thought preserves its dignity only inside the classroom,
its feet are weak.
Thought must touch the earth:
the farmer's dry field,
the worker's tired hands,
the young person's confusion,
the woman's silence,
the child's question,
the mind's unrest.
Life itself opens the philosophical classroom.
When an independent country stands upon its own feet,
it must determine not merely its borders but the direction of its thought.
'Who are we?'
'What should our future be?'
'What in our old inheritance is alive?'
'What has become rigid?'
'What shall we learn from the distant world?'
'What shall we create ourselves?'
These are not the questions of one book but the questions of generation after generation.
Each generation gives the river its new water.
Sometimes the current is swift.
Sometimes weak.
Sometimes flood.
Sometimes drought.
But that the river keep moving - this is life's first condition.
One end says, 'All answers are in the old.'
The other says, 'Leave everything old in the new age.'
Between them life says, 'I need both hands.'
One hand, memory.
The other, experiment.
One hand, tradition.
The other, criticism.
One hand, faith.
The other, discernment.
One hand, self-knowledge.
The other, science.
A human being cannot build a whole house with one hand.

The old questions are still alive:
 Who am I?
 What is the world?
 How do we know?
 What is truth?
 What is liberation?
 What is duty?
 What is consciousness?
 But a new time stands at the door with new guests:
 democracy,
 science,
 industry,
 the nation,
 social justice,
 individual freedom,
 human dignity,
 gender equality,
 the environment,
 technology,
 a new economy.
 The old house says, 'Come in.'
 But the rooms must be arranged again.
 Synthesis does not mean muddling things together.
 Two colours becoming grey is not synthesis.
 Two colours keeping their own brightness and creating one picture - that is synthesis.
 Old reasoning must listen to the questions of new science.
 Science must listen to the questions of human value.
 If religion says, 'Questions are forbidden,
 'discernment will knock upon the door.
 If science says, 'Values are not my concern,
 'life will ask, 'Then in whose hands will power lie?'
 A machine can be made - but for what?
 A medicine can save life - but who will have access to it?
 A technology can save time - but in what kind of life will the saved time be spent?
 Science says 'how'.
 Philosophy asks 'why'.
 Society asks 'for whose benefit?'
 The human being stands among all these.
 When they speak with one another,
 civilisation deepens.
 When they despise one another,
 the human being fragments.
 Faith and evidence need not be enemies.
 One looks toward a sky of meaning.
 The other toward laws governing events.
 One hears the heart's anguish.
 The other, data.
 But faith must not become blindness.
 Evidence must not mock human meaning.
 A healthy mind can keep both doors open.
 Truth sometimes lives in a formula.
 Sometimes in silence.
 Sometimes in data.
 Sometimes in a voice raised against injustice.
 Life has many languages of truth.
 A living tradition translates.
 Old words meet new problems.
 'Liberation' is no longer only a question beyond birth and death;
 it can also be a question beyond enslavement.
 'Dharma' is not merely ritual but responsibility.
 'Knowledge' is not merely private liberation but social justice as well.
 Old words receive new sunlight of meaning.
 A dead tradition preserves words, not meaning.

A living tradition preserves meaning,
even if words change.
A seed may remain safe inside a glass box,
but it will not become a tree.
Plant it.
Give it soil.
Water.
Air.
Questions.
Then comes the shoot.
If philosophy does not see society,
whose philosophy is it?
Hunger is a philosophical question.
Justice.
Resources.
The value of labour.
Equality.
Freedom.
Dignity.
At a well where a human being is denied water,
why should equality remain only on paper?
In a school where the daughter remains outside,
whose light is knowledge?
In a factory where the worker becomes a component,
where is humanity?
In a state where questions are afraid,
where is freedom?
The feet of thought must fall upon life.
Person and society are not two enemies.
The individual receives language, education,
roads, law and culture from society.
Society changes through individual creation.
Each makes the other.
If the individual sees only private happiness,
that person becomes a lonely island.
If society swallows the individual's voice,
it becomes a prison.
Between them lies the bridge of dignity and responsibility.
How much power for the state?
How much freedom for the person?
How much authority for the family?
How open should the market be?
How much difference can equality preserve?
These questions are knots of daily life.
Pull one thread and another may tighten.
Increase freedom - but what of protection for the weak?
Increase safety - but what of surveillance?
Increase equality - but what of individuality?
Strengthen community - but what of dissent?
Balance is a living art.
At one time political freedom was the central question.
Then social equality.
Economic justice.
Gender dignity.
The environment.
Technological freedom.
The moral circle keeps widening.
First some people.
Then all citizens.
Then women.
Dalits.
Adivasis.
Disabled people.

Minorities.
 Future generations.
 Other living beings.
 The wider the circle grows,
 the larger the heart must become.
 Spirituality that abandons life is incomplete.
 Life that abandons inward depth is incomplete.
 The lotus blooms in water.
 Not in the sky after leaving the water.
 Yet the water does not drown its petals.
 Live in the world, but do not become a slave to greed.
 Accept the body, but do not reduce yourself to the body alone.
 Accept society, but not blind imitation.
 Both inner and outer life ask for liberation.
 A mind at peace but cruel within the home - incomplete peace.
 A society equal in law but filled with hatred in the mind - incomplete equality.
 Inner values must take outward form.
 Outer institutions must create room for inward development.
 Character is not merely the shadow of knowledge;
 it gives knowledge direction.
 More books - but honesty?
 More degrees - but compassion?
 More technology - but restraint?
 More power - but service?
 A sharp intellect with a greedy heart can become a danger to civilisation.
 Power gives the hand.
 Character gives direction.
 A knife can perform surgery or murder.
 The question is the character of the hand.
 Education must form not only the brain but the human being.
 Love of truth.
 Respect for labour.
 The dignity of another person.
 Dialogue.
 Compassion.
 Courage.
 Self-examination.
 These are not merely chapters in a textbook.
 They are the atmosphere of the school.
 The teacher's conduct.
 The language of the home.
 The culture of the institution.
 In a school where cheating rules the examination,
 what is the worth of a lesson on honesty?
 In a home where the daughter is valued less,
 what is the worth of speeches on equality?
 Character is written by atmosphere.
 Language returns again to the doorway.
 If thought lives only in the tower of a prestigious language,
 how many people will ever climb there?
 Knowledge must reach the people.
 Mother tongues and Indian languages must become vehicles of thought.
 Let them create new words.
 Let there be translation.
 Let difficult ideas become accessible.
 Clarity is not the enemy of depth.
 A deep river can be clear.
 Let people ask questions in their own language.
 Let philosophy be not only a closed room in a library but a village square as well.
 But popularity is not the touchstone of truth.
 Accessibility does not mean shallowness.
 Clarity does not mean simplification.
 Language is a living laboratory of thought.

Translation is not merely changing words.
Two intellectual worlds meet.
As a word crosses, some meanings may fall away.
Some new meanings may grow.
Translation is humble creation.
Not copying.
Understanding.
If a society cannot discuss science, philosophy,
society, justice and technology deeply in its own languages,
its freedom remains incomplete.
But a world language is not the enemy.
It is a window.
The problem begins when the window becomes the whole house and the house itself becomes a store-room.
One foot at home.
The other in the world.
Travel with both.
Read the old texts again.
Not for worship.
For questions.
What were they saying in their own time?
What might they mean today?
The first question does justice to history.
The second accepts responsibility for the present.
Re-reading is not arbitrary twisting.
It is revision with respect.
Do not turn an old idea into a statue.
A statue does not hear questions.
A living idea debates.
'Here, something extraordinary.'
'Here, doubt.'
'Here, today's circumstances are different.'
This is living respect.
Where will new philosophy come from?
Not only from old commentary.
Not only from translation of foreign theory.
From new experience.
New questions.
New language.
New struggles.
Urban loneliness.
Environmental crisis.
The digital world.
Biotechnology.
Politics of identity.
The global market.
New problems demand new thought.
Originality is not born from an absolute void.
It keeps old threads inside a new weave.
Originality is an honest answer to a new question.
'The ancestors said this' - important.
'It was said in a distant land' - important.
But one day the question arrives:
'What do you say?'
This is the threshold where a student becomes a thinker.
The answer is not always in the book.
Sometimes it must be created.
Originality is not laziness.
Study.
Reasoning.
History.
Evidence.
And then a new path.
How can one make a new trail without first knowing the forest?

Know the old map, but do not sit at home holding the map.
 Walk.
 Research is the long breath of thought.
 Preserve manuscripts.
 Edit them.
 Translate.
 Undertake new studies.
 Document folk knowledge.
 Analyse contemporary problems deeply.
 Research is not merely a degree.
 It is a bridge between memory and future.
 A fading letter is not merely paper.
 It is the voice of an old question.
 Preserve it.
 But do not lock it in a cupboard.
 Read it.
 Understand it.
 Criticise it.
 Bring it into dialogue.
 Then memory becomes blood.
 Institutions are soil:
 universities,
 research centres,
 journals,
 libraries,
 conferences,
 translation programmes,
 terminological work.
 But if an institution becomes mere formality,
 the soil turns barren.
 A conference only for inauguration?
 Research only for promotion?
 A journal merely a list?
 A library closed?
 Where then will the seed of thought grow?
 An institution is alive where there are questions.
 Debate.
 Reading.
 Writing.
 An atmosphere of freedom.
 A research centre is not a temple where one position is worshipped.
 Nor a market where popularity is sold.
 It is a workshop.
 Reason is the hammer.
 Evidence, the touchstone.
 History, the measure.
 Questions, fire.
 Creation, metal.
 Knowledge is heated and takes a new form.
 Someone says, 'Philosophy is dying.'
 But as long as human beings ask:
 'What is truth?'
 'What is a good life?'
 'What is justice?'
 'Who am I?'
 'What is death?'
 'What are the limits of knowledge?'
 'How far does freedom extend?'
 How can philosophy die?
 It may change its name.
 Its language.
 Its subjects.
 But the questions remain alive.

A child's 'why?' is a philosophical lamp.
An old person's question about the meaning of life before death - a philosophical lamp.
A court weighing rights - a philosophical lamp.
A scientist confronting the limits of knowledge - a philosophical lamp.
A citizen questioning the power of the state - a philosophical lamp.
Life is filled with philosophy.
The question is whether the university remains connected to the heat of that life.
Let text and street meet.
Reason and experience.
Classroom and society.
Scholar and people.
This is the contemporary confluence.
The future has no single road.
Someone will work on language.
Someone on reasoning.
Someone on re-reading tradition.
Someone on ethics.
Someone on dialogue between religion and science.
Someone on society and culture.
Someone on the environment.
Someone on consciousness.
Someone on education.
Someone on values.
The forest of thought needs many trees.
But let the soil beneath the forest be shared:
an honest search for truth,
human dignity,
the discipline of reasoning,
respect for history,
openness,
self-confidence,
humility.
One tree is not the whole forest.
One ideology is not the whole of human experience.
Plurality is necessary.
But plurality is not scattering.
The roots meet below.
The roots of thought meet in human questions.
Two civilisations are not two solid stones.
Many currents live inside each.
'One is spiritual.'
'The other material.'
Such easy divisions can make truth smaller.
Let specific ideas meet specific ideas.
Specific questions.
Specific arguments.
Then comparison becomes alive.
Not slogan.
Another tradition's questions expose our blind spots.
Our questions expose theirs.
Dialogue is not victory and defeat.
Two windows see one sky more deeply.
But dialogue must be among equals.
One always teacher,
the other always pupil - that is not dialogue.
Let both sit at one table.
Both ask questions.
Both answer.
Both endure criticism.
This is the dignity of world thought.
A river carries its own water toward the sea.
After reaching the sea,
the water becomes part of a world cycle.

Then cloud.
 Then rain.
 Knowledge is such a cycle.
 Many sources.
 Many rivers.
 Many seas.
 No single centre forever.
 Keep your source alive.
 But do not fear the sea.
 An ideal is a horizon.
 It gives direction,
 but if forced down bodily upon earth it can become a mirage.
 A final society in which every question has ended - perhaps human life is not that simple.
 One problem is solved.
 Another grows.
 Technology gives convenience, and new loneliness.
 The market gives goods, and new greed.
 The state gives security, and new control.
 Freedom gives new responsibility.
 Let the ideal remain flexible:
 more justice,
 more freedom,
 more compassion,
 more truth,
 more creation,
 more balance.
 A horizon is not a place to arrive at;
 it is direction.
 Human liberation too does not have only one meaning.
 Liberation from hunger.
 From caste.
 From gender oppression.
 From political fear.
 From ignorance.
 From blind consumption.
 From inward ego.
 Let spiritual and social liberation speak to one another.
 Free within, unjust without - incomplete.
 Just without, hateful within - incomplete.
 Two wings:
 meditation and democracy,
 self-restraint and equal opportunity,
 compassion and law,
 discipline and service.
 A new human being must try to become whole:
 body,
 intellect,
 feeling,
 desire,
 morality,
 creativity,
 spiritual depth,
 social responsibility.
 A human being is not merely a company's 'resource'.
 One is also a poet.
 A friend.
 A mother.
 A citizen.
 A worker.
 A seeker.
 A thinker.
 A lover.
 A living being within nature.

The human being is many-dimensional.
Philosophy should not imprison the human being within one label.
Not caste.
Not profession.
Not religion.
Not gender.
Not class.
No single identity is the entire human being.
A free person who remains joined to society.
A spiritual person who does not flee the earth.
A scientific mind that is not value-less.
A believing mind that does not fear questions.
A love of nation that does not hate humanity.
A love of tradition that questions rigidity.
A modernity that does not despise memory.
This middle path is not weakness.
It is maturity.
How many oppositions have we created ourselves:
religion versus science,
tradition versus modernity,
individual versus society,
East versus West,
spiritual versus material.
Life is more complex.
Synthesis does not erase tension.
It makes tension creative.
The strings of a veena remain stretched;
then there is sound.
Too loose - silence.
Too tight - broken.
Balanced tension - music.
Conflict between ideas too can give birth to new truth.
If there is dialogue.
Disagreement is not hostility.
Debate is not war.
Let one idea strike another and give a spark,
not burn down the house.
The intellectual maturity of a culture can be measured by how it handles disagreement.
Someone says something different - immediately an enemy?
Then thought is weak.
Someone asks a question - immediately an insult?
Then self-confidence is small.
True self-confidence listens to criticism.
It answers.
Sometimes it says, 'You are right.'
These three words are intellectual humility.
A scholar should be able to revise a theory.
A teacher should delight in hearing a student's new idea.
A student should state disagreement with respect.
Humility is the water of thought.
Arrogance, its drought.
A new time is arriving with urgent questions:
digital surveillance,
artificial intelligence,
biological intervention,
climate change,
virtual relationships,
global migration.
Old books will not give direct answers.
But old values will still give some lamps:
dignity,
freedom,
compassion,

truth,
 non-violence,
 justice,
 responsibility,
 wholeness.
 Carry these lamps into the new tunnel.
 Sometimes the old boat needs repair.
 Sometimes a new boat.
 But the art of building boats comes from memory.
 Novelty is not nothingness.
 It is the child of memory and experiment.
 After a long journey, one looks back:
 some lamps burned,
 some darkness remained,
 some original voices,
 some borrowed echoes,
 some institutions were built,
 some dried up,
 some questions were opened,
 some postponed.
 History is mixed.
 An honest assessment says:
 'We have reached this far.'
 'Here, much remains.'
 Not celebration alone.
 Not despair alone.
 A milestone is not a home.
 It is a place to pause and breathe.
 Look back.
 Then forward.
 The journey remains.
 The future is not one person's work.
 It is collective labour:
 writers,
 teachers,
 students,
 translators,
 editors,
 researchers,
 librarians,
 artists,
 scientists,
 social workers,
 those who bring lived experience.
 All belong to the ecology of thought.
 One tree alone is not a forest.
 Let journals host debate.
 Let conferences move beyond formality.
 Let universities preserve new questions.
 Let language create new words.
 Let students ask.
 Let teachers be able to say, 'I do not know.'
 These small intellectual ethics make the future.
 Knowledge is not an object of prestige.
 It is shared discipline.
 Clear writing.
 Deep study.
 Slow reading.
 In an age of fast news,
 slow thought is more necessary.
 A theory cannot be fully understood in five minutes.
 A tradition is not a slogan.
 A society is not one sentence.

Depth asks for time.
Reading.
Reflection.
Silence.
Dialogue.
Then writing.
Information says: 'What happened.'
Knowledge asks: 'Why.'
Wisdom asks: 'What does it mean.'
Discernment asks: 'What shall we do now.'
Thought must protect these final two steps.
An integral view does not make every discipline identical.
Each voice keeps its own method.
The scientist, one.
The poet, another.
The historian, another.
The sociologist, another.
But let each open a window toward the others when confronting human problems.
A pandemic is not only medicine.
It is ethics.
Economics.
Politics.
Psychology.
An environmental crisis is not only science.
It is justice.
Development.
Culture.
Consumption.
A war is not merely strategy.
It is memory.
Identity.
Humanity.
Disciplines are limbs.
Life is the whole body.
Wholeness means remembering the whole body.
Test your own thought again and again.
A theory beloved once may appear limited today.
New facts may change its form.
Truth does not become my property merely because I say,
'This is my theory.'
Someone who shows me my error may sometimes be a friend of knowledge.
Criticism can be service.
But criticism should not become prejudice.
Evidence.
Context.
Respect.
These are its disciplines.
Hope for the future lies less in great declarations than in small acts.
A student writes serious thought in the mother tongue.
A researcher preserves an old text.
A translator brings a distant idea into living language.
A teacher leaves a question open in the classroom.
A scholar admits a mistake.
A journal publishes a differing view.
These small lamps together can illuminate a generation.
The future is not a ready-made building.
It is a brick each day.
One brick, language.
One, an original question.
One, social responsibility.
One, dialogue with science.
One, moral courage.
One, a compassionate gaze.

Slowly, a house.
 Once we asked, 'Where is our thought?'
 The future may ask,
 'How much thought is there in our life?'
 Books - but conduct?
 Theory - but society?
 Spirituality - but compassion?
 Justice - but institutions?
 Freedom - but the classroom?
 Pride in language - but creation of knowledge?
 Tradition - but new questions?
 Thought is alive when it touches action.
 Action receives direction from thought.
 A bridge between the two.
 A truth entering life receives new meaning.
 A social experience raises a new question before an old theory.
 Life is an open book.
 We all write a few lines.
 The question is: with which values will our line travel forward?
 After a long evening there may be not only night but a new dawn.
 If we can say: 'Now, deeper.'
 More original.
 More open.
 More rooted in language.
 More social.
 More in dialogue with science.
 More self-confident.
 More humble.
 More human.
 This new direction can create a sky.
 A thought that knows its home and also the world.
 That listens to ancestors and to children.
 That sees the temple and the laboratory.
 That asks about the soul and about bread.
 That speaks of liberation and of justice.
 That seeks truth and also admits its own limits.
 That preserves language and also translates.
 That holds pride and also criticism.
 This is the new current in the old river.
 The river does not change its name at every bend.
 But its water changes.
 Sometimes its banks.
 New ghats.
 New bridges.
 New boats.
 New travellers.
 And still the river carries the same long life toward the sea.
 Tradition can be like this.
 Identity remains.
 Flow remains too.
 Roots remain.
 New leaves as well.
 Memory remains.
 Creation as well.
 If both can move together, time will again ask from the bank:
 'Are you still flowing?'
 And the river, carrying its new water,
 will answer:
 'Yes.
 I am old, but I have not stopped.
 My depth comes from memory.
 My direction from questions.
 My flow from creation.

And my sea is still ahead.'

The Unnamed Light Behind the Lamp

A lamp shines upon the stage,
 but how many nameless nights remain behind it.
 A book feels light in the hand,
 but how many years of silent labour lie gathered behind its pages.
 A sentence looks clear upon paper,
 but how many books may have been opened to reach that sentence,
 how many questions left unfinished,
 how many answers struck out and written again.
 Knowledge never grows in a single day.
 It slowly takes root within.
 A child asks a first question.
 A teacher says, "Think again."
 A book opens another door.
 A disagreement breaks the mind's sleep.
 A journey changes the gaze.
 A failed answer gives birth to a new question.
 In this way thought builds its home.
 Someone sits in a quiet corner of a library.
 Someone writes words upon a classroom blackboard.
 Someone reads the faded letters of an old manuscript.
 Someone brings a distant idea into one's own language.
 Someone listens seriously to a student's small question.
 Someone doubts even a cherished belief.
 In all these small acts, the long tradition of thought continues.
 Knowledge has no single owner.
 One generation leaves a question.
 Another searches for an answer.
 A third questions the answer again.
 A fourth opens an old dispute in a new language.
 This is the long journey.
 One lamp receives light from another,
 yet the first lamp's flame does not diminish.
 Knowledge does not lessen when shared.
 It spreads.
 One sentence from a teacher may bloom ten years later in a student's life.
 The teacher does not see it that day.
 But the seed continues its work.
 A book leaves the author's hand and travels into many homes.
 Someone reads it late into the night.
 Someone disagrees.
 Someone is inspired.
 Someone preserves one sentence and creates a new thought.
 The book then ceases to be an object.
 It becomes dialogue.
 A living bridge between paper and mind.
 True scholarship is not merely a storehouse of information.
 It is also the courage to say, "I do not know."
 Where ignorance is admitted, a door to new knowledge opens.
 Where arrogance says, "I have understood everything," the window closes.
 Humility is the first air of knowledge.
 No question is small.
 Sometimes a child's "why?" can be greater than an entire treatise.
 For where the question is alive, thought is alive.
 An institution may build many buildings,
 but if there is no room for questions, it is only a house of stone.
 A university is alive where debate is unafraid.
 A journal is alive where different voices can sit upon the same page.
 A library is alive where there is more scent of reading than dust.
 A classroom is alive where questions are honoured along with answers.
 An institution of knowledge is not a temple where one doctrine is forever infallible.
 It is a workshop.

Reason, the hammer.
Evidence, the touchstone.
Doubt, the fire.
Thought, the metal.
Again and again it is heated and changes form.
A good idea does not fear its own criticism.
It says, "Come, test me."
If I break, make me anew.
If I endure, I become stronger.
Truth is no one's private property.
It gives everyone the right to test it.
Someone may have read much yet be unable to hear another's question - that knowledge is incomplete.
Someone may have read less yet be honest toward truth - there is a clear space within.
Scholarship is not decoration for a degree.
It is maturity of vision.
Discipline of thought.
Responsibility in language.
Fidelity to truth.
And respect for another person's dignity.
To write an essay is not merely to join sentences.
It is to clear the disorder within one's own mind.
Which thought is central?
Which evidence?
Which confusion?
Which prejudice?
Which word is excessive?
Which silence is necessary?
Writing is self-examination of the mind.
An editor is often unseen,
but how many sentences are clarified by that quiet labour.
How much repetition removed.
How many errors stopped.
How many ideas given their proper place.
The world of knowledge stands upon countless invisible hands.
Librarians.
Translators.
Proofreaders.
Teachers.
Researchers.
Editors.
Readers.
Students who ask questions.
Together they form an intellectual ecology.
No single tree makes the air; the forest does.
A researcher reads old letters.
The paper has yellowed.
The ink has faded.
But the question is still fresh.
Time ages paper, not questions.
"What is the human being?"
"What is truth?"
"What is a good life?"
"How trustworthy is knowledge?"
"Where is justice?"
These questions travel across generations.
Answers change.
Language changes.
Circumstances change.
But human curiosity assumes ever-new forms.
An old sentence can cast a new shadow in a new age.
But it is not true merely because it is old.
Nor superior merely because it is new.
The touchstone is discernment again.

Reason.
 Experience.
 Human dignity.
 When a scholar reads the past, one should offer not reverence alone but justice as well.
 Understand an old idea within its own time.
 Then place it before today's questions.
 Neither blind worship.
 Nor mockery.
 Dialogue.
 This is true respect.
 A translation is not merely a boat of words between two languages.
 It brings two experiences together.
 Where a word finds no direct companion, the translator pauses.
 Touches the pulse of meaning.
 Which word will live here?
 Which is only foreign glitter?
 Which can awaken an old meaning in one's own language?
 Translation is creative responsibility.
 As words cross over, thought is born again.
 A language able to speak of science, philosophy,
 society and technology increases the self-confidence of its people.
 Language is not emotion alone.
 It is a house of knowledge.
 A child able to ask a difficult question in one's own language - this is intellectual freedom.
 To learn another language is to open a door.
 But why close one's own home?
 A multilingual mind has many windows.
 It sees more sky.
 If research merely repeats what has already been said,
 paper increases and knowledge does not.
 Originality is not merely coining new words.
 It is a new question.
 A new angle on an old question.
 Evidence not yet seen.
 Hearing another person's silence.
 Recognising one's own prejudice.
 One small truth in a new thought is worth more than a great deal of decorative writing.
 Research requires patience.
 Sometimes there is no answer for an entire month.
 One day a small connection joins.
 Then the whole picture becomes slightly clearer.
 As darkness may last all night,
 yet dawn does not arrive all at once.
 First, a thin line.
 Knowledge is like this too.
 Slow light.
 How many failed attempts are necessary.
 A mistaken hypothesis.
 Incomplete evidence.
 A closed door.
 Then a new path.
 Failure is not the enemy of research.
 It corrects direction.
 A teacher also learns from students.
 A classroom is not a one-way river.
 Sometimes a student's question keeps the teacher thinking all night.
 The next day the teacher says, "Yesterday I did not have the full answer."
 That sentence makes the classroom human.
 An infallible guru may make students, but fewer independent thinkers.
 A true teacher wants the student one day to see farther than the teacher.
 A lamp does not envy another lamp it has lit.
 Its work is to increase the light.
 One generation is a stairway for another.

But the stairway must not sit at the top and block the road.
"In our time it was like this" is a memory.
"What is needed now?" is a new question.
Let the two meet.
An elder gives experience.
A young person, a new vision.
If each considers the other small, tradition breaks.
If they listen, a new lineage is born.
The lineage of knowledge does not run through blood.
It runs through the passing of questions and answers.
A book from one home to another.
An idea from one mind to another.
A value from one life to another.
This is intellectual genealogy.
Some leave their names in large letters, some do not.
But a name is not the whole contribution.
History may never record the names of many teachers,
yet their students may change the world.
Many editors never appear on a cover,
yet their severe honesty preserves a serious tradition.
Many translators remain silent,
yet their words lessen the distance between two cultures.
Many readers never write,
yet good reading keeps an idea alive.
Nameless labour is the foundation of civilisation.
The palace bears a name above; whose are the bricks in the foundation?
The palace of knowledge is like this too.
A thinker never becomes great alone.
Behind that thinker stand teachers.
Books.
Debates.
Language.
Readers.
Time.
Institutions.
Society.
Even opponents.
For disagreement gives an idea an edge.
A critic can sometimes be more useful than a friend.
A friend says, "Good."
A critic asks, "Why?"
"Evidence?"
"Limits?"
"The other side?"
Such questions lessen the arrogance of thought.
A healthy intellectual life does not live on praise; it can endure criticism.
But criticism is not insult.
It is responsibility toward truth.
With reason.
With evidence.
With respect.
This is the discipline of debate.
If a book is read only by those who already share its view,
dialogue remains small.
If an idea hears only its own echo, it becomes a cave.
Open thought hears another person's difficult questions.
Sometimes it changes.
Sometimes it becomes clearer.
But it does not close.
An author does not think exactly as one did ten years after writing a first book.
Life changes thought.
Experience deepens it.
Suffering gives new meaning.

Failure, humility.
 Friendship, compassion.
 Changes in society, new questions.
 The life of thought is not a fixed statue.
 It is a river.
 Scholarship able to revise its own old sentences is not weak.
 It is living intelligence.
 "I was wrong here."
 That sentence is one of the higher steps of knowledge.
 For truth has been accepted as greater than one's own ego.
 A society can learn like this too.
 An old policy wrong? Change it.
 An old custom unjust? Change it.
 An old education inadequate? Change it.
 But do not erase memory.
 Remembering error is protection for the future.
 Knowledge is not merely a collection of right answers.
 It is also the history of wrong roads.
 Why did this path fail?
 What confusion?
 What prejudice?
 Such records of failure become maps for the next generation.
 The last line of a research paper may say "Conclusion",
 but the last line of true knowledge is never "Final".
 It says, "Up to here, for now."
 Beyond it, another question.
 This is the humble grammar of knowledge.
 A journal preserves the heartbeat of an age.
 Today's debate.
 Today's concern.
 Today's language.
 Years later someone will open an old issue
 and see the mind of that time.
 A journal is a small museum of time, but while alive it is a public square of dialogue.
 An editorial decision makes certain voices visible.
 Whose article receives space?
 Whose differing view?
 Whose new voice?
 Editing is power too.
 So it requires justice.
 Not merely one's own circle.
 A door for new writers.
 Room for disagreement.
 Rigour for quality.
 With these three a journal remains alive.
 If a research centre is only a signboard, knowledge will not grow.
 It needs time.
 Books.
 Quiet.
 Money.
 Freedom.
 Permission to ask difficult questions.
 Room for failed attempts.
 Trust in the young.
 Knowledge is a long investment.
 Not immediate profit.
 A dictionary can take years.
 A critical edition.
 A translation.
 A complete study of a thinker.
 If society demands only immediate results, deep knowledge may go hungry.
 Some trees grow slowly yet give shade for centuries.
 Some works of knowledge are like that.

Slow, but enduring.
To build a library is to build a home for an unknown reader of the future.
We do not know which book someone will seek twenty years from now.
But we can leave a lamp for that reader.
This is compassion across generations.
To preserve a manuscript is not merely to honour a dead author.
It is to preserve a source for future questions.
Memory is a public inheritance.
But inheritance is not a glass cabinet.
It needs use.
Reading.
Translation.
Criticism.
New creation.
Then old ink becomes new blood.
Do not measure an educated society only by how many books it publishes.
How much does it read?
How much does it question?
How much dissent can it endure?
In how many languages does it create knowledge?
How many young people receive courage to do original work?
These are questions of intellectual health.
If knowledge is only examination answers, education is small.
If knowledge is a ladder to position, small.
If knowledge is a crown of prestige, small.
Where knowledge changes vision, deepens character and enables society to question, there it is alive.
The real test of a scholar is often not upon the stage.
Someone asks a weak question - does the scholar laugh or listen?
Someone disagrees - anger or reasoning?
A younger person advances - jealousy or joy?
Someone points out an error - conceal it or admit it?
In such small moments the character of knowledge appears.
True intellectuality does not make another human being smaller.
It creates more room for another person's question.
A classroom where a student can say without fear,
"I do not understand it this way,"
is a free classroom.
A researcher able to say, "I differ from this old view,"
belongs to a living tradition.
An editor able to say, "Publish the differing view,"
keeps a journal open.
A society able to say, "Let us hear criticism,"
is self-confident.
Knowledge and freedom are deep friends.
A closed mind can accumulate knowledge, but creates less new knowledge.
An open mind takes risks.
It may also be wrong.
But creation is possible there.
Freedom without discipline becomes whim.
Discipline without freedom becomes rigidity.
Let the two meet.
Like music.
There is rhythm.
And improvisation too.
There are rules.
And creation too.
The raga of knowledge is like this.
An experienced mind knows the rhythm of tradition.
A new mind brings a new improvisation.
Together they carry the raga forward.
Rhythm alone makes music mechanical.
Improvisation without rhythm becomes disorder.
Balance is the secret grammar of creation.

How many lives pass between study and teaching.
 Class in the morning.
 Library at noon.
 Notes in the evening.
 Writing at night.
 The next day, another question.
 Seen from outside, an ordinary routine.
 Yet how many generations take shape within this repetition.
 A teacher's greatest work may perhaps be not a book but a student.
 That student may become someone else's teacher.
 One lamp becomes another lamp.
 No single centre.
 Light spreads like a web.
 From one city to another.
 From one language to another.
 From one generation to another.
 From one thought to a new thought.
 Intellectual life is a long collaboration.
 However great one person may be, that person did not create language alone.
 Did not publish the text alone.
 Questions from ancestors were inherited.
 Debates from contemporaries.
 Questions from students.
 Criticism from readers.
 Experience from society.
 Within all these, one creates one's own voice.
 Originality is not isolation.
 It is one's own voice within relationship.
 A raga exists already, yet the singer brings a personal improvisation.
 This is creation.
 One may disagree with an ancestor and still remain indebted.
 One may receive a distant idea and give it one's own form.
 Someone writes the people's experience into a book.
 Someone carries a book's thought back to the people.
 The journey goes both ways.
 Knowledge does not only rain downward from above.
 It rises upward too.
 A farmer's experience.
 A craftsperson's skill.
 A woman's domestic knowledge.
 A community's memory.
 A folk song's vision of life.
 All these enrich the world of knowledge.
 Let books learn from the people.
 And people from books.
 Let the two meet.
 If a scholar sees only books, life may be lost.
 If one sees only experience without study, depth may be lost.
 Both eyes are needed.
 One eye, the text.
 The other, life.
 Both open, and vision becomes three-dimensional.
 Intellectual life is not the work of the brain alone.
 The heart too.
 Why seek truth?
 Why write against injustice?
 Why preserve a language?
 Why save old texts?
 Why give time to students?
 Behind each lies a value.
 Someone's love for knowledge.
 For society.
 For language.

For human dignity.
For truth.
Such love does not make labour easy; it makes it meaningful.
A text is completed.
The table closes.
But the journey of thought does not.
The reader now becomes the author's companion.
The reader carries the question forward.
Sometimes a book's most important fruit is not its answer but its new question.
A true book does not close the mind; it opens it.
"Now I need to know more."
That sentence is the book's victory.
An intellectual tradition lives long when every generation preserves something,
changes something,
rejects something,
creates something new.
If it only preserves, it becomes a museum.
If it only changes, amnesia.
If it only rejects, emptiness.
If it only calls itself new, arrogance.
All four together make a living tradition.
The flame of an old lamp and the oil of a new lamp may differ.
But the desire for light is one.
The direction of truth.
The wish to deepen human life.
A book may not change a whole life, yet it can change one way of seeing.
One way of seeing changes one decision.
One decision, one relationship.
One relationship, one family.
One family, one generation.
The influence of knowledge can be very slow.
But slow does not mean small.
Water takes time to cut stone.
An idea slowly changes the hard walls of society.
First it seems impossible.
Then debate.
Then some people accept it.
Then law.
Then a new normality.
This is the long power of thought.
For this reason writing is responsibility.
Words can touch the future.
So can falsehood.
Hatred too.
Prejudice too.
A book can diminish another person's dignity.
One word can make an entire community seem small.
An author carries not merely a pen but a moral weight.
Check truth.
Watch the language.
Recognise prejudice.
Do not swallow another person's voice.
Writing is free, but not free of responsibility.
An editor too is not merely a guard.
A gardener.
Which new plant receives space?
Which thorn is cleared?
Which old tree preserved?
Which diseased branch cut?
If the gardener loves only one flower, the garden becomes poor.
Diversity is intellectual health.
But not every shrub is a flower.
Quality is the touchstone.

Openness and rigour together.
 A reader too is responsible.
 What is read is not therefore immediately true.
 What agrees with one's own view is not therefore right.
 The reader should question.
 Sources.
 Reasoning.
 Context.
 Then judgement.
 Reading is not passive.
 It is co-creation.
 A poem blossoms a little differently in every reader.
 A philosophical sentence may raise a new question according to experience.
 But meaning is not arbitrary.
 Words have their ground.
 Freedom and discipline meet again.
 A living intellectual culture needs both respect and courage.
 Respect for ancestors.
 Courage to disagree.
 Respect for teachers.
 Courage for a new question.
 Respect for texts.
 Courage to see their limits.
 Respect for language.
 Courage to create new words.
 Respect for institutions.
 Courage to name their errors.
 Without both, tradition is incomplete.
 Respect alone - rigidity.
 Rebellion alone - amnesia.
 A living culture is the child of both.
 If a long life passes among books, classrooms, research,
 writing and dialogue, what is its final measure - how many positions,
 honours, titles?
 Perhaps not.
 How many minds awakened?
 How many questions came alive?
 How many students learned to think for themselves?
 How many languages became richer?
 How many truths became a little clearer?
 How many dialogues opened?
 This is the invisible measure.
 Not on paper.
 In people's minds.
 After a teacher is gone, the teacher's sentence may still live.
 An author is gone, but the book speaks.
 An editor is gone, but the tradition shaped by that editor continues.
 A translator is gone, but people still cross the bridge.
 A founder is gone, but a new generation asks questions within the house.
 Human beings are finite.
 Work can travel beyond time.
 This is one quiet immortality of knowledge.
 Whether the name remains or not.
 If one lamp lights another, the light moves forward.
 How many people give their lives to this light.
 History may not remember them precisely.
 But culture carries their labour.
 As we cross an old bridge without knowing the builder's name,
 so too the bridges of knowledge are made by many nameless hands.
 Hence gratitude.
 Gratitude when opening a book.
 When sitting in a classroom.
 When receiving the quiet of a library.

When reading a difficult idea in one's own language.
All these are fruits of someone's long labour.
Gratitude is not blind worship.
It is remembering that I do not think alone.
Countless minds stand behind my thought.
That memory lightens arrogance.
And increases responsibility.
I too must give something forward.
One clear sentence.
One faithful translation.
One honest piece of research.
One open classroom.
One new question.
One preserved manuscript.
Trust placed in one student.
Space for one differing view.
This is my small lamp.
The future may never know my name.
But if its road receives a little light, that is enough.
The journey of knowledge moves beyond prestige.
A true idea can become greater than its author.
A true question greater than its time.
True teaching greater than a classroom.
A true translation greater than the boundary of two languages.
True editing greater than a single issue.
Work can travel beyond the body of the worker.
This is why the unnamed light behind the lamp matters.
It does not ask for a stage.
It does its work.
Quietly.
One book clarified.
One mind awakened.
One question carried forward.
One language made a little richer.
One generation made a little freer.
And dawn arrives without writing any one person's name.
The sky asks for no signature.
The sun does not say, "This light is mine."
The tree gives shade without reciting its biography.
The river gives water without counting its titles.
Perhaps the brightest form of knowledge is just this -
to give.
To carry forward.
To go beyond oneself.
One lamp burns.
Then another.
Then a third.
And one day every direction is filled with light.
Someone asks, "Whose is this light?"
The answer comes -
"Of many silent hands.
Of many wakeful nights.
Of many questions.
Of many teachers.
Of many readers.
Of many translators.
Of many disagreements.
Of many creations."
And in that shared light a new generation asks its first question.
Then the journey begins again.

Lamps Arriving from Every Direction

A footstep rose from one village.
 A question from another city.
 Somewhere a child looked at the sky beside a river.
 Somewhere, in a small schoolroom, a difficult word opened a door in a child's mind for the first time.
 Then the road grew long.
 One town.
 Another university.
 A library.
 A silent night in a hostel.
 A teacher's difficult question.
 A friend's disagreement.
 An examination.
 A failure.
 A new beginning.
 The journey of knowledge is not straight.
 Sometimes a footpath.
 Sometimes a railway line.
 Sometimes a gathering in a distant country.
 Sometimes a small table in one's own classroom.
 But the questions travel alongside.
 "Where is truth?"
 "How does knowledge arise?"
 "How free is the human being?"
 "How should faith and reason speak to one another?"
 "Is beauty only pleasure for the eye, or something more?"
 "In which direction does duty point?"
 "How does language carry meaning?"
 "When is tradition alive?"
 These questions remained like bread in the traveller's bag.
 Cities changed.
 Classrooms changed.
 Students changed.
 But the questions did not tire.
 One day the traveller became a teacher.
 Standing before the blackboard.
 The students' eyes were all different.
 Some quick.
 Some shy.
 Some there only for the examination.
 Some wholly curious.
 The teacher understood - knowledge is not merely something to be spoken.
 It has to be awakened.
 Speak a word in such a way that a student's own question begins to grow within.
 Open an argument in such a way that the student can walk farther alone.
 A classroom is not the kingdom of one voice.
 It is an assembly hall of many eyes.
 One question comes from the teacher.
 Another from a student.
 A third from silence.
 Sometimes the truest lesson is born when the teacher says,
 "We need to think further about this."
 That sentence is not weakness.
 It is the humility of knowledge.
 How many lives flow from classroom to classroom.
 The bell falls silent in one university and rings in another.
 One post ends.
 Another responsibility.
 Sometimes managing a department.
 Sometimes a research student's question.
 Sometimes a syllabus.

Sometimes preparing a conference.
Sometimes an article for a journal.
Sometimes a preface to a book.
Scholarship is not only one's own book.
It is also making room for another person's thought.
A young researcher arrives holding trembling pages.
An experienced eye sees errors there, but possibility too.
If it sees only errors, the seed may dry out.
If it gives only praise, the seed remains weak.
True guidance is like soil -
firm, yet fertile.
"Read this again."
"The evidence here is insufficient."
"This is a good question."
"Here your own voice is beginning to appear."
These four sentences can change a researcher's year.
This is how the lineage of knowledge continues.
Not through blood.
Not through titles.
Through the transmission of questions and discipline.
One generation says to another, "My answer is not final."
"You look farther."
This is true inheritance.
How many scholars coming from different directions meet at a common crossroads.
One by the road of logic.
One by religion.
One by beauty.
One by language.
One by society.
One by ethics.
One by consciousness.
One through the close reading of old texts.
One through the questions of modern science.
One crossroads, many roads.
There debate takes place.
Someone says, "Reason first."
Another, "Experience."
A third, "Value."
A fourth, "History."
A fifth, "Language."
If all listen to one another, the picture deepens.
If each sees only one's own direction, the crossroads becomes small again.
Knowledge is a city with many directions.
No single road is the whole city.
While a thinker deepens one's own special field,
let the doors to other fields remain open as well.
For a human being is not one subject.
Suffering is also psychology.
Also ethics.
Also society.
Also religion.
Also language.
Also history.
How many subjects can one human question touch.
Like a river passing through many districts.
The borders of knowledge are not as rigid as administrative lines.
A question of beauty can suddenly touch religion.
A question of language, politics.
A question of consciousness, science.
An ethical question, law.
An old classical dispute can meet modern methods of reasoning and take on a new form.
In that meeting thought acquires a new radiance.
But meeting does not mean losing one's identity.

One raga may enter a jugalbandi with another, and still each keeps its own voice.
 Thought can be like that.
 Dialogue does not mean surrender.
 It means listening with self-confidence.
 A scholar went to a conference in a distant country.
 Many languages.
 Many accents.
 Many methods of thought.
 The scholar sat there carrying one's own question.
 Across the table, distant questions.
 For a moment the world seemed immense.
 Then a shared question appeared: "In what sense is the human being free?"
 The distance narrowed.
 Human questions become bridges.
 Countries differ.
 Languages differ.
 Histories differ.
 Yet how close are the questions of fear, hope, death, justice, love and truth.
 World dialogue becomes possible when we carry our own soil with us.
 Not empty-handed.
 Our tradition is a gift.
 But a gift is not for display.
 Open it and say, "This question lived here."
 "This was the limit of this answer."
 "Today it appears to me anew in this way."
 Then tradition speaks with the world.
 If we say only, "Ours is the oldest," dialogue remains small.
 If we say only, "Theirs is the most modern," self-confidence remains small.
 We need a table of equals.
 One chair here.
 One there.
 Both at the same height.
 No civilisation is anyone's permanent student.
 Nor anyone's permanent teacher.
 Human knowledge circulates.
 Sometimes one direction gives.
 Sometimes another.
 An old calculation travels far.
 A method of reasoning returns again.
 An idea is translated.
 A form changes in new soil.
 Knowledge travels.
 Its passport changes, not truth.
 Yet every journey can give it a new colour.
 How important translation is in a scholar's life.
 A book is locked inside a distant language.
 The translator becomes the key.
 But the key must fit.
 One wrong word can make the whole door open crookedly.
 Translation therefore requires patience.
 Dictionaries.
 Context.
 Other texts.
 The original feeling.
 The voice of one's own language.
 If translation is only a shadow, the reader receives less of the original light.
 If it is too free, the original face disappears.
 Between them lies a subtle fidelity.
 A river crosses to another ghat, yet does not lose its water.
 That is the translator's art.
 Language sometimes grows together with thought.
 New philosophical questions arrive and language asks for new words.
 Someone awakens an old word.

Someone creates a new one.
Someone adopts a distant word.
Slowly language becomes a home for serious discussion.
A language in which there is not only song, but reasoning too.
Not only lullaby, but science too.
Not only feeling, but difficult analysis too.
That strengthens the mind of a society.
For the ability to think deeply in one's mother voice is part of self-respect.
But language must not become a fortress.
Another language is a window.
A multilingual mind sees in many directions.
A word with one subtle meaning in one language may give birth to a new question in another.
Let languages enrich one another.
Someone serves on a council.
Someone designs a syllabus.
Someone manages a research institution.
Someone edits a book.
Someone brings out a research journal.
Seen from outside, administration.
But when done with awareness, it builds the structure of knowledge.
Which subject will be taught?
Which text translated?
Which new research supported?
Which language given space?
Which young scholar encouraged?
The future is hidden inside such decisions.
A committee can sometimes look like dull paperwork.
Yet one good decision can create a new field of research ten years later.
A book is published.
A scholarship awarded.
A conference held.
Two distant scholars meet.
A new collaboration begins.
Institutions are the soil of relationships.
But if soil turns into the stone of rigid rules, seeds cannot grow.
Freedom is needed.
Accountability too.
A researcher should be free to choose a question.
But must provide evidence.
A teacher may hold a different view.
But must preserve the student's dignity.
A journal may publish a new perspective.
But must be rigorous about quality.
Openness and discipline together.
This is the joint of intellectual culture.
For decades a teacher may teach the same question again and again.
An outsider may ask, "How many times can the same thing be taught?"
But every classroom is new.
The same text is new in the eyes of new students.
A sentence quiet last year becomes a debate this year.
Time changes context.
The teacher changes too.
A text that gave one meaning in youth gives another in old age.
Experience deepens reading.
A bereavement changes the meaning of death.
A social injustice, the meaning of justice.
A war, the meaning of non-violence.
A student's success, the meaning of education.
Life writes its own notes in the margins of books.
Year by year the margins fill.
Then the scholar opens the book again and smiles at an old note.
"That is how I thought then."
Knowledge is not still.

This is humble growth.
 When a scholar revises an old position, it is not betrayal.
 It is fidelity to truth.
 Truth greater than one's own ego.
 How many people exhaust a lifetime defending a single sentence.
 But the work of thought is not to save a sentence; it is to seek truth.
 If truth changes the sentence, change it.
 A vigilant tradition carries criticism within itself.
 Criticism is not merely an attack from outside.
 It is cleaning from within.
 Which rigidity?
 Which living value?
 Which historical limit?
 Which insight remains useful today?
 Which injustice is no longer acceptable?
 Let tradition clean its own house.
 Then it becomes stronger.
 A house does not become sacred by preserving dust.
 Cleaning is an act of love.
 If a society reads its philosophical inheritance only for pride,
 that is half a reading.
 The other half is criticism.
 "Here, greatness."
 "Here, limitation."
 "Here, a new meaning today."
 Together these three views create mature memory.
 A researcher reads a distant book, but must also look at one's own society.
 For if theory never touches the earth, its feet are weak.
 Test an idea of beauty before folk art.
 An ethical theory before poverty.
 A political idea before the village assembly.
 A linguistic theory before living speech.
 A philosophy of religion before a plural society.
 Then thought finds its touchstone.
 Life is a severe examiner.
 It says, "The theory is beautiful, but what will you do here?"
 Scholarship that runs from this question of life may remain safe on paper,
 but it does not change the world.
 Knowledge sometimes asks us to look at society's suffering.
 Hunger.
 Inequality.
 Discrimination.
 Violence.
 Ignorance.
 Fear.
 Environmental destruction.
 These are not merely political problems.
 They are questions of human value.
 Why should philosophy remain silent here?
 An ethical thought that does not awaken compassion is incomplete.
 A social philosophy that does not hear the weak is incomplete.
 A spiritual thought that does not change daily conduct is incomplete.
 An epistemology that does not see the spectacles of prejudice is incomplete.
 An aesthetics wholly indifferent to the ugliness of life is incomplete.
 Thought must cross its own boundary and touch life.
 Sometimes a scholar's work is to become a bridge.
 Between old and new.
 Between language and language.
 Between faith and reason.
 Between academic knowledge and lived experience.
 Between country and world.
 A bridge itself goes nowhere.
 Yet thousands cross it.

The greatness of a bridge lies not merely in standing firm, but in being used.
Scholarship becomes meaningful when it helps another mind cross.
Someone carries a difficult idea to students in accessible form.
Someone carries a lived experience to the world in rigorous language.
Both are bridges.
A society's intellectual life is rich when it has many bridges.
Not only one fortress.
How many travellers received positions.
Honours.
Chairmanships.
Memberships.
But in the end positions leave with time.
The chair passes to another.
The nameplate changes.
What remains?
An idea.
A book.
A student who went farther.
An institution that remained alive.
A translation still being read.
A debate that gave a new direction.
A value that entered life.
Position is momentary.
Influence can endure.
Therefore let the chair become service.
Not a throne.
If a chairperson amplifies only one's own voice, the gathering becomes small.
If many voices are heard, the gathering grows.
Leadership in intellectual life is also the art of listening.
Hear the new questions of the young.
A scholar from a distant region.
A writer in a small language.
A different method.
A disagreement.
Then the institution becomes plural.
The future of a country's knowledge does not live only in great cities.
Small universities.
Colleges in villages.
Regional languages.
Local journals.
Small libraries.
Lamps can burn there too.
Knowledge is not the monopoly of a capital.
Sometimes the newest question comes from the margin.
From where the mainstream did not look.
The experience of a small town can reveal the limit of a large theory.
A folk language can hold a word for human experience that a major language lacks.
The margin can become a new centre of knowledge.
Therefore listen.
Not only upward.
In all four directions.
From some village in the north.
From a city in the south.
From a university in the east.
From a research centre in the west.
Lamps arrive from every direction.
A gathering fills with light.
No lamp says, "Only I shall remove the darkness."
Each gives its share.
This is cooperation.
A tradition of thought grows not only through competition but through collaboration.
Joint projects.
Edited volumes.

Translation teams.
 Conferences.
 Journals.
 Research networks.
 No one person can do everything.
 Collective intelligence is necessary.
 But the group must not suppress the individual's voice.
 Collaboration does not mean uniformity.
 An ensemble contains many instruments.
 One rhythm, many voices.
 This is collective knowledge.
 How many scholars spend their lives between religion and philosophy.
 It is not easy to hold both the depth of faith and the rigour of reason.
 Yet it is necessary.
 Faith that fears questions is weak.
 Reason that mocks human belief without understanding it is incomplete.
 A true dialogue says, "Keep your faith."
 "I shall keep my question."
 "Let both preserve human dignity."
 Then religion learns peace within a plural society.
 Then philosophy understands the inner experience of faith.
 A thinker works upon beauty.
 Looks at flowers, poetry, music, sculpture, theatre.
 But beauty is not merely beautiful objects.
 It is also a way of seeing.
 Why does a mind change within upon hearing one raga?
 Why can a painting say so much while silent?
 Why can one line of poetry touch a deeper wound than reasoning?
 Beauty is another doorway to human knowledge.
 It speaks truth without the language of logic.
 Art preserves human experience.
 The fear, hope, love and rebellion of an age.
 How can thinking about beauty be separate from life?
 A thinker bends toward language and meaning.
 How small a word, how vast its meaning.
 A sentence means one thing in one mind and another in another.
 But if meaning were wholly arbitrary, how could dialogue occur?
 A subtle dance between word and circumstance.
 Language is the house of thought.
 Both the wall of the house and its window.
 How many philosophical disputes may arise from different meanings of words.
 How many others are genuine differences.
 Clarify language, clarify thought.
 But human experience is not definition alone.
 Some meanings come from life.
 A mother's word "son" is larger than a dictionary.
 The "silence" of grief is larger than grammar.
 Language and life fill one another.
 A thinker of logic says, "Keep the steps clear."
 First the premise.
 Then the reason.
 Then the conclusion.
 One error can tilt the whole building.
 Logic is discipline for the mind.
 But logic is not the heart.
 It can demonstrate injustice; compassion teaches us to tremble before injustice.
 Both are needed.
 Compassion without reasoning can be misled.
 Reasoning without compassion grows cold.
 Human judgement deepens when the two meet.
 A scholar looks back in the final years of teaching.
 How many faces.
 The first class.

The first article.
The first conference.
The first research student.
How many books gathered.
How many pages still to reread.
How many questions still unanswered.
Life is not a completed text.
Some chapters remain open.
Perhaps the future lives precisely in this incompleteness.
If every answer were given, what would the next generation do?
Unfinished questions are gifts.
"We have come this far."
"You go farther."
This is one of the most beautiful sentences one generation can say to another.
A senior researcher says to the young, "Do not merely repeat my name."
"Go beyond me."
That is true pride.
If the disciple never goes beyond the teacher, the tradition has stopped.
If a seed swears to remain smaller than the tree, where will the forest be?
Knowledge asks for growth.
Transcendence with respect.
One book becomes a stairway for the next.
One theory becomes soil for later revision.
One question becomes a door to the next search.
No one is final in this cycle.
The claim to final truth can stop the intellectual journey.
Humility says, "There is more to see."
"More to hear."
"More to read."
These three sentences are the breath of scholarship.
Where elders make room for a new generation, thought remains fresh.
Where the young honour the labour of those before them, roots remain strong.
Where the two meet, the tree grows.
Otherwise one side has roots without leaves.
The other, leaves without roots.
Synthesis is life.
A research tradition that has lasted many decades is not merely a list of people.
It is a shared mental landscape.
Which questions became prominent?
Which languages were used?
Which methods grew?
Which subjects remained at the margin?
Which new currents appeared?
History must see currents more than names.
The intellectual character of an age is known through its questions.
Which questions were asked?
Which were not?
Whose voice was heard?
Whose silence?
The next generation opens these blind spots.
Then history becomes living rereading.
Much old research may seem limited today.
Yet it was a step in its own time.
Climb the stair and look higher; do not kick away the stair.
Gratitude and criticism together.
This is mature inheritance.
When a society preserves the history of knowledge, the future knows its roots.
But if history becomes only glorification, the future is deceived.
Truthful history says, "This was the achievement."
"This was the limit."
"This was overlooked."
"This is the new possibility."
All four are necessary.

Lamps arriving from every direction are placed in a great courtyard.
 Some burn more brightly.
 Some are small.
 Some with old oil.
 Some with a new wick.
 But darkness is not the enemy of any one lamp alone.
 Together they lessen it.
 One lamp of reason.
 One of beauty.
 One of faith.
 One of language.
 One of justice.
 One of society.
 One of consciousness.
 One of education.
 One of rereading tradition.
 One of world dialogue.
 The courtyard slowly fills with light.
 Someone asks, "Which lamp is the greatest?"
 The wind smiles.
 "Wherever there is darkness, the lamp that reaches it is the important one."
 The greatness of knowledge does not come from position.
 It comes from usefulness.
 From integrity.
 From depth.
 From the power to awaken another mind.
 A small article can sometimes be more effective than a great treatise.
 A class more than a book.
 A question more than an answer.
 The measure is not simple.
 So scholarship must not become a race for prestige.
 Awards are beautiful, but not the goal.
 Honour is sweet, but not above truth.
 Position is useful, but for service.
 Let the name remain, but let the work be greater.
 A thinker's work receives true life when it passes beyond the shadow of the thinker's own name.
 A book leaves the author's control and enters the reader's world.
 A student leaves the teacher's control and takes one's own road.
 An institution leaves the founder's control and passes to a new generation.
 True creation sets free.
 Less ownership.
 More trust.
 One lamp lights another and says, "Now burn by your own light."
 This is knowledge's most beautiful blessing.
 At the end, when the hall is empty,
 the chairs silent,
 the books in their shelves,
 the nameplates faded,
 perhaps some nameless light still remains.
 In a student's mind.
 In a translator's words.
 In a researcher's question.
 In a classroom's free debate.
 In a manuscript preserved in a library.
 In the first sentence of a new book.
 This is the long life.
 Human beings depart.
 Questions remain.
 Answers change.
 Lamps change hands.
 And the road of knowledge keeps moving forward with light arriving from every direction.
 No one is the final traveller.
 No one the final lamp.

The sky is still vast.
The road is still open.
And in some distant little school a child asks for the first time again -
"Why?"
From that one word, the whole journey begins again.

SECTION VI — QUESTIONS

The Question Flowing Behind the Fixed Image

Many times an old image
hangs upon the wall of truth;
people do not see its dust,
they only bow and call it inheritance.
Someone says - thought from this land
knows only the direction of the soul,
as though earth, matter, reason and doubt
never found a doorway into it.
Yet in the solid question of each particle
body and world too are present;
alongside consciousness, the reality of matter
stands with equal dignity on many paths.
Another curtain says - the ancient word
is the final seal, questions forbidden,
while within interpretation there has always burned
the fire of disagreement.
A third mould - doctrines as though
forever locked in a house of ice;
once an old form had been made,
no rhythm of change followed after.
But history moves like a river:
one voice contends with another,
new questions open old answers,
boundaries break and new paths are made.
Tradition remains alive only when
it doubts even its own image;
reverence does not close its eyes,
reason fills it from within with light.
Not the stillness of a dead museum -
dialogue is the true home of thought;
behind every image hardened into permanence
a counter-voice continues to flow.
Respect for truth does not mean
putting a lock upon the mouth of questions;
if you want a living inheritance,
test old assumptions again.
The question flowing behind the fixed image
still asks for its answer;
only the tradition that rereads itself
awakens together with the future.

The Sky of Thought Beyond the Axis of Liberation

Can one word be made the centre
 around which every question must turn?
 Can every curiosity of life
 be explained through the same single goal?
 Someone says - thought first
 reveals the possibility of liberation,
 then discipline makes that distant horizon
 real within life.
 The path is beautiful, but the question remains -
 did every argument arise for this end?
 Number, language, cause, matter:
 how do the concerns of society join there?
 Sometimes thought is a laboratory,
 sometimes the sharp light of negation,
 sometimes the boundless sky of imagination
 creating its own possibilities.
 Liberation is an important direction,
 but no direction is the whole;
 to call one river-ghat the sea
 is to lose the meaning of the remaining current.
 Thought, by its own right,
 asks questions and demands evidence;
 where an answer transforms life,
 a path of practice awakens too.
 But do not measure the worth of every thought
 only by the fruit it yields;
 sometimes, for the joy of knowing itself,
 open the door of a question.
 If liberation is one possibility of truth,
 give it its honoured place;
 but in the wide sky of thought
 let the other stars live too.
 A philosophy reduced only to a means
 loses its own freedom;
 a discipline emptied of thought
 dissolves into blind belief.
 Let the two meet, but let neither
 swallow the other whole;
 beyond the axis of liberation too
 the infinite sky of thought opens.

Liberation Is One Question, Thought Has Many Paths

Liberation - what a deep word,
like a door bolted somewhere within;
but is every journey of thought
only the guard of this one doorway?
Self, world, action, knowledge -
each raises its own questions;
one seeks truth, another justice,
another tests the limits of language.
Does calling something 'spiritual'
require denying the truth of matter?
Or is the name earned merely
by placing consciousness above all else?
Goal and reality are different questions;
this distinction must be understood:
what kind of world is there - one inquiry;
how life ought to be - another judgement.
If liberation is our true nature,
how was it ever lost?
If it is not produced by action,
what then is the meaning of effort?
If ignorance is the root of bondage,
knowledge may untie the knot;
but knowledge itself has many forms -
which one shall be called final?
Sometimes the peace of nirvana,
sometimes the bright horizon of omniscience,
sometimes the silence of self-realisation,
sometimes a new infinity of relationship.
Why should so many different images of liberation
be enclosed within a single word?
Beneath the unity of the word
the differences of thought become clear.
Thought has dignity when
it can examine the goal itself,
and before even its dearest ideal
light the merciless lamp of questioning.
Liberation is a great question,
but thought has many roads;
wisdom does not measure every mountain
by declaring one summit the only peak.

In the Forest of Shruti, Whose Voice Is Original?

In the old forest, in every direction,
 the sound of mantra keeps resounding:
 here the fire of ritual, there the silent wood,
 elsewhere the inward question flows softly.
 Which shall we call the original voice,
 which a later leaf?
 Are they branches of a single tree,
 or a gathering of seeds from different origins?
 Mantra awakens in its own metre,
 the Brahmana orders the sequence of ritual,
 the Aranyaka crosses the boundary,
 the Upanishad awakens the inward question.
 If all are one body,
 why should the measure of selection change?
 Why do some texts receive the highest seat,
 while others remain in tradition's shadow?
 Different utterances on different branches -
 how can uniformity simply be assumed?
 Even where the music bears one name,
 the notes turn in many directions.
 If human hands gave the arrangement,
 how absolute can the claim of the non-human be?
 If ritual requires knowledge shaped by people,
 many questions necessarily arise.
 A collection formed across a thousand years
 is not one complete decree of a single moment;
 addition, selection and forgetting through time
 do not stand outside history.
 Reverence grows deeper
 when it does not fear truth;
 to rearrange an inherited order
 is not therefore an act of insult.
 The body of a text is history too,
 time leaves its mark on every page;
 to ask whose voice is original
 is no sin against Shruti.
 The forest is honoured only when
 we see the form of every tree;
 do not erase difference beneath one name -
 record it with attentive care.

Silent Questions Within Limitless Utterance

How many utterances call themselves
the final shore of secret knowledge;
but which shall be chosen as the source,
and which left outside in the night?
Here the world is said to arise,
there unborn truth is sung;
here the self becomes everything,
there the question itself remains primary.
Different seasons, different speech,
different concerns, different settings;
within one name, how many
unequal colours of thought.
A later text dresses an earlier saying
in the clothing of new meaning;
sometimes a small selection claims
the authority of the entire original text.
Where questions once stood in the plural,
interpretation sometimes makes them singular;
how many dissenting voices are suppressed,
how many new doctrines emerge.
Calling something 'the final teaching'
does not make history final;
conflict persists within the reader,
and another question is born again.
Silence too can be evidence,
absence too can be a sign;
what was never clearly said
must not be filled in without caution.
Uniformity is a beautiful idea,
but it requires evidence;
without respect for difference,
the search for truth remains incomplete.
Within limitless utterance,
listen patiently to the silent question;
give up the hunger for one answer
and choose the many directions of speech.
A text remains alive only while
the door of meaning stays open;
not an iron lock of one conclusion,
but a sky of dialogue in bloom.

Many Writings of Time upon the Body of the Sutra

The sutra is small, yet upon its body
 how many centuries leave fingerprints;
 one reading says 'is', another
 adds a negation and makes it different.
 Here one line becomes two,
 there two are joined again as one;
 elsewhere a minute change of word
 turns the direction of the whole argument.
 Which reading is earlier, which later,
 whose evidence carries greater weight?
 To accept something merely because it is old
 is not critical knowledge.
 If a commentary quotes the sutra,
 that is one bright line of evidence;
 but the commentary's own text has a history,
 and it too requires careful scrutiny.
 Sometimes an editor creates an original,
 sometimes tradition preserves a reading;
 sometimes the name of a lost text
 raises a question of verification.
 Counting alone awakens astonishment -
 how many lines stand in doubt;
 yet all are included in the main body:
 how firm the basis, how vast the decision.
 Textual purification is not worship;
 it is the first discipline of reasoning.
 If the word is wrong, the conclusion is wrong,
 and the rule of meaning can collapse.
 To remove the dust of history
 we need doubt joined with humility;
 love for a text never means
 forbidding questions.
 Time writes upon the body of the sutra,
 cutting, adding, shaping again;
 without the lamp of examination we merely
 repeat the imprint of a later hand.
 Truth is not cruel toward anyone,
 but it is severe toward evidence;
 ask the sutra's silence for an answer,
 and make patience the thread of inquiry.

The Final Distance Between Witness and Prakriti

On one side the silent witness stands,
on the other the dance of Prakriti;
when the two are mistaken for one another,
there the work of bondage begins.
Colour, form, pleasure, pain, motion -
all are Prakriti's changing dress;
if the witness takes itself to be these,
confusion fills the whole field.
Discernment says - see clearly:
the one who sees is not the seen;
the light of consciousness and the stream of forms
cannot easily be called one substance.
But when liberation arrives, a question remains:
will the witness continue to see Prakriti?
Or in the peace of final aloneness
will all memory of the seen also flow away?
Within life, awareness of difference
can awaken while the body still remains;
old momentum turns like a wheel,
but identity no longer forgets itself.
Then, when the movement of the body stops,
what meaning remains in kaivalya?
Can there be knowledge of any seen without a witness,
or can a witness stand without anything seen?
One saying claims - once seen, Prakriti
will not return again out of modesty;
another says - even then the witness
retains a clear awareness of difference.
Within this tension lies a deep question:
is liberation emptiness or lucid vision?
Is the perfection of difference the ending
of relationship, or a new creation?
Bondage was an error of identification,
liberation its correct discernment;
but at the final moment of discernment,
does knowledge remain, or only silence?
The clearer the distance between witness and Prakriti,
the deeper the question becomes;
at the shore of final freedom,
whose light will still remain awake?

From the Knot of Illusion to the Silence of Non-Difference

The line between 'I' and 'this'
 at first appears very hard;
 the moment we call the body our own,
 the knot of identity is tied.
 Seeing, hearing, desiring, doing -
 all depend upon one primal conjunction;
 as soon as self is joined to mind and senses,
 the whole world of personality arises.
 But if this joining is illusion,
 the next question is harder still:
 how was illusion born within truth
 if truth is wholly without difference?
 If there are two things, mistaken joining is possible;
 if reality is one, where can duality arise?
 Whose is the first seed of ignorance
 that draws the image of difference in non-difference?
 All the activities of knowledge seem
 to move upon this primal error;
 when the error falls away, knower and known,
 the whole stage slowly dissolves.
 Pleasure-pain, right-wrong,
 meaning-nonmeaning: the pairs break apart;
 speech that travels by means of difference
 comes to rest at the edge of silence.
 Non-difference then is not the number 'one',
 nor a count opposed to plurality;
 it is a field where pairs of opposites
 can no longer construct their old forms.
 Yet if the world is present in experience,
 shall we dismiss it merely as shadow?
 Without understanding the mystery of illusion,
 how can we accept a triumphal cry of truth?
 The knot must be opened,
 but ask also how the knot was formed;
 keep the breath of questioning alive
 all the way to the silent light of non-difference.
 From the knot of illusion to the peace of non-difference
 there is no straight road;
 light the lamp of reason at every step,
 or silence itself may become illusion.

Many Opposing Directions Within One Name

One name is ancient and vast,
yet many positions stand beneath its shade;
one sees the summit of non-difference,
another the immovable mountain of difference.
One takes the world as real,
another denies its finality;
one makes the self one with the Absolute,
another builds a bridge across distance.
If a philosophy is one clear position,
how can so many contradictions fit within it?
Stretch the same definition far enough,
and some remain inside while others fall out.
Sometimes the name comes from the end of a text,
sometimes from a tradition of interpretation;
sometimes three or four authoritative texts
together build a house of legitimacy.
But texts themselves do not face one way,
and interpretations multiply again;
while preserving the truth of one text,
they open doors to different conclusions.
If the name means only
accepting a few ancient texts,
how can philosophical boundaries
be fixed by reverence alone?
A living tradition is never
sealed inside one sutra;
yet if difference expands without limit,
the meaning of the name itself disappears.
The emotional majesty of a word
does not produce logical clarity;
if identity is wanted, a measure is needed,
otherwise the boundary remains like air.
Many directions within one name -
this may be flaw, and it may be history;
the question is not merely whether the name survives,
but whether meaning survives or only belief.
Ask tradition lovingly:
where, in truth, is your centre?
If the answers are many, accept that;
do not call ambiguity itself truth.

The Offering to Fire and the Solitary Ledger of Karma

An offering rises before the fire:
 one hand gives, another receives;
 life is a web of reciprocity,
 one person's well-being comes through another.
 Rain, grain, labour, community,
 the exchange between divine and human;
 within giving lives the hope of receiving,
 the deep effect of a shared order.
 Another current says - the fruit of every action
 is written in the doer's own name;
 no one's merit is simply received by another,
 nor is the burden of fault easily transferred.
 Then the question - if the world is interwoven,
 how can action remain only 'mine'?
 If the blow of my hand falls upon you,
 how can its fruit flow in isolation?
 Morality is not merely a private account;
 it is responsibility toward another;
 the effect of what is done
 travels through living relationships.
 If fruit is stored only within,
 where is justice for the wound outside?
 If all consequences are shared,
 where does personal responsibility remain?
 The stream of causation and moral worth
 are not identical, but they are joined;
 intention, body, circumstance, consequence -
 many threads are woven in one act.
 The offering to fire speaks of sharing,
 the ledger of karma of personal burden;
 between these two voices opens
 the difficult doorway of moral intelligence.
 Even if liberation means distance from fruit,
 action still touches the world;
 non-attachment does not erase responsibility,
 it only unties the knot of greed.
 Between fire and ledger, the question
 still continues to ask for an answer:
 I am the owner of my action,
 yet the world too bears its fruit.

Life Beyond the Threshold of the Four Aims

Four old thresholds were built -
dharma, wealth, desire, liberation;
it was said that every road of life
could find its reason within these four.
But the artist's hunger for colour,
the selfless curiosity of knowledge,
the joy of play, the risk of discovery -
in whose house do these find language?
Is wealth only a means or also an end,
is desire merely the body's thirst?
Does dharma govern everything,
is liberation everyone's final hope?
If all four depend upon one another,
which stands above and which below?
If one cannot be fulfilled without another,
what meaning remains in the division?
If desire is called the root of bondage,
how does life's movement begin?
Without desire, how does action rise;
without action, how can a goal be reached?
If liberation stands above all,
are the other three only stairs?
Then where is the independent worth
of love, labour, justice and creation?
Someone says the four are one goal,
but then what is the name of that one?
If everything dissolves into one,
why speak of four at all?
Human life has many aspirations;
one list can never complete it.
There is also the independent joy of intellect,
beyond both gain and liberation.
The old thresholds are a useful map,
but the earth is larger than the map;
new experiences give birth to new ends,
life is always larger than the list.
Beyond the threshold of the four aims
opens the vast road of the human being;
meaning grows richer only when
new desires too receive their own chariot.

Not the Wall of a List, but the Living River of Questions

A list of names can be made,
 the houses of doctrines can be counted;
 but the true history of thought
 does not fit inside compartments alone.
 One question crosses centuries
 and rises again in another language;
 one answer plants within another
 the seed of a new opposition.
 One asks about the self, another action,
 one seeks the origin of words;
 one asks for the just form of society,
 another examines the evidence for truth.
 Tradition is not made in one day;
 it grows through dialogue across generations.
 Agreement is one part of its wealth,
 disagreement equally so.
 The question of beginnings is always hard -
 whose voice shall be called first?
 Where no written text survives,
 history must be read through signs.
 Religion, art, language, politics
 are not separate islands of knowledge;
 within the lived experience of one society
 their roots are never wholly apart.
 Yet to call everything philosophy
 can erase the meaning of distinctions;
 questions need clarity,
 or boundaries become blurred.
 Recognise a living tradition
 through problems, arguments and counterarguments;
 no position is ever simply 'final',
 its meaning grows through later dialogue.
 Not the wall of a list - become a river,
 where streams meet and separate;
 history comes alive only when
 the question touches the present again.
 Do not make a tomb of what has passed;
 join it to today's inquiry;
 do not sever the living nerve of old thought
 from the pulse of new questions.

From the Smoke of Sacrifice to the First Light of Reason

Around the fire stood society,
season, grain and spoken word;
life was bound within the sequence of action,
an ancient play of shared order.
Within home, forest, village and clan,
the forms of duty changed;
and with them a question arose -
what is right, why, and who says so?
Rule first sounded like command,
then began to demand meaning;
behind the word 'do', intelligence
looked for the source of authority.
Language was not mantra alone;
the making of words became a question itself:
root, meaning, the coherence of a sentence
opened a new pulse of thought.
Knowledge lived in the artisan's hand,
in the skill of actor, physician and farmer;
the practices of life themselves became
a silent laboratory of intelligence.
Then a sharp challenge arose -
why assume a permanent self?
Why know eternal substance and universal form
without evidence?
One established the independent reality of action,
another built a world of causes;
one identified truth through language,
another analysed differences in matter.
The old fire did not go out,
but the eye moved beyond its smoke;
questions were born beside ritual,
reason spread from branch to branch.
Within the same civilisation
both reverence and doubt remained;
where reason was asked behind command,
there new thought began to flow.
The light that rose from sacrificial smoke
now moved in an independent direction;
from the ground of action, the forest of knowledge
slowly grew thick and full.

Seven Doors of the Object, One Eye of the Witness

The object stands before us,
 but how many forms does it bear?
 Substance, quality, motion, universal,
 particular, relation - many principles.
 Even absence can carry meaning;
 what is not there is also a sign.
 The silence of an empty place speaks
 of a different boundary of presence.
 The rose is red - but where is redness?
 Apart from the flower, or dwelling within it?
 By what rule is the bridge between
 quality and object made firm?
 See 'flowerhood' in many flowers -
 how does one common form arise?
 Without particularity, how does each thing
 remain distinct from another?
 Yet among all these outer categories
 a witness raises another question:
 the one who knows all objects -
 to what class does that knower belong?
 If consciousness were an object,
 someone else would have to see it again;
 an endless row of observers would arise,
 and knowledge would write itself within itself.
 The witness says, 'I am not the seen.'
 Prakriti says, 'I am many forms.'
 The error of identifying the two
 becomes a subtle support of bondage.
 Colour, movement, pleasure, pain,
 the changing play of sattva, rajas, tamas;
 Prakriti moves, the witness is silent,
 yet experience is woven from both.
 While counting the doors of objects,
 ask also about the nature of the knower;
 classification of the outer world alone
 does not reveal the whole house of knowledge.
 Seven doors open outward,
 one eye looks within;
 the distinct mysteries of world and witness
 keep questioning one another.

The Inner Sky When the Winds of the Senses Fall Still

The eye keeps running outward,
the ear goes after sound;
the mind catches every thread of touch
and drifts away with a new desire.
Bondage is not only an outer rope;
habit in consciousness is also a net.
What forever runs toward objects
forgets its own vast silence.
First comes discipline of the body,
then the slow rhythm of breath;
gathering the wings of a restless mind,
attention takes one direction.
Restraint is not mere prohibition;
it is turning energy inward again.
The wind that raises dust outside
can be joined to an inner lamp.
Desire rises, memory flashes,
imagination makes its own world;
the practitioner watches every wave
but does not flow away with it.
A dream can sometimes seem true,
the waking world is called firm;
upon the screen of both experiences
consciousness reveals its form.
Right recognition is difficult -
how much is seen, how much is seer?
Where the mind grows quiet, there opens
the witness's untroubled discernment.
Freedom is not running away,
nor hatred toward the world;
it is the discipline of remaining awake
above one's own reactions.
When the winds of the senses fall still,
the inner sky is not empty;
there shines a light of awareness
not enslaved to outer noise.
Silence does not mean inactivity;
it is an inward movement of freedom.
Where mind recognises its own source,
there dawns the crimson morning of liberation.

A Forest of Imagination from the Seed of Words

Where was the word first born -
 in sound, or in an unseen seed of meaning?
 The tongue only releases a voice;
 how does the mind weave meaning into its own?
 One root gives rise to many forms,
 one word performs many tasks;
 change its place inside a sentence
 and the direction of meaning changes.
 Is a word merely an object's shadow,
 or is the object recognised through the word?
 Can experience remain without a name,
 or does naming itself shape the world?
 The meaning of a sentence is not made
 merely by joining piece after piece;
 sometimes a whole resonance in one instant
 bursts open within the mind.
 What is unsaid lives in suggestion,
 what is unheard awakens in rhythm;
 seeds of possible meaning within us
 flower when they meet the season of context.
 A poet speaks one scene,
 and a world forms inside the reader;
 through the small doorway of one line
 a vast forest of imagination opens.
 An actor weeps upon the stage;
 the audience knows it is not literal truth.
 Yet the tears in their eyes are real;
 the world of feeling is not simply false.
 Between reality and imagination
 there is not always a hard wall;
 human consciousness creates new forms
 that did not exist before in the outer world.
 Language is not information alone;
 it is also a ground of creation.
 Within words live feeling, memory,
 culture, and worlds of possibility.
 From the seed of words a forest grows,
 and from the forest new words are born;
 in this cycle of language and imagination
 the mind enlarges its own world.

The Sceptre, Labour, and the Shared House

Society is not merely a crowd;
many streams of work come together.
One grows grain, another protects,
another tends the lamp of knowledge.
Division can be useful,
but why should it become a prison of birth?
If flexibility of work belongs to life,
why should lineage harden into walls?
The value of labour differs -
skill, risk, and time all weigh upon it;
but when price becomes human rank,
justice breaks again and again.
The king may stand at the centre,
but the state is not his private body;
without the people's safety, food, and peace,
the sceptre has no worth.
The minister's intelligence, the soldier's strength,
treasury, allies, fortress, land -
power is the meeting of many limbs,
not a game played by one hand.
A neighbouring state may be a friend
and may also become a rival;
the politics of borders takes direction
not from ideals alone but circumstance.
Yet policy is not merely deceit;
public welfare places a measure upon power.
The wisdom of rule succeeds
when fear decreases and life is protected.
Rules are necessary within the house,
but rules do not stand above questions;
injustice carried out in the name of tradition
cannot be the foundation of a shared home.
Labour, knowledge, power, and wealth
depend upon one another;
the hand that calls itself supreme
does not speak the truth of the whole body.
The sceptre becomes just
when service is its central note;
let the shared house have strong walls,
but doors open to everyone.

The Current of the Moment and the Shores of Many Perspectives

One voice says - nothing is fixed,
 the world becomes new from moment to moment;
 what we call one 'thing'
 takes form through a sequence of flow.
 Seek the self and you find experience,
 memory, feeling, desire, movement;
 how firmly can a fixed centre be proven
 when everything within is a changing web?
 Cause too is not a hidden force in a thing;
 events flow into one another.
 A chain of moments, through its own pattern,
 keeps producing new results.
 The universal form is made by mind -
 where does 'treeness' stand by itself?
 Seeing many trees, intelligence spreads
 one thick umbrella of a common name.
 Another voice says - one perspective
 cannot contain the whole truth;
 a thing stands in many relations,
 and context changes its form.
 Even saying 'it is' carries conditions,
 and 'it is not' may also be right;
 direction, time, and limits of form
 make the value of a statement precise.
 The first challenge questions stability,
 the second challenges monopoly;
 together they teach the mind
 humility and the practice of analysis.
 Emptiness is not meaningless void;
 it questions the essence we cling to.
 Many perspectives are not anarchy;
 they are disciplined awareness of limits.
 We live in the current of moments,
 seeing the world from many shores;
 leave the claim of a single picture
 and trace the subtle lines of relation.
 If the house of truth is vast,
 one window is not enough;
 without dialogue between moment and viewpoint,
 the journey of knowledge does not end.

The Geography of Questions Beyond the Walls of Doctrine

Writing history can seem easy -
names of doctrines, rows of texts;
but which question fought against which,
which answer became the next confusion?
Many traditions facing the same subject
create their own different languages;
the words differ, the problem may be one -
how often this relation disappears.
Where there are only boxes of doctrines,
dialogue becomes invisible;
which argument cut across which other argument -
the heartbeat of history is lost.
Within art, the question of beauty;
within ethics, right and wrong;
within language, the knot of meaning;
within society, the structure of power.
These are not outer borders of thought
but provinces of living questions;
philosophy is not merely formula -
experience too gives entry to reasoning.
One author is not one school;
many streams may supply that mind.
An idea from an opposing position
can sometimes find a place in one's own house.
Chronology is necessary, but insufficient;
look also for threads of influence.
One came earlier, another later -
that alone does not reveal meaning.
Silent intervals also need attention,
as do traces of texts that have vanished;
to be overly certain from surviving evidence
is itself an error.
Build a geography beyond doctrinal walls,
where questions flow like rivers;
an answer at one ghat rises elsewhere
again in a new form.
History truly comes alive
when the problem remains at the centre;
the list of names recedes
and the journeys of arguments speak.

Prelude of Word, Emptiness, and Non-Difference

Within the word, the resonance of meaning;
 within meaning, the imprint of the world.
 Where speech begins to look at itself,
 there consciousness opens its radiance.
 One says only the moment is real,
 another understands dependent emptiness;
 another in the silent depth of the Upanishads
 recognises a sign of non-difference.
 Different currents quietly receive
 elements from one another;
 even when called opponents, many ideas
 make homes in later minds.
 Is the world a web of name and form,
 or the play of an unmanifest ground?
 Does language veil truth,
 or through language do we meet it?
 If words come in fragments,
 how does meaning rise as a whole?
 If thought is entirely private,
 how can shared speech arise?
 Consciousness is joined to the body,
 yet how far do its limits extend?
 Witness, memory, feeling, language -
 many forms within a single mind.
 Within the shadow of old positions
 awakens a desire for new synthesis;
 standing upon the shore of difference,
 intelligence looks toward a sea of non-difference.
 But synthesis is not mixture;
 preserve the worth of each distinction.
 Where questions appear incompatible,
 there build a new structure.
 Word, emptiness, self-awareness -
 three directions, one prelude;
 before the great debates ahead,
 their notes gather here in resonance.
 Here history takes a new turn,
 made from elements of many older streams;
 before the song of non-difference rises,
 many voices move silently within.

The Lamp of Knowledge in the Subtle Web of Relations

The rose is red - a simple sentence,
yet how many relations live inside it?
The rose is subject, redness quality -
what support joins the two?
The one who knows, what is known,
and knowledge itself as a third link;
within a single moment of awareness
how many subtle structures stand?
The object is 'this' - but 'this' for whom?
Location, time, the ground of pointing;
without identification a word wanders,
context gives it a solid shore.
Is relation itself like an object,
or only a line drawn by intelligence?
If relation is absent, where is quality;
if there is no object, relation of what?
Knowledge of absence is also knowledge -
the pot is not there, yet something is known.
Upon what basis do we clearly know
the negation of what is not?
Inference needs a precise reason,
not merely a loose pervasion;
a single small hole of exception
can make the whole conclusion unsafe.
Language grows more subtle,
words become new instruments;
a new grammar slowly arises
to catch finer distinctions of thought.
The object of knowledge is not object alone,
but a web of object, quality, relation;
the knower's process enters too,
and analysis becomes vast.
If subtlety is cut away from life,
it may dry into technique;
but without clarity, thought
can hide beneath vague belief.
Light a lamp in the web of relations,
name every knot you can recognise;
where language reaches its limit,
weave meaning with new tools.

The Endless Debate of One and Many

One says - the ground is one alone,
 differences are emergent forms;
 another says - difference is real,
 relation itself creates the whole.
 If the world is only appearance,
 whose eyes see the appearance?
 If the ground is entirely one,
 what causes illusion to be born?
 Giving it the name 'maya'
 does not end the question;
 whose ignorance, upon whom -
 this knot is no small matter.
 If the individual is distinct from the Supreme,
 how great the distance, how deep the relation?
 If a part, then within the whole
 what right does difference possess?
 If the world is real and the Supreme also,
 what dependence lies between them?
 If either is incomplete without the other,
 what becomes of the Supreme's completeness?
 Across the field of argument, one and many
 have collided for centuries;
 the language may change,
 but the root question rises again.
 Bhakti enters and says -
 relationship is more alive than logic;
 lover and beloved retain distance
 yet find unity in the music of feeling.
 But feeling too is not free of questions:
 is the beloved truly real?
 If all is one, who is addressed;
 if two, what is final unity?
 The value of debate is not victory
 but the art of clarifying limits;
 through another doctrine's question,
 a view discovers its hidden weakness.
 The endless debate of one and many
 remains a breath of truth;
 where opposition becomes dialogue,
 there thought remains alive.

Love as the Fifth Direction

Dharma, wealth, desire, liberation -
four old directions were named;
but the heart quietly asked -
where is the road of love contained?
Love is not merely desire,
nor only a bargain of gain;
it offers itself
and places the heart in another's hands.
Joy awakens within service,
freedom within surrender;
closeness grows while distance remains,
intimacy within difference.
If God remains only a distant
unattached power, how can love arise?
If the divine descends into the heart as beloved,
the gold of relation changes.
Sometimes master and servant,
sometimes the open laughter of friends;
sometimes maternal affection, sometimes lovers -
relationship speaks in many languages.
With this, feeling receives
its proper place within thought;
tears, song, dance, remembrance
become names of lived truth.
Then it becomes difficult forever
to reject the body as impure;
through touch, sound, mantra, form
new doors of sacredness open.
Ordinary acts of life
rise into forms of discipline;
what was once called forbidden
may return with transformed meaning.
The fifth direction of love says -
liberation is not loneliness;
relationship too can become a highest value
holding existence's deepest meaning.
When heart and intellect meet,
feeling does not remain darkness;
love itself becomes a language of questions
through which the world is read anew.

Meaning at the Point of Subtle Distinction

Knowledge is not merely 'knowing' -
 who was known, and how?
 Object, quality, relation, knower -
 how many levels meet in one moment.
 When the mind sees a red flower,
 it does not catch colour alone;
 the relation between flower and redness
 also rises within knowledge.
 Above one relation another
 relation comes into being;
 quality of quality, knowledge of knowledge -
 subtle analysis moves forward.
 For this fine road, language
 forges tools of new words;
 a distinction once blurred
 becomes clear through the edge of definition.
 When we say 'this', what is pointed to;
 when we say 'that', what distance is measured?
 Location, time, fitness and relation
 leave their marks upon the body of meaning.
 Absence too is not simple emptiness,
 but negation upon a particular ground;
 'the pot is not on this earth' -
 the ground itself becomes part of what is known.
 Relations can extend without end,
 so a criterion for stopping is needed;
 otherwise the ladder of analysis
 keeps climbing into the sky.
 Subtlety is useful when
 it opens the knot of confusion;
 if it becomes wordplay alone,
 thought forgets its purpose.
 Let the point of reasoning remain sharp,
 but do not cut the body of experience;
 see the finest line of meaning,
 and keep living context beside it.
 Meaning at the point of subtle distinction
 shines like a drop of glass;
 one careful touch of intelligence
 can change the whole scene of knowledge.

The Confluence of Ancient Shruti and New Agama

One river says, 'I am ancient,
my source itself is supreme authority';
another says, 'Living experience
receives form in new utterance.'
Temple lamps, the sound of mantra,
songs of bhakti, the road of Tantra;
new traditions seek within their texts
their own claim to sacredness.
The question rises - whose authority?
Ancient utterance or new testimony?
If truth belongs only to the past,
is present experience trivial?
The ancient source itself is plural,
its interpretations many;
new Agamas too are not uniform,
their signs appear in many directions.
One makes loving relationship
with a personal God central;
another looks within power, consciousness, mantra
for the mystery of creation.
One treats the body as an instrument,
another transforms the meaning of enjoyment;
another through vow, worship and meditation
makes daily life sacred.
If Shruti only forbids,
new experience walks outside;
if Agama forgets foundational memory,
it loses its own history.
Within conflict, a new dialogue
of tradition is still possible;
do not suppress the question of authority -
let reasoning become a ground for both.
Sacredness is not a fixed seal;
communities reshape its meaning.
When an old voice meets a new raga,
it flowers again with time.
Shruti and Agama meet truly
when each can hear the other;
do not assume a single source of truth -
keep the touchstone of evidence awake.

The Rebellious Window in the Wall of Tradition

A question born inside the old house
 begins measuring the wall;
 where everyone says, 'This is the limit,'
 it cuts a window and looks beyond.
 Accepted categories, established relations,
 many sutras hardened into solidity;
 yet one example from experience
 challenges the entire map.
 Adding a new distinction is not rebellion
 when the old distinction proves incomplete;
 tradition lives precisely where
 there is courage to correct it.
 The meaning of cause is asked again,
 the status of absence weighed again;
 universal, particular, relation -
 their boundaries reopen under a new gaze.
 The sentence 'nothing lies beyond this'
 is never final for intelligence;
 if evidence points another way,
 antiquity by itself proves nothing.
 A rebel does not always
 have to leave the house;
 sometimes one remains within it
 and reveals a weakness in the foundation.
 A successor may fall silent,
 or an idea may be suppressed;
 history beside famous doctrines
 also hides vanished alternatives.
 Novelty is not victory for a name;
 it is the free right of questioning.
 One able to test what is established
 receives the doorway of intelligence.
 A window in the wall of tradition
 brings discomfort along with air;
 but the safety of a sealed house
 slowly loses its breath.
 Open the window, test the foundation;
 what endures will become stronger.
 From the rubble of what breaks,
 truth can build a new house.

Thought Descending into the People's Voice

Beyond palace, monastery, school,
questions rise along village paths too;
lines of song, stories, proverbs
quietly weave the meaning of life.
When a poet sings in the voice of love,
it does not remain feeling alone;
new relations among body, self, God, society
flow within the song.
The people's language brings difficult thought
down into the breath of daily life;
a sutra locked in a scholar's room
resounds in the voice of the marketplace.
A mother's song, a saint's verse,
a craftsperson's metaphor, a farmer's speech;
upon the soil of experience, thought
receives gifts of new meaning.
Sometimes the hard wall of caste
becomes a question inside a song;
sometimes the open sky of the formless
stretches the limits of authorised form.
Sometimes the beloved becomes the Supreme,
sometimes the Supreme becomes a friend;
dry formulas of philosophical relation
receive the breath of feeling among the people.
But popularity alone
is not the final proof of truth;
the people's voice also carries prejudice,
and it is not wrong to examine it.
Learning above, people below -
this division is itself incomplete;
knowledge can flow in both directions,
no source is entirely remote.
Thought becomes wider
when it changes language and remains alive;
the same question in verse, story, argument
returns again in different forms.
Thought descending into the people's voice
expands the boundaries of shastra;
life itself becomes a book
slowly reading the letters of experience.

The Broken Bridge Between Two Languages

One day at the doorway of school
 a new language became authority;
 the living river of old texts
 suddenly flowed to the other bank.
 One group read Western books
 and learned the language of new science;
 another preserved old sutras,
 and the two looked at one another less.
 The 'great division' within knowledge
 was not only difference of language;
 the genealogy of questions broke,
 the bridge of memory no longer held.
 A new student saw the past
 through the eyes of translation;
 an old scholar often remained
 on a distant shore from new debates.
 Printing, universities, curricula
 also brought new opportunities;
 but in whose hands lay the power of selection -
 that question stood silently.
 A tradition that had flowed continuously
 became an 'ancient subject';
 knowledge arriving from outside
 became the only voice of the present.
 The fault belongs to no single language;
 the problem is the broken relation.
 Old and new no longer conversed
 within a shared classroom.
 Translation becomes a bridge
 only when both banks are equal;
 one side's words must not merely rule,
 the other's experience must also be honoured.
 A broken bridge can be rebuilt,
 but imitation will not do;
 understand the history of one's own questions
 and enter dialogue with the new world.
 The gulf between two languages
 is not the destiny of intelligence;
 when memory and the present meet,
 new thought is not impossible.

A New Path of Synthesis from a Broken Tradition

Even after division, the old current
did not wholly dry up;
some minds saw both banks
and became the slave of neither.
One imagined an ascent of consciousness,
a journey from matter toward mind;
another sought in the relation of self and object
a new measure of analysis.
One joined an old voice of non-difference
to a language of development;
another explained subtle levels of experience
through new concepts.
New science offered challenges,
old principles were ringed with questions;
sometimes bold synthesis was born,
sometimes there was only a joining of words.
To preserve a tradition does not mean
preserving every sentence within it;
it means recreating living meaning
where evidence does not contradict it.
Modernity is not truth by itself,
nor antiquity the final word;
if the same lamp of criticism does not shine
upon both, dialogue cannot be sound.
Person, world, consciousness, action,
society - all receive new contexts;
old questions meeting new experience
make themselves again in new forms.
Sometimes outside thought presses so deeply
that the root is buried;
sometimes excess pride of identity
prevents new truth from entering.
The middle path is not compromise;
it is the name of creative struggle.
From the strongest questions of both directions
a new home of thought is built.
From a broken tradition a new path
joins memory and future;
the one who knows one's roots
is not broken by an outside wind.

The Coming and Going of the World from Unborn Silence

What was there first - silence or vibration,
 the seed of one or many?
 Did existence bring forth the world from itself,
 or was the world always its own?
 Here desire is the first wave,
 there the play of Prakriti's qualities;
 elsewhere, from a reflection of consciousness,
 the wide web of name and form.
 Sattva as light, rajas as motion,
 tamas with the heavy mark of rest;
 as their proportions change,
 the world takes new shapes.
 Creation is not a one-time event;
 cycles of manifest and unmanifest continue.
 After creation, persistence, dissolution,
 seeds of possibility grow again.
 A subtle world within the body
 is stretched toward the outer cosmos;
 'as here, so there' -
 the mind searches for a common law.
 Maya sometimes becomes a veil,
 sometimes an active power of creation;
 one word carries opposite meanings
 and makes thought more intricate.
 Birth is joined to birth again,
 the thread of karma crosses time;
 an individual life is a small link,
 the imagined cycle is immense.
 But why did the first motion rise,
 why was equilibrium broken?
 Every story of creation finally reaches
 a play of unanswered silence.
 Poetry gives no answer here;
 it opens a universe of questions:
 from the womb of unborn silence, how
 do infinite forms emerge?
 Seeing the cycle of coming and going,
 the mind knows its own transience;
 the moment is small, the question infinite -
 and consciousness sings within that wonder.

The Ethical Sky Over the Question of Suffering

One child is born into suffering,
another opens its eyes in a house of comfort;
if the world is a moral order,
who can speak the meaning of such inequality?
The doctrine of karma says - the fruit
of earlier acts returns again;
justice crosses the boundary of time
and becomes an account across births.
But without memory, how just
can responsibility remain?
What meaning has punishment for an act
I do not even remember?
Rebirth provides continuity,
but then whom do we call 'I'?
The body changed, memory vanished -
how long does the moral person remain?
If every suffering comes from old karma,
where has present injustice gone?
Does helping another then become
interference in the ledger of karma?
Compassion says - suffering is before us;
extend the hand first, reason later.
If justice blames the victim,
morality becomes a hard darkness.
Chance, nature, social structure,
the actions of others - many influences;
human suffering is a web of many causes,
one formula is not enough.
Yet moral intelligence still seeks
some relation between action and fruit;
without responsibility, freedom
can turn into arbitrary will.
Over the question of suffering the sky opens -
justice, mercy, and lines of causation;
let the ledger of karma be useful,
but let compassion remain its breath.
A moral world is not made
by cosmic law alone;
it is made also by our present responsibility,
which refuses silence before suffering.

The City of Labour, Power, and Boundaries

A city is made by many hands -
 knowledge, labour, wealth, governance together;
 one tends fields, one crafts, one protects,
 another keeps the order of rules.
 Division of work can be useful,
 but value did not remain equal;
 difference of work slowly became
 a ladder of human rank.
 If birth fixes occupation,
 where will talent find its direction?
 How long can moving life
 be bound within a rigid box?
 Knowledge is one power, wealth another,
 labour a third, governance a fourth;
 each incomplete without the others,
 yet rights are divided harshly.
 Within the state the king stands not alone:
 minister, treasury, army, land;
 people, allies, fortress, production
 together make the ground of power.
 Outside, neighbouring circles form -
 behind one friend another friend or enemy;
 geography changes the movement of power,
 policy acquires a dynamic pulse.
 But victory is not the highest goal;
 without public welfare the state is empty.
 If punishment is severed from justice,
 power becomes only an instrument of fear.
 A theory of society is complete only
 when the individual too remains visible;
 in the name of the whole, a person
 must not become only a functional part.
 Respect for labour, openness of opportunity,
 and a bond of accountability upon power -
 without these an ancient arrangement
 can become an obstacle in a new age.
 A city within borders is not secured
 by walls alone;
 when justice breathes within,
 outer dangers too become less fearful.

In the Moment of Rasa, the World Became Joy

A scene of grief upon the stage -
why does joy arise in the spectator's heart?
The tears are real, the suffering imagined -
what is the mystery of this contradiction?
When private pain becomes art,
it crosses the boundary of 'mine';
feeling leaves its private thorn
and takes the form of shared experience.
A lasting emotion sleeps within;
scene, word, the touch of performance,
memory and imagination together
awaken the wondrous delight of rasa.
The spectator knows the stage is not reality,
yet the experience is not false;
art creates a region in between
where distance and nearness are both true.
Music speaks without words,
dance makes meaning through the body;
through rhythm consciousness moves
outside its ordinary time.
Rasa is not entertainment alone,
but a moment of transformed consciousness;
the person leaves the narrowed 'I'
and meets a wider field of feeling.
Sometimes the sweet current of love,
sometimes heroic, compassionate, wondrous colours;
the feelings differ, yet within rasa
each brings a special elevation.
Bhakti carries this road of beauty
into the relations of life;
through song, form, remembrance of the beloved,
the everyday world too becomes festival.
Tantra seeks within body and sound
the hidden radiance of sacred energy;
the boundaries of art, discipline, and love
sometimes meet within one sky.
In the moment of rasa, the world becomes joy -
not escape, not ordinary pleasure;
but such an expansion of experience
that 'I' melts and the world becomes eloquent.

The Mind Seeking Footprints in the Dust of Time

There is much dust upon history's road,
 footprints remain half-erased;
 one text survives, ten are lost,
 yet we still try to arrange a sequence.
 Who was born when, which text came first -
 dates are not always clear;
 a map built from later quotations
 is not itself infallible.
 One name may belong to two people,
 one person may bear many names;
 how many authors of commentaries, vartikas, sutras
 remain nameless in history.
 The manuscript's date may be late,
 the thought's source much older;
 the written copy and moment of composition
 are not the same evidence.
 A tradition may enlarge its own genealogy
 for the sake of prestige;
 and may sometimes push the author
 of a rival view away from memory.
 Counting can awaken astonishment -
 some centuries flood with writing,
 some periods are almost silent;
 did thought truly stand still?
 The surviving material is uneven,
 therefore conclusions require humility;
 where evidence is only inference,
 saying 'perhaps' is not weakness.
 History is not dates alone;
 look also at the movement of thought.
 Which question answered which,
 which current turned when - record that.
 Where evidence is absent, imagination
 must not cross the boundary of proof;
 honest admission of a blank space
 is better than false certainty.
 Seeking footprints in the dust of time,
 the mind finally knows this much:
 history is not a complete picture,
 but careful meaning made from surviving lines.

SECTION VII — THE PHILOSOPHICAL SKY OF MANY DIRECTIONS

One Truth from Many Directions

If a lamp is seen from only one side,
 it seems merely a roundness of light;
 look from another angle and behind it
 the silent tale of shadow also awakens.
 Truth too is not a single straight line -
 its form changes from direction to direction;
 many-sided thought tells us
 that meaning opens through the eye of the beholder.
 When an impatient palm tries to seize the world
 and says, 'Only this is true,'
 a question rises quietly:
 'Are all the other directions entirely worthless?'
 A thing gathers within its body
 many relations, many qualities, many times;
 to bind them all within one statement
 is like catching the sky inside a fist.
 At the first watch upon the road of knowledge
 the mind recognises the object standing before it;
 in that moment of form, sound, and touch
 consciousness opens its own doors.
 But what is not before the eyes
 is not therefore lost in darkness;
 memory, recognition, and the bridge of thought
 carry us toward meanings at a distance.
 A face seen yesterday appears again -
 the mind says, 'This is that same person';
 past experience comes and joins the present
 through a subtle thread.
 What is unseen also leaves a sign
 through the path of cause and effect;
 if smoke is seen rising in the sky,
 the mind awakens to the possibility of fire.
 Reason is not merely a weapon of dispute;
 it is a lamp that clears the mist of doubt.
 It awakens questions inside questions
 and brings us nearer to truth.
 Inference is the name of that bridge
 whose one end is sign and the other meaning;
 if the soil of relation is not firm,
 the building of conclusion becomes useless.
 Reported speech too becomes knowledge
 when the ground of trust is clear;
 not the weight of words alone, but within them
 the responsibility of meaning must remain plain.
 The worth of knowledge awakens there
 where no net of confusion is spread;
 intelligence distinguishing self from other
 accepts meaning with care.
 Waves of mind, limits of the senses,
 depth of the self - each has its place;
 the whole dwelling cannot be seen
 through any single window.
 When the knower loses one's coverings,
 vision moves beyond its limits;
 in the clear sky of pure knowledge
 clouds of difference slowly dissolve.
 False answers can be without number,
 for error has a thousand roads;
 but the search for truth becomes single-minded,
 like a river approaching its final gate to the sea.
 Once a sound relation is grasped,
 the direction of meaning grows steady;

amid the uproar of many possibilities
reason makes its voice clearly heard.
The lesson of this vision is not merely
to count formulas in a book;
it says: make your gaze humble,
recognise the right of another angle.
Not ownership of truth, but dialogue;
not pride in knowledge, but discipline;
in this vast courtyard of many-sidedness
thought becomes the pulse of coexistence.
So when another question arises,
do not immediately close the door of judgement;
look once through your own eyes,
then hold another viewpoint beside them.
Knowledge able to examine itself
keeps its light for a long time;
the light of this vision lives in the moment
when even disagreement opens a road to truth.

The Ladder of Causes, the Light of Being

The bell of questioning kept ringing
 within the silent walls of the monastery;
 faith burned like a lamp on one side,
 intellect sought an answer on the other.
 One voice said - they are not enemies,
 but fellow travellers on the road of truth;
 one awakens reverence in the heart,
 the other keeps discernment as a vigilant guard.
 The vast river of ancient thought
 flowed again beside a new age;
 through the firm current of reason
 questions of religion appeared in a new form.
 What can be understood by intellect
 should receive the honour of intellect;
 what descends beyond intellect as mystery
 may there let faith kindle its own light.
 'Is' seems such a simple word,
 yet the womb of being is very deep;
 what a thing is - that is one question,
 that it actually is - another line.
 In a finite thing essence stands apart,
 existence is a gift it has received;
 in ultimate being there is no such division,
 essence and existence rest upon one ground.
 Look at change - something changes,
 coming from possibility into form;
 what moves is moved by something,
 and the thread of cause goes further back.
 Leaving the endless darkness of causes,
 the mind seeks a first ground;
 the crowd of transient things declares:
 somewhere there must be a necessary being.
 Seeing many steps of quality,
 intelligence measures less and more;
 in the subtle discipline of order,
 the direction of function appears purposeful.
 The final question behind all these paths -
 who stands behind the question 'why'?
 Reason is not the whole heaven of answers,
 but it makes a road for inquiry.
 Power that exists only as possibility
 reaches fulfilment when it enters act;
 the silent possible forest within a seed
 turns green when the season arrives.
 The world is a mixture of potency and act,
 the highest fulfilment pure actuality;
 in this thought, change receives
 a deep philosophical form.
 Body and soul are not two strangers -
 not a prison and a prisoner;
 as the form of a living body, the soul
 is not separate from human existence.
 The senses touch the world outside,
 intellect draws out its meaning;
 from particular forms the mind
 shapes universal truth.
 Human desire is not merely
 a brief glitter of momentary pleasure;
 within the search for the highest good
 life keeps learning its direction.
 Discernment shows the road of virtue,
 desire chooses the voice of action;

yet the horizon of complete happiness
raises the gaze toward ultimate truth.
If law is only a rod of punishment,
justice dies within it;
law becomes meaningful only
when it creates a road toward the common good.
Human reason can read in nature's order
signals of the moral law;
government's worth stands where
it bears the burden of public welfare.
The work of the state is earthly order,
social peace, protection of the good;
the spiritual life has its own direction,
an inward purification in the field of religion.
The distinction between the two must be understood,
yet a human being lives only one life;
the city of the body and the road of the soul
must remain in dialogue.
The voice of this thought does not say:
silence the question;
rather, learn the discipline of questioning,
seek the cause behind the cause.
If faith is born of truth,
why should it fear reason?
If reason serves truth,
why should it seek the victory of pride?
Climbing this ladder of causes,
the mind finally learns humility;
the more it understands, the more it sees
its limit before the limitless.
Intellect carries its lamp,
faith becomes a star upon the horizon;
together in human consciousness
may they make a long radiance of truth.

Recognition of One's Own Light

In the quiet valley of consciousness
 the fire of questions burns within;
 logic, grammar, poetry, Tantra
 flow together through many currents.
 Experience, discipline, rasa, and language
 are different canopies of one sky;
 when diverse paths meet together,
 a deep space for dialogue opens.
 The long journey of inquiry
 did not stand upon a single ghat;
 greater and lesser doctrines, shastras, disciplines -
 from all were chosen living measures.
 No wall of opposition was raised high;
 bridges of relation were built instead;
 the radiance of separate lamps
 found names beneath one sky.
 Knowledge was not merely a book
 nor the carrying of a burden of words;
 when experience awakened within the mind,
 thought received its meaning.
 Discipline and reflection travelled together,
 writing became evidence from within;
 a truth that cannot merely be spoken
 rises alive in conscious knowing.
 To dismiss the world as false
 was not the aim of this road;
 whatever appears is not merely
 an uncaused shadow of some void.
 Supreme consciousness, by its own freedom,
 creates the play of form and formlessness;
 many waves of one ground
 become the extended body of the world.
 If light were only light,
 from where would its self-awareness arise?
 When reflective awareness joins illumination,
 conscious being comes to itself.
 Creation, continuance, dissolution,
 concealment, grace - deep movements;
 within one conscious power
 the endless age of the world keeps turning.
 Whatever a thing is, its existence
 has not arrived from somewhere apart;
 within the ultimate ground
 its quiet note of being is contained.
 The hard division of outside and inside
 slowly melts in this vision;
 the distances among doer, deed, and action
 grow within one conscious ground.
 Liberation is not a new object,
 nor an unknown door in a distant land;
 it is finding again a forgotten sign -
 this is the central idea of recognition.
 As a familiar face is suddenly
 recognised again by the lamp of memory,
 so the self, within its own depth,
 awakens recognition of its Shiva-nature.
 Recognition says: 'While searching outside,
 do not forget yourself';
 the consciousness from which the question rises -
 turn once toward that source.
 If bondage is a mist of ignorance,
 the wind of awareness removes it;

when the light of true nature opens within,
the limited 'I' grows vast.
Poetry here is not merely
the glitter of ornament or a game of skill;
behind words lives the depth of feeling,
the journey of meaning is not one straight line.
Honouring the aphorisms of earlier teachers,
new doors of interpretation are opened;
beauty, thought, and folk experience
are weighed upon one rasa-filled earth.
The long inheritance of this meeting
is the discipline of the meeting itself -
Tantra and logic, poetry and philosophy,
the pulse of intellect together with experience.
When we recognise our own light,
how can the world remain alien?
Many expressions of one consciousness
speak their own voices in every form.

From Earth to the Supermind

From the dust of earth rises a question:
 is the human being limited only this far?
 Is the consciousness awakened within the body
 for the sake of some next dawn?
 In the silent darkness of inert matter
 the green breath of life arises;
 from life's restless waves again
 the lamp of mind slowly wakes.
 Evolution is not merely change of shape,
 but an unveiling of inner power;
 what slept within every particle of earth
 becomes conscious and rises.
 Nature preserves in her secret womb
 the seed of the next form;
 the human is not a final station -
 only a middle doorway upon the road.
 It is not ascent alone;
 a higher light too descends.
 Where the seeker makes oneself a vessel,
 conscious power fills it with form.
 Between ascent and descent
 lies a long law of meeting;
 liberation is not abandoning earth,
 but honouring divinity within earth.
 Being is not a distant impersonal void,
 consciousness not merely silent and formless;
 bliss is not sadness turned away from the world,
 not a thought hostile to life.
 Streams of being, consciousness, bliss
 flow in many forms from one ground;
 forms and levels change, yet
 the innermost source remains undivided.
 The mind sees a fragmented world,
 drawing lines and giving separate names;
 the lamp of reason is precious indeed,
 but it comes to a halt at its boundary.
 Above mind there is a sign
 of a wider and luminous field of awareness,
 where knowledge is not separately sought -
 truth itself opens its dwelling.
 The Supermind is no miraculous
 story in the sky, no escape;
 it opens the knot of divided consciousness
 into a living experience of unity.
 The one who knows, the one who is, the one who acts -
 all three streams flow together;
 knowledge is not separate from action,
 and love wears the body of truth.
 Yoga then is not an instrument
 for forgetting the world in cave-like stillness;
 body, life-force, mind - all are transformed,
 not one side made victorious over another.
 Inner silence and outer action
 stand in the same line of discipline;
 life itself becomes the laboratory,
 the daily moment a light of tapas.
 The individual alone is not complete,
 nor is society merely a crowd;
 without the growth of free selves,
 group-unity remains unfit.
 Imposed uniformity
 is not the form of living harmony;

when different voices find accord,
collective consciousness does not grow barren.
The nation is a necessary stage
in the middle of humanity's journey, but not the end;
if a border rises into pride,
it cannot be a road toward human unity.
The world does not mean erasing difference,
but organising respect for it;
free units join together
to create a wider human life.
At last the question rises:
'What will humanity become beyond itself?'
Rest upon past achievement, or
dig open another door of consciousness?
We shall not gain the sky by abandoning soil;
the sky must descend into the earth.
Within the unfinished lamp of humanity
the dawn of the Supermind must awaken.

Form, Cause, and the Middle Way

Under a sky filled with questions,
 the gaze examines the forms of earth;
 leaf, creature, city, thought -
 each unfolds its own sign.
 Alongside high concepts,
 solid things retain their own speech;
 first look, then ask the question -
 how did this leaf of form come to be?
 A name alone is not knowledge.
 What structure lies within the thing?
 Of what is it made, how is it made,
 why does it change, what does it seek?
 Following thread after thread of cause,
 the mind opens the knot of an event;
 within the meeting of form and matter
 the thing speaks its own identity.
 Within the seed, the tree's silent possibility;
 within the tree, the seed's dream fulfilled;
 what is coming and what is becoming
 move together in the world's underlying tune.
 If power sleeps, it wakes in action;
 possibility takes on form.
 Change is not an anarchic leap;
 being takes its road through order.
 Knowledge begins at the doors of sense,
 but the journey does not stop there;
 from seen facts intelligence rises,
 for without universal meaning understanding is incomplete.
 Reason recognises the pattern
 within separate things;
 from sentence to conclusion, thought
 climbs the ladder of discipline.
 If reason is only a weapon for victory,
 truth remains far away;
 right relation, right definition
 slowly clear the mist of confusion.
 Thinking too is a discipline
 in which conclusion demands a cause;
 without ground, even a brilliant assertion
 wins no dignity for intelligence.
 The question of life is not only what to know,
 but what to become and how to live.
 Virtue is not decoration for a speech;
 it must be stitched into daily action.
 At both shores of excess and deficiency,
 the middle asks for careful balance;
 right time, right measure, right purpose -
 through such practice character becomes great.
 Happiness is not the name of brief laughter,
 nor merely the colour of desire fulfilled;
 it is meaningful action, developed capacity,
 and a life shaped by discernment.
 Let the human fulfil what one is,
 using one's capacities in their best form;
 ethics then is not merely a rule,
 but a conscious joining of the form of life.
 The human being is not a solitary island;
 the voice opens within community.
 From house to city, relation to government,
 collective life takes form.
 If the state is merely a rod of force,
 citizenship becomes a dry name;

an order has worth
when public good becomes its work.
Art is not merely a mirror;
it gives life a new form.
Through event, character, and the order of feeling,
a human being reads one's own mind.
Fear, compassion, joy, conflict
receive rhythm within creation;
the tangled impulses of experience
are clarified through artistic discipline.
The voice of this road says:
look at the sky, but do not leave the earth.
Even while thought flies high,
keep it joined to the soil of fact.
Form, cause, action, virtue,
society, art - all gather in one question:
'What does what exists mean,
and how should a human being live well?'

From the Night of Doubt to the Dawn of Faith

In the city of knowledge, lamps of questions
 cast light from door to door;
 through text, reason, and experience,
 the limits of answers test themselves.
 To accept merely what has been heard is not enough -
 the mind carries a fierce thirst for truth;
 where inquiry itself becomes the road,
 the inward journey begins.
 The senses said, 'I have seen';
 intellect asked, 'Is that the final word?'
 What the eye calls true
 dream may reverse in the night.
 If experience itself stands within questioning,
 reason too must ask for its own ground;
 where shall the soil of certainty be found?
 Thought trembled in that search.
 Doubt was not the enemy;
 it was a stream cleansing the inside.
 It removed the dust of false belief
 and kept searching for the essence of trust.
 Truth clothed in tradition
 was not accepted without examination;
 yet in the desert of negation alone
 no meaning of life was found.
 The high palace of philosophical reason
 was examined carefully from within;
 where evidence was firm, it was accepted,
 where limits appeared, questions pressed further.
 Intellect is priceless, but not omnipotent;
 human understanding has its own circumference.
 One who knows the limit and grows humble
 finds a fulfilment of knowledge there.
 The seat of prestige glittered,
 but the heart held silent unrest;
 if outward fame leaves the inside empty,
 what peace can it give the soul?
 One day the dazzle of position was left behind
 and the door of the inward mind approached;
 far from the crowd, in silent discipline,
 another region of consciousness opened.
 Knowledge is not an accumulation in the head;
 it also asks transformation of the heart.
 If the tongue speaks of truth
 while conduct goes the other way, what is gained?
 Conduct, restraint, self-examination
 open knots of greed and ego;
 without purification, the lamp of theory
 loses its flame inside smoke.
 Faith is not blind surrender,
 nor the destruction of reason;
 where intellect recognises its limit,
 felt experience can take hold of deeper meaning.
 The light that bursts within the inner mind
 is not the enemy of evidence;
 within the fullness of lived experience
 it may be another window toward truth.
 If religion is only outer ritual,
 where will the self find rest?
 Leaving fear, greed, the wish to be seen,
 an inward realm of responsibility awakens.
 Prayer then is not merely words;
 it becomes a discipline of character.

Remembrance then is not escape;
it becomes an alert ethical life.
The question of doubt asks:
'What I know - how do I know it?'
And another voice asks softly:
'What I believe - how do I live it?'
If knowledge and life fall apart,
truth remains incomplete;
intellect, faith, experience, conduct
together shape the human road.
The night of doubt was not wasted;
through that night dawn received meaning.
Within the ashes of broken trust
the seed of a new faith sprouted.
If certainty is born from humility,
it will not become a hard wall;
the search for truth will then travel lifelong
with questions and light.

The Inner Light and Two Cities

The road of desire turned many ways;
 the mind kept running after pleasure.
 Thorns of questions, storms of wanting
 kept giving birth to emptiness within.
 Outer colour could not fill
 the unnamed restlessness inside;
 then in its own depth the heart
 heard the approach of quiet light.
 The first door of knowledge is the sense,
 but the visible is not the limit of all.
 Intellect raises a question above facts:
 'Can what changes be the final thing?'
 Behind transient forms the mind
 looks for a dwelling of stable meaning;
 if outer things move like shadows,
 the inner light asks their name.
 Truth is not only a gift of the eye,
 nor the shimmering imprint of memory;
 there are standards by which
 we measure truth itself.
 That which awakens justice within reason,
 that which questions falsehood,
 is not a light invented entirely by us -
 the mind receives it and finds direction.
 God is not a distant lifeless cause,
 but the root of being, the ground of truth;
 the form of forms, the meaning of meanings,
 an infinite expanse behind the world.
 Creation is not equal to that source,
 nor merely another name for it;
 what is made is dependent being -
 source and world remain distinct.
 'From where comes evil?' the question rose
 when suffering appeared in the world.
 If the source is good, why has
 so deep a shadow of darkness spread?
 Searching for an answer, thought said:
 darkness is not an independent lamp;
 where goodness diminishes,
 the shadow of privation arises.
 Free will is valuable
 because love cannot flower by command;
 but without responsibility for choice,
 the meaning of freedom turns slowly to dust.
 When mind becomes slave to lower ends,
 it overturns the balance of its order;
 evil is then not merely an outer demon,
 but misplaced desire building a house within.
 The soul is not the shadow of the body,
 nor the body merely the soul's enemy;
 within life is a conscious centre,
 a subtle vessel of memory and discernment.
 On the road to self-knowledge,
 the mind turns from world toward within;
 beside its own limited light
 it finds a sign of an unlimited source.
 Morality is not a rod of fear;
 life is ordered through the order of love.
 Let what is higher remain higher,
 let means remain means.
 If greed steals the seat of the end,
 the kingdom within the mind is overturned;

when love is rightly ordered,
the direction of character is restored.
Society too contains two currents,
two cities formed by two different loves;
one circles around private gain,
the other moves toward justice.
Brick and stone alone do not make a city;
its fundamental desire is its life.
The state has worth only where
peace and restraint are honoured.
History is not merely a list of kings,
nor dust of wars and victory or defeat;
it is human desire, hope, decline,
time flowing while searching for meaning.
Earthly power is a temporary halt;
no state is the final home.
If justice is destroyed though splendour remains,
its brilliance has no lasting name.
The voice within says:
'Search outside, but descend within.'
Measure the road by the lamp of reason;
do not let the questions of faith frighten the mind.
If truth remains only words,
where is its evidence in life?
In the order of the heart, the direction of desire -
there lies philosophy's real examination.
At last the mind understands:
peace does not come from more possessions.
When the centre finds its proper place,
unrest does not remain the same.
The inner light is not an eye
for fleeing the outer world, but seeing it;
walking between two cities,
the human being keeps choosing a life.

The Voice That Awakens Beyond Words

A word is spoken, meaning appears,
 yet the poem does not end there;
 behind the line is a vibration
 that is not heard, yet is not silent.
 The vision of dhvani says:
 the life of poetry is not statement alone;
 what awakens unspoken in the heart
 is meaning too, and no lesser meaning.
 A word through its first doorway
 goes to the house of direct meaning;
 along the clear road of denotation
 it identifies name, object, event.
 But when direct meaning is blocked,
 context points toward another road;
 at the slight turn of secondary indication
 the word receives a wider boundary.
 Behind this comes a third wave,
 not remote from the body of the word;
 yet its value is higher
 because it is not merely spoken.
 When suggestion touches within,
 a lamp burns behind literal meaning;
 in the courtyard of the reader's experience
 a new garden of meaning flowers.
 If the poet says, 'Evening descended,'
 evening may simply mean the time;
 but in the life of someone waiting
 it may also mean the darkness of separation.
 Within one sentence
 many subtle signs may lie asleep;
 when a responsive heart touches them,
 meaning suddenly becomes luminous.
 Dhvani is not merely an ornament of figures,
 nor a game of verbal marvels;
 the central vibration within poetry
 creates the meeting of feeling.
 Suggestions of subject, ornament, and rasa
 may break forth in different forms;
 but when the deep suggestion of rasa awakens,
 the reader may forget one's own boundary.
 Rasa is not the writer's private tears,
 nor only the suffering of a character;
 shaped within the discipline of poetry,
 it becomes a vessel of shared experience.
 Waves of compassion, love, heroism
 take a voice beyond the individual;
 the responsive reader, in that moment,
 reads one's own life in a new form.
 Where does the beauty of poetry live?
 Not only in even rhythm of metre;
 not only in the shining outer house
 of simile, metaphor, alliteration.
 It lives where the word knows its place,
 meaning keeps its measure,
 and the subtle radiance of unspoken feeling
 looks through the whole work.
 If dhvani is breath and speech the body,
 they are not enemies of each other;
 without clear statement suggestion scatters,
 without suggestion poetry lacks depth.
 A work becomes whole
 when spoken and unspoken travel together;

one voice is heard in the ear,
another grows inside the heart.
Criticism then is not counting
how many similes, metres, or verbal devices;
the question is - after reading the work,
what changed within, and how did it shine?
To open layer after layer of meaning
needs responsiveness and patient affection;
a poem is not a judgement carved in stone,
but a living body with the reader.
The long suggestion of dhvani
is still heard beyond the word:
listen to what language says,
but understand also what it does not say.
Poetry is the name of that subtle moment
when the boundary of meaning opens;
even after one line ends,
another poem wakes in the heart.

To Say Is Also to Do

A word is not merely sound riding the air,
 nor the cold meaning of a dictionary;
 when a human being speaks,
 the path of circumstance changes with the speech.
 In the moment one says, 'I promise,'
 not only information is born;
 an act takes place within the saying,
 language becomes a form of action.
 Small sentences of ordinary speech
 open a large door of philosophy;
 market, home, court, assembly -
 everywhere meaning speaks through practice.
 To cut a word away from its use
 is like separating a river from its current;
 meaning appears alive only
 when it moves together with context.
 Some statements describe the state of the world,
 such as, 'The sky is cloudy';
 such sentences are tested
 upon the balance of truth and falsehood.
 But some utterances happen in their saying -
 promise, naming, command;
 there language is not description alone,
 it becomes the entrance of an event.
 For an utterance to succeed,
 time, person, and convention must be right;
 mere pronunciation of words
 does not release every power of action.
 A declaration by one without authority
 may remain only sound;
 linguistic action receives its meaning
 within a web of social rules.
 The first level is what was said -
 sound, words, form of the sentence;
 this is the body of the utterance, its structure,
 where the first sunlight of meaning appears.
 But within the body there is intention -
 asking, telling, warning, commanding;
 the same sentence in different contexts
 enters into different acts.
 Beyond that comes the effect of words,
 what happens in the hearer's mind;
 persuading one, frightening another,
 inspiring someone to change direction.
 Language then becomes a three-layered wave -
 what was said, what was done, what effect arose;
 inside one small sentence, see
 how much social world is contained.
 'The door is open' - that much
 may simply be information;
 but if cold air is entering,
 it may become a hint of request.
 Meaning is not a prisoner locked in words;
 context is the place where it breathes.
 Speaker, listener, time, circumstance
 together create what meaning is.
 Philosophical confusion again and again
 arises from badly tied knots of language;
 a word that works in different contexts
 is bound into one formula.
 Living language seems to say: first observe
 how people actually speak;

do not leave the earth of living practice
and trap the mind in an abstract net.
Truth is necessary, but truth is not all;
human speech carries other responsibilities.
Trust, order, forgiveness, promise -
each holds a different dignity of relation.
Language is ethical too,
because words create trust;
the courage to bear the weight of what was said
helps make the human being human.
So the next time we say,
'I will', 'I believe', 'Come';
look once with care
at the action moving within your words.
The lesson is not merely
to count types of sentences;
it is to understand: language is work in life,
and by saying, the world too can change.

Many Doors of the Same Light

An unnamed question rises in the wind
 and travels far and wide;
 form changes, language changes,
 the inward search remains unbroken.
 Many books, experience deep,
 a discipline of silence greater than words;
 toward the light of one truth
 how many roads keep opening.
 Before the eye, a thousand forms,
 a thousand names, many shapes;
 the mind asks - behind this difference
 is there one primal pulse?
 The world is not merely scattered particles,
 nor God a distant detached edge;
 the relation between visible and invisible
 opens a dawn within consciousness.
 If unity erases every difference,
 where will the colours of the world remain?
 If plurality forgets the ground,
 from where will the thread of meaning flow?
 Between them comes a subtle experience -
 many in one, one in many;
 like reflections of the moon upon water -
 forms are many, the light undivided.
 It is difficult to give God a boundary,
 for boundaries are lines drawn by humans;
 the infinite remains behind naming
 as an unwritten, unspoken text.
 But the infinite is not only far away;
 it is near too, within every life.
 When the search for true nature turns inward,
 the world itself becomes recognition.
 If the self were confined only
 inside the walls of its own body,
 why would a single touch of love
 break and overflow those boundaries?
 The seeker slowly understands -
 the circle of 'I' grows too small;
 upon the deep road of self-experience,
 another's suffering too feels one's own.
 Knowledge is not merely lines in books;
 without experience its voice is incomplete.
 The Sufi road says - wash the heart,
 then you will meet the light within.
 Reason deserves its honour,
 but love too carries evidence;
 that which changes a heart for a lifetime
 is also one mark of knowledge.
 Religion appears through many doors:
 for one prayer, for another meditation;
 for one silence, another song;
 for one law, another sacrifice.
 If compassion stands at the centre of the search,
 thorns of ego keep falling away;
 behind different symbols the seeker
 recognises one deep thirst.
 Rigid borders are made by the mind;
 the infinite cannot fit inside them.
 Whoever says truth is only one's own
 tries to extinguish the lamp of another direction.
 The feeling of unity says:
 make the heart so vast

that in a person of another faith
you recognise humanity first.
Love is not merely an emotional wave;
it is a hard discipline of the self:
placing one's insistence behind
and opening a door for another.
Where love is present, distance
slowly changes its meaning;
the hard stone called 'stranger'
melts under human touch.
So: many doors of the same light,
many directions of the same sky;
names change, languages change,
yet the thirst for truth remains alive.
The voice of inward journey says:
cross the boundary, do not lose heart;
love the many-coloured forms of the world,
and hold the primal unity within the heart.

Prakriti Dances, Purusha Watches

The stage of the world stands adorned from beginningless time;
 on one side Prakriti changes form;
 on the other, silent witness Purusha
 keeps watching and does not itself move.
 One is motion, one a conscious gaze;
 from their conjunction experience awakens.
 In the broad courtyard of Sankhya,
 discern their difference and bondage retreats.
 Whatever is produced in the world
 does not arrive suddenly from nothing;
 inside the womb of cause, the seed of effect
 already remains as possibility.
 Curd is latent in milk,
 the rhythm of the tree remains in the seed;
 when effect assumes its form,
 cause reveals its power.
 Prakriti is one, but within it
 the endless play of three gunas goes on -
 the light of sattva, the restlessness of rajas,
 the heavy silent darkness of tamas.
 At one moment one rises,
 another is pressed down, then the order changes;
 in this disturbed balance
 new forms of creation arise.
 From Prakriti first emerges buddhi,
 a clear doorway of decision;
 behind it ahamkara rises and says:
 'I am the ground of this experience.'
 Mind joins the messages of the senses;
 subtle tanmatras unfold into forms;
 sound, touch, form, taste, smell
 gradually release the world before us.
 Purushas are many - each a witness,
 not bound by the gunas of Prakriti;
 not doers, not subject to change,
 yet appearing joined with experience.
 Because of ignorance, the dance of Prakriti
 seems to be one's own dance;
 when the lamp of discrimination is lit,
 the witness recognises its nature.
 Suffering can surround us from three directions -
 from the body, the world, unseen forces;
 temporary remedies may bring peace,
 yet vast pain can return.
 For complete liberation it is necessary
 to open the knot of the primal confusion;
 knowledge of the difference between Purusha and Prakriti
 breaks the deep darkness of mind.
 There is more than one road of knowledge:
 perception opens the door of the eye;
 inference lets signs speak softly
 of unseen causes within intelligence.
 Trustworthy testimony is also a path
 where the senses cannot reach;
 through the accord of three means of knowledge
 the mind understands many watches of truth.
 Mind, ahamkara, buddhi are all subtle,
 an inner order larger than the gross body;
 the senses seize outer forms,
 inside them experience comes together.
 But the conscious principle that sees and experiences
 has a root distinct from all these;

the instruments belong to Prakriti,
Purusha is only a traveller of light.
Liberation is not a carnival of pleasure,
nor the glitter of some new world;
it is the understanding: 'I am not Prakriti' -
this recognition cuts the snare of confusion.
Prakriti, having completed its work,
falls silent before the witness;
even while the body's movement continues through knowledge,
delusion does not return.
The teaching of discrimination says:
do not abandon the world - recognise the difference.
What changes is Prakriti;
what sees, understand as consciousness.
To the mind lost in the play of gunas,
give the clear vision of discernment;
let Prakriti dance according to its law,
and let Purusha live its silent freedom.

An Offering to Truth from the Flowers of Reason

When questioning rose into a sharp current,
 when reasoning became a rigorous test,
 thought searched for a road on which
 even faith would consent to examination.
 Upon the subtle balance of Nyaya,
 a claim is first weighed by evidence;
 if belief is the companion of truth,
 it must also stand before intelligence.
 The object seen is one doorway;
 the unseen cause takes the road of inference.
 Smoke speaks of the possibility of fire,
 a sign opens the form of cause.
 But inference is no blind leap;
 it requires the discipline of invariable relation.
 A conclusion not joined to its reason
 cannot travel with logic.
 Events in the world do not stand alone;
 behind effects rise questions of causes.
 Arrangement of form, current of sequence -
 intelligence asks: why this movement?
 Intellect keeps searching for answers
 among experience, reason, and relation.
 Speech of the unseen becomes meaningful only
 where evidence can provide a ground.
 Is the self merely another name for the body?
 Does consciousness break from moment to moment?
 Memory, desire, pleasure, pain, knowledge -
 through whose thread do they come together?
 The body changes, experiences change,
 yet the sequence of 'I' does not disappear;
 self-discernment sees within this continuity
 a sign of an abiding knower.
 Do not silence an opposing view;
 first hear its question completely.
 Where an objection becomes sharp,
 reconsider the ground of your own position.
 Philosophy remains alive only
 where doubt receives respect;
 under the hard sunlight of debate,
 the metal of truth becomes clearer.
 The question of God is not worship alone;
 it is also a search for philosophical cause.
 The world's effect, order, and relation
 place many signs before intelligence.
 Gathering flower after flower of evidence,
 reason fashions a garland of argument:
 accept the conclusion only when
 the reason can bear its own weight.
 Language too raises a question:
 how was the discipline of meaning formed?
 Behind the shared bridge of usage,
 what intelligence gives order to the rules?
 Sentence, sign, arrangement, number -
 all are viewed through the thread of cause;
 within familiar lines of the world
 thought seeks marks of an unseen ground.
 Yet the victory of logic is not final,
 for logic too has its limits;
 the road of conclusion runs only
 as far as evidence can travel beside it.

Truth does not grow through excessive claims,
nor does doubt reduce everything to void;
the disciplined lamp of balanced discernment
remains steady in the mind's darkness.
If the flower of knowledge becomes ego,
its fragrance dies;
if knowledge stays humble before questions,
new doors open of themselves.
The offering of reasoning is like
fragrance of reverence within logic;
intellect and belief are not enemies
when both are bound to truth.
So question, ask for evidence,
hold the thread of cause with care;
speak of self, world, and God
with the lamp of discipline lit.
This road teaches: do not accept
merely by the force of a name;
offer truth the flowers of reason,
and keep the doors of thought open.

The Lamp of Reason, the Witness of the Self

When the edge of questioning sharpened
 and struck old aphorisms,
 logic stood up with Nyaya's discipline
 as a support in the hand.
 It did not merely reject opposing views,
 but opened the knots within their questions;
 it tested inherited meaning again
 and made roads for new interpretation.
 Behind old commentaries came vartikas,
 bridges made by thought;
 where earlier explanations were insufficient,
 new reasons were sought.
 Before the challenge of Buddhist logic,
 there was not merely defence of words;
 within Nyaya new subtlety emerged
 from the fire of debate.
 If inference is to reach truth,
 the reason must be able to stand:
 present in the subject,
 and in agreement among similar cases.
 Where the probandum is absent,
 the reason too must be absent;
 without this discipline, conclusion
 becomes only the shadow of inference.
 Smoke is seen, fire is remembered -
 but is that alone sufficient?
 The seen sign and known relation
 must be joined again within the mind.
 At that moment of reflection on the mark,
 the sign opens the doorway of cause;
 inferential cognition is then born,
 and intellect speaks through ordered meaning.
 Perception too has many layers,
 the movement of sense and object;
 form, quality, class, and relation
 open their nets within knowledge.
 Nyaya's subtle observation says:
 even seeing is no simple act.
 What was known, how, and through what medium -
 these are no small questions.
 If a reason, despite its appearance,
 does not lead to the probandum,
 beware its glitter -
 not every argument becomes truth.
 Fallacious reasons, unestablished grounds,
 contradictory marks, uncertain roads -
 without recognising hetvabhasa,
 the boat of discernment cannot cross.
 A hard objection rises concerning the self:
 is the body alone what we call 'I'?
 If consciousness changes moment by moment,
 how does the village of experience endure?
 Memory, language, and self-awareness
 point toward one knower;
 within the continuing sense of 'I'
 awakens a question of an enduring ground.
 This was dialogue with opposition,
 not silence, not a wall of anger;
 one objection after another was placed before thought,
 and answers were sought repeatedly.

A philosophical tradition lives
when questions do not frighten it;
a view that can endure criticism
does not root itself in memory alone.
Nyaya here is not a collection of formulas,
but practice in the discipline of intelligence;
subject, reason, example, relation -
all demand alert confidence.
Whom shall we accept, why accept,
how far does evidence bear the claim?
within this severe discipline of questioning,
knowledge also tells us its limits.
The path of logic teaches:
do not make tradition rigid;
receive the edge of opposing questions
and renew your reasoning again and again.
Light the lamp of the reason,
keep the witness of the self within;
if truth is firm, testing
will make its radiance clearer.

The Motion of Matter, the Liberation of Humanity

In factory smoke the world appeared
 outside the pages of books;
 a worker's tired palm asked:
 for whom is this endless production?
 When the eye moved beyond theory
 and read the living form of suffering,
 behind society's glittering mask
 it heard the silent story of labour.
 When dialogue became thought,
 the voice of questioning deepened:
 different minds, yet similar pain -
 why has the human entered bondage?
 Amid debate, labour, and struggle,
 thoughts sharpened one another;
 a purpose greater than personal fame
 became the shared lamp of inquiry.
 The world is not a fixed stone;
 everything is movement and change.
 The new is born within contradiction;
 transformation comes through conflict.
 Whether nature or social formation,
 relations are continually changing;
 old structures, within their limits,
 grow seeds of new possibility.
 'Matter first, thought afterward' -
 this is not merely a rigid negation.
 Without the material conditions of life,
 the history of consciousness is hard to understand.
 Hunger, labour, tools, production,
 the structures of home and society speak;
 human ideas do not live alone in the sky,
 they take form through earthly relations.
 History is not only tales of kings;
 the worker's sweat is also its script.
 Relations of land, capital, and labour
 quietly write the watches of time.
 When class interests collide,
 politics reveals its face;
 through struggle the balance of power
 shapes the society that follows.
 If labour is humanity's creative power,
 why does the worker become alien?
 Why does what one makes, and one's own day,
 pass under another's control?
 Liberation is not bread alone,
 nor merely a change in rulers;
 human capacities must fully flower -
 society must provide such ground.
 Seeing the achievements of science,
 mind understands nature as dynamic;
 life, matter, and form
 keep changing into one another.
 But do not turn science into mantra;
 let thought grow from the earth of fact.
 Where new evidence shines,
 bring assumptions back for examination.
 Socialism is not merely a dream;
 it is organisation, consciousness, struggle.
 Change does not come from solitary anger;
 it requires the strength of shared understanding.

When workers understand their condition
and organise for rights,
a new pressure falls
upon the wheel of history.
This thought seems to say:
join ideas to life.
If a theory cannot understand human pain,
break its hard shell.
Alongside laws of the material world,
do not forget human dreams.
Freedom must descend from a word
onto the ground of equal opportunity.
The motion of matter and human liberation -
both questions are joined to one another.
World changes, society changes;
nothing remains fixed forever.
The road of change reminds us:
history is made by the work of hands.
Through conscious labour and shared discernment,
human beings can write their society.

The Touchstone of Meaning

A word arose and with it a question:
 what does this statement finally mean?
 Mere saying does not make truth;
 where is the road of testing?
 Language receives a touchstone of meaning:
 let the sentence reveal its evidence.
 A claim that can be tested
 earns a place in the courtyard of knowledge.
 Some statements in their structure
 make truth or falsity clear;
 within relations of logic and mathematics,
 meaning shines by its own rules.
 Even without giving new empirical news,
 they belong to the order of thought;
 their ground is woven within
 definition and logical relation.
 Other statements are joined to earth -
 seeing, hearing, testing are necessary;
 if experience can touch the claim,
 then it does not remain unsupported.
 The language of science walks this road;
 possible testing gives it worth.
 The bond between meaning and evidence
 is the central discipline of this thought.
 But a statement beyond experience,
 that does not enter rules of logic,
 a claim about invisible being
 for which no road of testing appears -
 the question rises: in the form of knowledge,
 how will its meaning stand?
 The words may sound profound,
 but without evidence what fact do they state?
 A hard wind blew across
 the high palace of metaphysics;
 merely saying 'being', 'absolute', 'transcendent'
 did not make a claim self-proving.
 The work of philosophy is not to create mysteries;
 it is also to untie knots of language.
 First understand what kind of claim
 a statement is making.
 When we say morally,
 'this is good', 'that is wrong',
 this view finds not fact alone
 but also the pulse of feeling and value.
 Approval, rejection, insistence,
 the attitude of mind moves there too;
 on ground different from factual testing,
 the language of value carries its own colour.
 Aesthetic statement is similar:
 'this work is beautiful.'
 Can measure alone
 capture the full meaning of rasa?
 Fact and value must be seen
 upon their different grounds;
 do not bind different functions of language
 into the same kind of knowledge-claim.
 The rule of verification may seem severe,
 but its purpose was clarity:
 from where does a statement receive meaning,
 how testable is it?

If a philosopher is enchanted by words
and forgets the road of evidence,
language itself becomes a mist
that sends the mind wandering.
This thought teaches us to ask:
'You say this - how will we test it?'
'Is this a fact or a result of definition?'
'Where is the evidence, and what is the relation?'
These questions guard thought,
teaching claims their limits;
humility in knowledge lies here -
do not invent what has not been tested.
Keep the touchstone of meaning in hand;
do not be carried away by the glitter of words.
Look in all three directions:
experience, logic, and the limits of language.
The road of the touchstone may be hard,
but it gives a vast discipline:
before speaking, ask the meaning;
behind meaning, search for the ground.

The Grammar of Difference in Every Particle

When the world opened before the eyes,
 a question rose: 'What form is this?'
 A name alone does not settle the matter;
 what structure lies within the thing?
 Particle, quality, motion, relation -
 all were placed in classes for understanding;
 seeking rules within difference,
 the road of Vaisheshika was lit.
 Substance bears qualities;
 motion awakens action within it.
 A quality does not move by itself,
 yet it gives the object its identity.
 From earth, water, fire, air
 to ether, time, and direction;
 along with subtle grounds of self and mind -
 the world of substance became many-sided.
 Colour, taste, smell, touch,
 number, magnitude, distinctness;
 conjunction and disjunction, desire and aversion,
 pleasure and pain - colours of experience.
 The list of qualities is not mere counting;
 it asks how an object is recognised.
 Through distinct characteristics,
 knowledge discovers its own boundary.
 Action says: stillness is not final;
 motion too belongs to the law of matter.
 Rising, falling, contracting, expanding -
 see change in movement.
 Action cannot stand without substance,
 identity is incomplete without quality;
 the relations of object, quality, and act
 fill out the picture of the world.
 As 'cowness' appears in many cows,
 'treeness' in many trees,
 the universal joins many forms,
 the particular measures difference.
 Within one class each thing
 remains distinct through its own being;
 in this meeting of unity and difference,
 the meaning of the object-world opens.
 Thread and cloth, quality and substance -
 some relations cannot simply be separated;
 break what is joined at that depth
 and the ground of meaning is lost.
 Samavaya appears as the subtle name
 of that enduring relation;
 it explains the knot of part and whole,
 the unity within form.
 Behind the visible body, subtle particles -
 the imagination of atoms arises;
 from the union of indivisible grounds,
 the gross world takes shape.
 The subtle gaze seems to say:
 seek the root of the vast in the minute.
 Behind mountain, pot, body,
 think the unseen structure.
 Perception opens the door of knowledge;
 inference catches distant threads.
 From a seen sign, unseen cause
 rises within intelligence.

But inference is not arbitrary;
the rule of causal relation is needed.
Without discipline of evidence,
imagination cannot take the place of truth.
When an effect is born,
ask how it is joined to its cause.
Why is this form present now,
from whose meeting did it arise?
Inherent, non-inherent, efficient -
see different grounds of causation.
Behind one event join many conditions
through subtle discernment.
Absence too is not empty nothing;
its sign remains within knowledge.
To say 'this is not here'
awakens awareness of absence.
Being and non-being alike
receive the lamp of thought.
Discernment of difference teaches here:
the world grows clear through subtle questions.
Grammar of difference in every particle,
and laws of relation within difference;
with substance, quality, and action,
universal and particular hold deep affinity.
This subtle thought says:
read the visible world attentively.
Search structure behind the name,
and take the road of evidence toward truth.

Shape the State Through Your Own Conduct

Dust of an unsettled age was rising,
 distrust stood between state and state;
 moral discernment sought a remedy:
 first make the human being fragrant.
 An order cannot stand by the sceptre
 if character falls away within;
 the root of government is not the palace,
 it lives in human conduct.
 The teacher says - want to repair the country?
 First repair your own heart.
 Justice and affection within your home,
 then open the door of society.
 From individual to family, family to state,
 responsibility expands step by step;
 without inward discipline,
 outer civilisation remains hollow.
 Five subtle cords of relationship:
 ruler and subject, father and son;
 husband and wife, elder and younger,
 friend with friend in equal affection.
 Duty must not flow one way alone;
 respect answers respect.
 Let the one above be compassionate,
 the one below honour the relation.
 Ren is the tender light of humanity:
 understanding the worth of another life,
 considering another's happiness with one's own,
 duty beside right.
 One who truly desires self-improvement
 creates a path for another too;
 a heart that grows wider
 can soothe the wounds of society.
 Shu says - do not do to another
 what you would not wish to suffer yourself;
 and the goodwill you seek for yourself,
 carry its shadow toward another.
 This rule is not a burden of books;
 it is a simple measure of daily conduct.
 Many sufferings may lessen
 merely by treating another as human.
 Li is not mere outer ceremony,
 nor an empty shell of ritual;
 it keeps measure within conduct
 and gives civilisation balanced speech.
 Humility, restraint, fitting occasion,
 the right degree of honour for each;
 when conduct is true from within,
 relationship receives life.
 If the ruler becomes a slave of greed,
 even law is only a rod of fear;
 if the ruler embodies virtue,
 people learn through that character.
 The power of example exceeds command;
 moral influence travels far.
 Even one day of right conduct
 can alter the direction of society.
 Education is not the right of lineage alone;
 let the doorway open to the curious.
 Read, think, then practise -
 thus the seed of knowledge flowers.

Memorised speech without thought
falls like a dry leaf;
thought without practice is incomplete,
their union awakens intelligence.
The wise are not those
who hide their ignorance;
but those who say clearly:
'this I know, and this I do not.'
Where humility toward learning lives,
one may meet a teacher anywhere;
even walking with three people,
knowledge can be found in one of them.
Honour ancestral memory and family,
but not blind imitation.
Seek life within tradition;
let courtesy not become rigidity.
The form of society keeps changing,
but do not forget humanity.
In a new age, discover again
the living meaning of old values.
The road of virtue says:
the state begins in the mind;
the mind begins in virtue,
and virtue bears fruit in conduct.
Shape the state through your own conduct,
open your heart toward another;
in the difficult discipline of becoming human,
shape society's future again.

The Mould of Experience, the Lamp of Duty

Even before limited eyes,
 the sky of questions remains vast:
 how, in the end, is knowledge made -
 by experience alone, or by intellect?
 What the eye sees and what the mind joins -
 the world opens in their meeting.
 The knower is no silent spectator;
 the knower also participates in the form of experience.
 Many waves of the outer world
 enter through the doors of sense;
 but without prior forms of mind,
 those scattered streams cannot be ordered.
 Space and time are like two frames
 within which experience takes shape;
 event, distance, before and after
 arise in ordered form within awareness.
 Intellect then through its categories
 gives relation to what has been seen;
 unity, causation, possibility -
 the world is bound by threads of rule.
 Experience is like raw material,
 intellect the shaper of form;
 knowledge is neither a mere copy of outside
 nor the solitary invention of mind.
 What appears before us
 is the available form of phenomena;
 but what the thing is in itself -
 there the sunlight of knowledge stops.
 To understand a limit is not weakness;
 it is self-discipline of intelligence.
 Do not build a palace of pride
 over what cannot be known.
 Some truths stand as conditions
 within intellect before experience;
 other knowledge is enlarged
 when experience adds new meaning.
 At this meeting a question rises:
 how is new knowledge possible?
 How do rules of mind and material of world
 lie joined to one another?
 Then behind knowledge another question rises:
 'Where lies the root of right action?'
 If reward, fear, and greed are removed,
 what does the voice of duty say?
 The moral mind seeks within itself
 a universal law:
 the rule desired for oneself
 must be fit to apply to all.
 A human being is never merely a means;
 each is also an end in oneself.
 Do not make another's will, labour, dignity
 mere material for your own use.
 When autonomous will gives itself law,
 morality awakens from within;
 not from fear of outer pressure,
 but through honoured duty.
 Freedom is not arbitrary will,
 not a right without law;
 moral autonomy exists
 when discernment becomes the doorway of conduct.

To accept duty is not slavery
when reason freely recognises the law;
responsibility for one's own action
becomes the true garment of free consciousness.
If the individual possesses rights,
honour the same rights in others;
let the law of the state be such
that freedom receives a place.
The purpose of law is not fear alone,
but guardianship of equal freedom;
legitimacy of government awakens
where the citizen is not a slave.
If nations learn only the language of war
generation after generation,
peace becomes a brief pause
before weapons gather again.
The dream is of law-governed relations,
nations mutually responsible;
lasting peace grows from justice,
not merely from exhaustion after war.
The starry sky stretches above;
within, the voice of moral law.
Before both stands the human being -
finite, yet responsible.
The mould of experience, the lamp of duty -
this road of duty teaches:
recognise the limits of knowledge with humility,
and preserve human dignity in action.

The Map of Meaning, the Discipline of Language

From the crowd of words a question rose:
 what is the ground of meaning in speech?
 We need a language where mist is reduced
 and thought stands clear.
 Alongside mathematics, physics, logic,
 the limits of statements were measured anew;
 not seduced by the glitter of words,
 the structure of meaning was examined from within.
 We say a proposition - very well,
 but from where does its meaning arise?
 What possible road of experience
 could examine that statement?
 If we speak about facts of the world,
 the claim should point toward some evidence;
 if meaning is wholly cut off from experience,
 the assertion drifts like air.
 At first the touchstone was severe -
 a hard demand for verification;
 if a sentence could never enter experience,
 could it receive a place in knowledge?
 But scientific language is broader;
 not every statement can be tested at once.
 So an open road of confirmability
 points toward possible evidence.
 Simple observation sentences became
 the first solid ground of testing:
 colour, event, measurement, motion -
 the nearest signs of experience.
 If a distant theory is meaningful,
 it must build bridges of rules;
 its relation to observation statements
 must come through a road of transformation.
 Definitions are not complete for all time;
 science grows and language changes.
 Sometimes the relation is only partial,
 yet the work of inquiry does not stop.
 Leaving a rigid 'all or nothing',
 analysis adopts a finer gaze;
 as far as evidence is possible in the world,
 so far should the meaning of a claim be measured.
 Some sentences give no factual report,
 yet do not therefore become meaningless;
 rules of logic, laws of mathematics
 receive value from their own structure.
 Their necessity is not an event in the world,
 but discipline of linguistic rule;
 the analytic mind can recognise
 different grounds of truth and falsity.
 When huge metaphysical words
 fly far from evidence -
 'absolute', 'ultimate', 'invisible being' -
 how often language creates illusion.
 The question rises: in what experience or logic
 is the use of this sentence anchored?
 If no touchstone can be found,
 perhaps the dispute is trapped in words.
 Philosophy then is no royal throne,
 no final command over the world;
 it becomes analysis of language and thought,
 clarifying different kinds of statements.

Sometimes the knot of a problem is not in things
but in a tangle of unclear words;
proper grammar and clear definition
can wash away many disputes by themselves.
An ideal language becomes a dream
where rules remain clear;
relations between simple and complex sentences
stand open in logical form.
Which sentence is a messenger of experience,
which merely a rule of structure -
through this distinction thought receives
new discipline and restraint.
Scientificity is not uniformity,
but a shared discipline of testing;
among statements from different fields
logical relations may still exist.
The clearer the language of knowledge,
the easier dialogue becomes;
a shared order of evidence can reduce
distance among different sciences.
The lesson is not merely
to abandon poetry and dream;
it says: whenever you make a knowledge-claim,
take responsibility for meaning.
Say: how shall it be tested?
How shall it be understood?
On how much evidence does it stand?
With a map of meaning in hand, thought shines clearly.

The World of Symbols, Human Meaning

The world is not only what appears before the eyes,
 not merely colours and shapes displayed;
 the mind too weaves threads of meaning
 and gives experience its form.
 A question rises: is knowledge only
 the imprint of an outer image upon mind?
 Or does the human, through structures of intelligence,
 keep shaping the world's meaning anew?
 It is difficult to take an object as a fixed lump
 and seize some final essence;
 within webs of relation, order, and function,
 knowledge moves in a more living way.
 How is one fact joined to another,
 whose place stands relative to whose?
 A relational gaze says:
 there the character of the world becomes intelligible.
 Number, law, scientific formula
 are not merely names of objects;
 as forms of relation they give the world
 an ordered map for intelligence.
 If knowledge were only copying,
 how could a new theory ever be born?
 The mind is a creative participant -
 thus the meaning of experience is made.
 But the human being is not science alone;
 one speaks language and creates stories.
 Through myth, memory, art, and religion,
 one makes meaning of one's world.
 Each form shapes experience in its own way;
 one world has many symbolic doors,
 each with its own rules,
 its own discipline.
 Language is not merely a label upon things;
 words change the direction of experience.
 As soon as an unnamed feeling receives a name,
 it flowers into form in the human world.
 Relations take shape within sentences,
 memory passes from generation to generation;
 language becomes a shared human house
 in which culture nurtures its voice.
 Myth is not merely the dust of ignorance;
 it is an ancient dawn of human consciousness.
 Fear, hope, nature, tales of gods -
 the first symbolic doors of meaning.
 The age of reason may certainly test its limits,
 yet myth preserves a deep mental rhythm
 from the history of the human being.
 Art is not a copy of fact,
 nor the servant of utility.
 Through line, colour, sound, and story,
 new forms of experience open.
 The artist makes us see the world again,
 including what ordinary sight lets pass;
 within the autonomous structure of symbols,
 life finds a hidden meaning.
 Science measures; language tells.
 Myth interprets fear through symbol.
 Art makes experience visible;
 history joins the threads of time.
 None need destroy the others;
 they are different forms of human culture.

Within this wide forest of plural symbols,
consciousness searches for its own form.
A human being is not merely a biological creature;
one lives in a world of symbols.
With signs, stories, rules, and values,
human illumination comes into being.
Where an animal lives in its immediate environment,
the human lives through mediation of meaning;
language and culture carry experience
toward a far horizon.
Freedom is not only breaking bonds;
it is also the capacity to create meaning.
Where discernment tests symbols,
human dignity remains alive.
But when political myth turns fear into slogan
and entices the crowd,
symbol ceases to liberate
and binds public consciousness.
Therefore understand the power of symbols with vigilance.
Do not call every story truth.
Do not make science the only language,
nor bow the head before every myth.
The road of symbols teaches:
meaning is a living human act.
Light discernment within the symbolic world
and make culture and society freer.

The Moment of Choice, the Leap of Faith

The crowd says, 'Walk this road.'
 The system says, 'All meaning has been decided.'
 A quiet inward voice asks:
 'Where do I myself stand?'
 Life is not a measured map
 with answers already written upon it.
 In the fire of one's decision,
 a person makes one's own existence firm.
 If philosophy becomes so vast
 that the living person disappears,
 while the palace of system grows higher,
 where will the cry of the individual be heard?
 A complete system wishes to explain everything,
 but life demands a decision in the moment.
 The distance between thought and living
 rises as the real question.
 Truth is not only a distant object
 to be measured by cold intelligence.
 Some truths must be lived
 until they fill the mind.
 Subjectivity here is not deceit,
 nor arbitrary distortion of fact;
 it is the living acceptance of truth
 with one's whole existence.
 Only when I choose
 do I bear the weight of my life.
 Saying, 'circumstances were entirely to blame'
 does not erase responsibility.
 Freedom is a sweet song,
 but it comes with a night of trembling.
 The open doors of endless possibility
 release a deep wind of anxiety.
 Anxiety is not always illness;
 it can be freedom's shadow.
 When a thousand possible paths open,
 the mind trembles: 'Which road shall I take?'
 To avoid choosing is also a choice;
 silence too can become a decision.
 In this sharp hour of existence,
 the human being forms oneself.
 The first mode of life moves in aesthetic rhythm -
 moment, pleasure, novelty, colour.
 Desire runs from one delight to another
 without the company of lasting responsibility.
 The more momentary glitter increases,
 the more emptiness may awaken within.
 The mind learns that chasing pleasure alone
 does not contain life's whole meaning.
 Then the ethical door opens -
 duty, promise, commitment.
 The question, 'What kind of person shall I become?'
 demands continuity of character.
 Choice is not merely today's wish;
 it is choosing oneself across time.
 Rule, relation, responsibility
 give life a deeper ground.
 Yet ethics too is not the final shore.
 A person encounters one's limit;
 within fault, failure, and inability,
 the self begins to tremble.

The religious level then asks:
is God merely the name of a doctrine?
Or in the solitary relation of the individual
does faith become the work of life?
Faith is not a mathematical conclusion,
nor the last rung of proof.
Sometimes at the edge of intellect
the mind sees a deep uncertainty.
Then the leap is not merely blindness;
it is staking one's whole existence.
Where complete security cannot be found,
faith nevertheless chooses its place.
Beyond ethical universality,
when the innermost difficult question rises,
the relation between the individual and the Absolute
becomes strange and fearsome.
Within this deep tension,
faith is not a house of comfort.
It is the voice of inward decision
even amid fear and trembling.
Despair may be born
when the 'I' runs away from itself;
when one refuses what one is
and burns to become what one is not.
The truth of selfhood
is a relation to oneself and to the Absolute.
When the knot of self-division opens,
inner life is made anew.
It is easy to lose one's name in the crowd;
hard to meet oneself in solitude.
Yet genuine existence awakens where
the decision is one's own, alert and new.
The existential road says:
do not make life merely an explanation.
In the moment of choice accept responsibility,
and make truth live within yourself.

Six Lamps of Knowledge

Within the long tradition of Mimamsa
 a radiant question arose:
 action, Veda, world, and knowledge
 were gathered again for reflection.
 The voice of realism says: the world we see
 is not merely a shadow of mind.
 External things have their own place;
 knowledge is not wholly severed from them.
 Objects are many, forms are many,
 qualities, actions, relations spread wide;
 beside universals, lines of particularity
 shape the world of experience.
 What exists slowly opens its nature
 before awareness.
 To call reality simply false
 leaves no secure ground for evidence.
 The first lamp is perception:
 when a sense meets its object,
 form, taste, smell, touch, sound
 introduce themselves within consciousness.
 The first awareness may be indeterminate;
 later name and form become clear.
 In this order of experience, knowledge
 moves from indistinct toward definite.
 The second lamp is inference:
 from the seen sign grasp the unseen.
 When smoke rises, the possibility of fire
 enters the mind through a known relation.
 But imagination is not inference;
 the relation of reason requires evidence.
 Where pervasion is trustworthy,
 there the conclusion receives standing.
 The third lamp is comparison:
 recognise a new object through similarity.
 A description heard before
 awakens recognition in a new encounter.
 What was unknown becomes familiar
 through the subtle assistance of resemblance.
 In this natural process of knowing,
 language and experience look toward each other.
 The fourth lamp is trustworthy testimony,
 where speech itself becomes a road of knowledge;
 especially the authority of the Veda
 stands firm in the Mimamsaka view.
 Here word is not mere sound;
 it bears an enduring relation with meaning.
 Within inherited memory and injunction,
 the sentence carries a bond of knowledge.
 The fifth lamp is postulation:
 when two facts cannot otherwise stand together,
 intelligence assumes an unspoken condition
 and opens the knot of the problem.
 Someone claims to fast all day,
 yet the body appears well nourished;
 the assumption of eating at night
 reveals meaning through otherwise impossibility.
 The sixth lamp is non-apprehension:
 sometimes not seeing is itself knowledge.
 To say, 'There is no pot here,'
 the empty place itself makes absence evident.

Absence is not the darkness of nothing;
non-presence too belongs to experience.
Like being, non-being also
receives colour within awareness.
How does knowledge possess truth?
This question rises beside the six lamps.
Cognition is trusted as it arises
until a defect later breaks that trust.
When error is subsequently recognised,
the earlier claim is defeated.
Truth need not beg at every moment
for a fresh external seal.
Vedic injunction and discipline of action
are not merely a burden of ritual;
they are reflection upon human duty
and remain joined to life.
Knowledge of dharma will not everywhere
be seized directly by the eye.
For this reason testimony has
a distinctive role in Mimamsa.
Reason, experience, testimony, comparison,
inference, postulation, absence -
from six directions the sky of knowledge
seeks different faces of truth.
The teaching of pramana seems to say:
do not read the world through one doorway.
Carry six lamps of knowledge in your hands,
and follow discernment toward meaning.

A Science of Society upon the Ground of Experience

Amid an age of upheaval,
 knowledge searched for solid ground.
 Leaving the high mist of speculation,
 it sought truth within experience.
 Build the house of thought
 upon what can be seen and examined.
 Behind events, seek not hidden mysteries
 but identifiable relations and laws.
 Positivism says: the road of knowledge
 begins upon the ground of observation.
 Through experience, comparison, and testing,
 the sequence of events slowly opens.
 Leave the final mystery of 'why' aside
 and first understand the law of 'how'.
 Measure and examine the world's movement,
 choosing the limits of truth with care.
 Human intelligence did not reach
 the light of science in a single day.
 Passing through three stages,
 the history of thought moved forward.
 First events were understood through divine powers;
 then through names of abstract forces;
 finally mind descended to experience
 and searched for observable laws.
 Even within the theological stage
 forms changed in sequence:
 conscious powers in things,
 many gods, then the force of one God.
 The more human beings wrestled with questions,
 the more structures of explanation changed.
 In this view, history became
 a gradual development of intellect.
 The middle stage spoke through abstractions:
 'nature', 'essence', 'substance'.
 Names of ideas replaced gods,
 yet remained distant from experience.
 It too served as a bridge
 carrying thought from old toward new;
 but it was not the final shore
 where testable law could be kept.
 The positive stage says:
 look at relations among events;
 sequence, coexistence,
 and the formulas of law.
 Leave pride in ultimate causes;
 honour what is available.
 Even limited knowledge can be firm
 when it remains joined to evidence.
 Sciences are not all made in one mould;
 they form an order from simple to complex.
 Mathematics at the base, calculation of the heavens,
 physical world, then chemistry.
 The science of life comes further,
 and finally the difficult study of society.
 Each field has its own law,
 yet all share the discipline of experience.
 Society too is not merely a crowd;
 it has structure, law, and movement.
 Family, labour, institutions, cooperation
 together form a social web.

Thus arose the need
for a distinct science of society;
the study of human relations
was given a scientific road.
Social statics asks:
how does order remain standing?
What relations join the parts of society
and keep them bound together?
Family, language, division of labour,
bonds of shared belief -
how does unity arise in the social body?
Many questions gather around this thread.
Social dynamics in turn
reads the history of change.
From age to age ideas alter,
institutions are shaped by new circumstances.
If progress is merely a slogan,
its ground remains incomplete.
Understand patterns of gradual development
and the road of reform becomes fuller.
Knowledge does not aim only to know;
it belongs to the life of society.
Order without progress is blind;
progress without order is madness.
The dream is that the light of science
move toward human welfare;
that upon the earth of experience,
social science build a responsible future.

The Root of the State Is the Welfare of the People

A state is not merely the glitter of a crown,
 nor the solitary prestige of the sceptre;
 it is the rice-field, the city market,
 defence of borders, and the law of justice.
 A subtle gaze sees within government
 countless threads of life joined together.
 If politics cuts itself off from the people,
 the palace becomes ruined from within.
 Hearing the name Arthashastra,
 do not think only of accounting wealth.
 State, policy, economy, security,
 administration - all travel one road.
 How can order endure?
 How may crisis be driven away?
 Many organs of government together
 form the whole body of the state.
 Gathering views of earlier teachers,
 new discernment examines them again.
 Tradition is not a blind line;
 the test of practice remains central.
 A rule that no longer serves its time
 must be tested again.
 Practical intelligence within books
 must meet living practice.
 Branches of knowledge may differ,
 yet government needs them all.
 Thought, dharma, wealth, and punishment
 must be held in balance.
 Decision is not mere impulse;
 it requires information, reasoning, and knowledge of time.
 Every step of statecraft
 must carry the mark of foresight.
 If a king drowns in private pleasure
 and does not feel the people's suffering,
 power loses its foundation
 and the root of trust slowly dries.
 The ruler's good is bound
 to the people's good.
 The stability of the throne in the end
 is tied to public welfare.
 Ministers, officials, treasury, army -
 all require a vigilant eye.
 The boundaries of duty must be clear,
 and roads of audit remain open.
 When corrupt greed enters within,
 the body of the state grows ill.
 Discipline and accountability
 must move like breath through administration.
 A full treasury built on injustice
 cannot sustain prosperity.
 Production, trade, taxation
 need balance and policy.
 Agriculture, crafts, roads, granaries -
 all are limbs of economic life.
 The strength of a state is not war alone;
 it takes colour from food and labour.
 Punishment does not mean blind assault,
 nor rule by fear as the only remedy.
 Discipline, justice, and security
 form the triangle in which punishment belongs.

Excessive severity produces resentment;
excessive softness, disorder.
Measured policy is necessary
if social institutions are to endure.
Crisis comes from within and without -
enemy, famine, disintegration, fear.
Statecraft is tested most
when no easy remedy remains.
Understand the movement of time before deciding;
consider alliance and conflict.
Use intelligence alongside force,
and thus keep the gateway secure.
Society is made of many occupations,
many groups with different duties.
Order becomes meaningful
when everyone receives a place to live.
Between dharma and practical affairs,
government seeks a balanced road.
If the law of the state turns against the people,
its chariot becomes unstable.
Political discernment says:
policy is not merely cunning;
power is not merely hunger for victory,
wealth is not merely a pile of money.
The root of the state lies in people's welfare,
and people's welfare measures good government.
Through foresight, justice, and economic discernment
a civil order can endure.

The Form of Experience, the Freedom of History

Amid the movement of time and suffering,
 thought searches for a home.
 Life refuses to remain mere enjoyment;
 through questioning it finds its voice again.
 History, art, knowledge, action -
 all are roads joined to one another.
 From the ashes of experience thought rises,
 like a new dawn from darkness.
 The mind is not merely a mirror,
 passively receiving an image of the world.
 Through its living activity, consciousness
 gives experience form and meaning.
 What is seen becomes human
 when its form rises within.
 Knowledge is born from the living meeting
 of outer and inner.
 Art is not first a box of rules,
 nor a dry definition of logic.
 Art is the form of immediate experience,
 a language awakened within the mind.
 Picture, song, poem, story -
 feeling first becomes form.
 Expression and intuition are not two;
 meaning is born in the same moment.
 When an artist truly sees,
 one does not merely copy the object.
 The unique image arisen within
 takes body in sound, line, and word.
 Call expression successful
 when the experience receives full form.
 Mere imitation does not become art;
 creation asks for an inward world.
 Beauty is not outward decoration,
 not merely measured proportion.
 Its hidden truth lies in
 the completeness of living expression.
 Ugliness is broken expression
 where form cannot bear its feeling.
 Beauty is born where
 inside and outside fill one another.
 After art comes the field of logic,
 where concept assumes a form.
 From particular experience intellect rises
 to threads of universal relation.
 Intuition says, 'This form is thus';
 logic asks, 'What does this class mean?'
 They are not enemies but sequential activities,
 different movements of consciousness.
 Behind knowledge lies the world of action,
 where desire becomes decision.
 First, economic discernment considers
 use, means, and gain.
 By what means will the end be reached?
 How much resource is justified?
 On this ground of practical intelligence,
 life chooses its steps.
 Yet gain is not the final rule.
 Moral action asks another question:
 beyond private interest, where is
 the pulse of universally human value?

When duty joins the wider good,
mind crosses its private boundary.
Leaving calculation of self-interest behind,
moral consciousness fills with light.
Intuition, logic, utility, ethics -
four living movements of consciousness.
Within one spiritual life,
each possesses its own large domain.
Impose any one upon all the rest
and human experience breaks.
The independent dignity of different activities
keeps the whole life balanced.
History is not a heap of dead dates,
but memory awakened by present questions.
When we understand past events again,
they become a living disposition.
The historian is not merely a copyist;
one recognises relations of meaning.
The voice of the past is heard again
inside the present with new questions.
Freedom is not only a political word;
it is history's living moral current.
Where human beings resist oppression,
they seek dignity again and again.
The voice of this thought reminds us:
whether art, knowledge, or action,
from the form of experience to history,
humanity creates its own dawn.

The Web of Belief at the Edge of Experience

The house of knowledge is no fortress
 whose bricks remain forever fixed.
 It spreads like a web in every direction;
 when one knot moves, another must respond.
 A wind of experience touches from outside,
 threads of meaning tighten within.
 When new light reaches the edge,
 the whole weave is arranged again.
 What the eye sees and ear hears
 is not a final verdict.
 Today's firm belief may tomorrow
 change under new evidence.
 Stones of certainty are rare;
 possibilities travel with us more often.
 The dignity of knowledge lies here:
 it can correct its own error.
 Some sentences say, 'I live inside language';
 others, 'I report the world.'
 A hard line once drawn between them
 turns blurred when rain falls.
 Meaning does not live alone in a chamber;
 experience does not stand alone either.
 Language, rule, and collision with the world
 together open the earth of meaning.
 Threads of logic run deep within,
 bound like strong knots;
 lines of calculation and disciplines of rule
 have grown firm through long practice.
 Yet no knot in the web is such
 that touching it is forbidden forever.
 Change can be difficult,
 but its doorway is not closed.
 A single sentence never stands alone;
 behind it is a company of beliefs:
 measurements, rules, auxiliary assumptions -
 together they create the force of meaning.
 When a prediction fails,
 where is the single face of error?
 Look again at the whole web:
 which knot loosened, where did decay enter?
 Experience touches the outer edge,
 but its tremor travels inward.
 Old central knots
 do not easily change their form.
 Threads at the edge may shift first;
 sometimes even a central line breaks.
 Seeking new balance with least disruption,
 intelligence weaves its web again.
 Everything we accept about the world
 leaves its mark upon our statements.
 Name, object, number, relation
 take form upon the ground of belief.
 The question 'What is there?' is not useless,
 but its answer does not fall from the sky.
 The direction in which our language and whole knowledge
 are bound becomes visible in the answer.
 Simplicity sometimes shows a road;
 coherence sometimes takes the hand.
 A new order with less breaking -
 this too is part of discernment.

Love of truth is not mere stubbornness,
nor guarding old formulas.
Where evidence demands revision,
let the face of mind remain open.
The centre of the web may be very old;
the edge is washed by new winds each day.
Yet neither can complete the song of meaning
without the other.
Without experience the web goes blind;
without the web, experience is scattered dust.
In their meeting the river of knowledge
keeps searching for a new bank.
This journey has no final shore,
no throne for the last word.
Question grows behind question;
testing keeps becoming a new instrument.
Keep the web of belief in hand,
keep the edge of experience open.
Truth that wishes to remain alive
must endure the light of revision.

Four Doors of Knowledge

The courtyard of knowledge is vast;
 many doors, but the path must remain alert.
 Seeing, reasoning, comparison, speech -
 from four directions rises the raga of meaning.
 For truth born in the mind,
 its ground must be sought.
 Light becomes evidence only
 when the shadow of confusion falls away.
 The first door is perception:
 when a sense meets its object,
 form, taste, smell, touch, sound
 slowly flower within consciousness.
 But seeing alone is not enough.
 Whose knowledge, how did it become clear?
 The relation among object, sense, and mind
 makes the basis of awareness manifest.
 Sometimes the first glimpse is indeterminate,
 free of name and class;
 then recognition, kind, quality, relation
 give meaning its fuller shape.
 From momentary experience to definite cognition,
 clarity develops step by step.
 Subtle analysis of the seen world
 opens the first door of knowledge.
 The second door is inference:
 from a seen sign toward the unseen.
 Smoke rises and memory of fire appears;
 relation accompanies the conclusion.
 But if the reason loosens,
 the boat of logic is caught in a whirlpool.
 Without firm recognition of pervasion,
 intelligence easily sits within error.
 Subject, reason, example together,
 memory and reflection subtly joined;
 the sign must truly lead toward the probandum
 and its relation not be broken.
 Inference is not arbitrary flight;
 it requires evidence of regular connection.
 The road toward the unseen
 is built from the solid law of visible signs.
 The third door is comparison:
 through similarity a new meaning is known.
 A description heard earlier
 awakens recognition in a new encounter.
 An unknown object becomes familiar,
 knowledge tied by the thread of resemblance.
 Distant description and nearby experience
 receive standing in the same moment.
 The fourth door is trustworthy speech,
 when word bears the weight of meaning.
 An utterance does not remain mere sound
 when it flowers from a credible source.
 Each word in a sentence may stand apart,
 yet whole meaning joins them together.
 Memory, expectancy, fitness, proximity
 light the lamp of sentence-meaning.
 Relation is necessary within saying;
 word calls for word.
 Where meaning proves impossible,
 the sentence loses its power.

One word heard creates expectation;
another word completes it.
Through this unseen cord of relation,
language assumes the form of knowledge.
Pramana means not merely a tool,
but a search for the cause of true cognition.
Knowledge not possessed before
receives high standing as fresh definite awareness.
Four doors of knowledge stand open,
but one discipline remains within:
see, reason, compare,
and govern the meaning of words.
No single path is everything;
each has limits, each its own weight.
Where discernment joins evidence,
thought grows clear.
From the dust of questions,
the jewel of meaning is slowly sifted.
Correct recognition of one subtle distinction
cuts the root of many confusions.
Passing through the four doors,
mind does not reach final rest.
Inside every answer
the name of a new question is born.

The Thread of Truth, the Loom of Compassion

Truth is no distant star;
 it breathes with every breath of daily life.
 In speech, action, and the chamber of mind,
 it searches for a clean road.
 What was experienced, what the mind understood -
 do not cover it with deceit.
 Keep one voice within and without,
 and weave the cloth of life truthfully.
 Compassion is not mere softness;
 it has the bright edge of courage.
 Do not wound through mind, speech, or action,
 yet do not surrender to injustice.
 Struggle is better than cowardly silence
 when fearless truth lives within.
 By the slow fire of inner strength,
 even violent darkness may melt.
 Do not seek merely to defeat an opponent;
 make a road toward that person's heart.
 Even while bearing pain, do not nurture hatred;
 stand firm in your truth.
 Instead of force, the strength of patience;
 instead of revenge, self-restraint.
 Within the fire of this difficult discipline,
 satyagraha is born.
 Do not touch what is not yours;
 do not extend the hand of greed.
 Do not steal the fruit of another's thought
 and wear it as a garland of your own name.
 Theft is not only of wealth;
 desire too can cross another's boundary.
 Respect for another's right
 ties a knot of humanity.
 Keep only as much as needed;
 do not place the burden of excess upon the mind.
 Do not fill storehouses of greed today
 out of fear of tomorrow.
 Greater accumulation, greater bondage,
 thorns spread upon the road of happiness.
 As desire is voluntarily made smaller,
 the inward sky grows larger.
 The horses of the senses run swiftly;
 if the reins of mind loosen,
 speech, desire, the body's restlessness
 can turn the direction of life.
 Restraint is not guard-duty over the body alone;
 it also governs thought and gaze.
 When love leaves the fire of selfishness,
 it becomes selfless respect.
 Labour increases the dignity of the hands;
 bread becomes sacred in the body's sweat.
 Swadeshi is not merely the name of cloth,
 but intimacy with the labour of those nearby.
 Control of taste says:
 the tongue's insistence must not rule life.
 Fearlessness says: in the darkness of fear,
 let the lamp of truth not tremble to death.
 Temples differ, prayers differ,
 a thousand names, but one thirst.
 Honour your own road
 without throwing away another's.

If religion raises a wall of hatred,
it loses its own meaning.
In the open courtyard of equanimity,
different faiths can stand together.
The one from whose shadow society shrinks
is also human and has the same right.
Break the fear of touch carried through generations
with a bright current of love.
Temple doors, lines for food,
should become bridges of shared life.
Without changing the heart, law alone
cannot fill the sand-pit of humiliation.
Yet within old arrangements
a difficult knot remains:
occupations bound by birth
collide with the voice of equality.
On one side rises the urgent call
to erase the darkness of untouchability;
on the other, bondage to hereditary work
remains a question of history.
If rules were made for human beings,
let them not become burdens upon humans.
If truth is called supreme,
measure it with living discernment.
Hard vows are not machines;
let compassion for circumstance stand beside them.
If the purpose is public welfare,
measure each road of action accordingly.
The thread of truth, the loom of compassion,
the slow rhythm of restraint;
fearlessness, labour, the colours of equal regard,
the bright web of simple living.
Struggling with imperfection,
humanity searches for a better world.
In the difficult discipline of changing within
and shaping outside, an immense dawn opens.

Beyond the Four Ghats of Sleep, the Unborn Light

The waking eye says - this is the world,
 the dream at night too says - this is truth;
 in both moments the mind believes,
 after dawn the road of vision changes.
 In waking, the outer world expands;
 in dream, an inward city is made.
 Both feel solid while they are experienced,
 both leave behind a wave of memory.
 If the elephant of dream vanishes on waking,
 where are waking objects during sleep?
 Humbling the pride of permanence,
 the question rises - where is final truth?
 The third ghat is deep sleep:
 no desire, no image of dream;
 the clamour of differences grows quiet,
 yet the seed of ignorance remains within.
 The fourth is difficult even to name:
 neither knowledge of outside nor inside;
 neither both, nor merely a void,
 but the undivided law of silent consciousness.
 Whatever words seize has a boundary,
 whatever thought forms creates distinction;
 the fourth light lies beyond difference,
 where knower and known no longer contend.
 If we say the world was born,
 examine the chain of causes again:
 that which is truly unborn -
 how can we accept its origination?
 If cause turns into effect,
 the cause loses its own form;
 how could unborn truth undergo change
 and become some newly produced thing?
 Being does not arise from non-being,
 nor does being itself need another birth;
 origination belongs to the visible level of dealings,
 deep insight follows the road of the unborn.
 When a firebrand is whirled in a circle,
 the eye sees a shining ring;
 in truth one spark is moving,
 many forms arise through illusion.
 So too within the vibration of consciousness
 a world of differences may unfold;
 though the ground remains indivisible, experience
 can create a forest of name and form.
 Maya is not an insult meaning falsehood;
 it marks a level of experience.
 What works in ordinary dealings
 changes its distinction at the summit of knowledge.
 Fear in a dream is a real heartbeat;
 on waking, the form of its cause changes.
 So in the dawn of self-awareness,
 the hardness of plurality melts.
 Silent discipline without grasping
 need not struggle against anyone;
 the mind ceases to seize outer supports
 and slowly turns toward its own source.
 When waves of attachment and aversion fall still,
 the sky of mind grows clear;
 the unborn, unmoving, fearless
 reveals itself within itself.
 No origination, no final destruction;
 the middle play is called the world.

Beyond the experience of the four ghats,
one silent expanse of consciousness remains.
When beyond the four ghats of sleep
the dream of difference grows still,
the unborn light does not arrive from anywhere -
it has always shone within itself.

From Doubt to Decision

When a question rises, the mind does not flee;
 first it examines the form of doubt.
 What is truth, what only appearance,
 which means of knowledge opens the road?
 From inquiry's first tremor
 to decision stretches a long path;
 carrying the lamp of discernment,
 the mind travels in truth's chariot.
 The doors of knowledge open in four directions -
 perception, inference, comparison, testimony;
 each has its own limit and strength,
 each works through a different cause.
 Not everything seen is therefore true,
 not everything heard therefore knowledge;
 without the discipline of pramana,
 the journey of intelligence is not easy.
 When the eye meets a form,
 when the ear receives the touch of sound,
 through nearness of sense and object
 the first cognition of perception awakens.
 But if the mind is absent,
 even what stands before us may be missed;
 in the birth of knowledge, alongside the senses,
 inward attention too has its part.
 Smoke rises upon the mountain;
 the mind holds the possibility of fire.
 From a seen sign toward an unseen cause,
 the bridge of inference takes shape.
 First recognise the relation firmly;
 only then advance toward conclusion.
 If the reason is not bound to what is to be proved,
 the boat of logic sinks midway.
 When presenting one's own thought,
 five disciplined steps are needed:
 claim, reason, example, application,
 and finally the road to conclusion.
 The noise of words is not reasoning;
 meaning's lamp burns through order.
 Where the cause becomes clear,
 doubt slowly begins to die.
 When an unknown thing is encountered,
 an earlier description wakes in the mind;
 one thread of likeness
 shows the road toward new recognition.
 Comparison is more than resemblance;
 it becomes a subtle bridge of acquaintance.
 Within the darkness of the unfamiliar,
 a known sign stretches light.
 Trustworthy speech too
 opens one doorway of knowledge;
 what we did not see, what remained far away,
 words can carry as report.
 But the speaker must be trustworthy,
 and the sentence must cohere in meaning;
 the heavy voice of authority alone
 does not receive truth's seal.
 When the assembly of reasoning is convened,
 answers arrive with questions;
 on one side defence of a thesis,
 on the other the edge of objection.
 If debate becomes a search for truth,
 the soil of dialogue grows fertile;

when wrangling and destructive dispute raise dust,
meaning's clear mirror is lost.
A reason may wear the proper form
while hiding a defect within;
unproved, contradictory, uncertain grounds
cut the wings of conclusion.
When verbal trickery bends words,
when false generality confuses reason,
learning to recognise error
protects the mind from its own mistakes.
Life's suffering is not fate alone;
ignorance too can be its root.
From mistaken cognition desire rises,
from desire the net of action spreads.
The clear current of true knowledge
slowly opens the knots of confusion;
when discernment becomes steady,
the sky of liberation speaks within.
The journey from doubt to decision
is neither one leap nor blind belief;
question, evidence, reason, examination -
these make a dwelling for intelligence.
Whatever you say, say with a ground;
whatever you accept, hold its reason.
Let truth's road remain open always,
welcoming every new question.

The Infinite Opening in the Name of Love

Endless waves of a single truth,
 many forms, one source;
 the world is not merely a play of shadows,
 nor is difference entirely false.
 One within many, many within one;
 the more intellect measures, the more lies beyond.
 Between difference and non-difference a bridge
 falls into the heart like inconceivable light.
 Perfect being is joined with power;
 without power, its form would be incomplete.
 Creation is not its enemy,
 but an extended radiance of its own light.
 A wave appears distinct from the sea,
 yet its bond with water never breaks;
 living beings and world, in their difference,
 do not lose relation to their source.
 Maya here is not simply falsehood;
 it is dependent power, a web of limitation,
 through which, within the infinite,
 the many questions of name and form arise.
 Bondage begins when the mind forgets
 its deep relation to the ground.
 When remembrance awakens, bondage loosens,
 and the ghat of love opens within.
 The living being is neither wholly identical with That,
 nor wholly distant from it;
 like a spark, a portion of fire,
 a little light from the primal radiance.
 Freedom is limited, love without limit;
 within dependence its meaning flowers.
 Selfhood remains, relation deepens;
 together they open the raga of life.
 If knowledge is only dry thought,
 it cannot understand the heart's thirst;
 if action is only an outer burden,
 it cannot satisfy inward longing.
 When love becomes discipline,
 when remembrance travels with the breath,
 truth is no distant doctrine,
 but the nearest form of belonging.
 When the sound of the Name rises together,
 the solitary mind becomes a community;
 among rhythm, voice, tears, laughter,
 the hardness within begins to melt.
 Kirtan is not merely song,
 but a collective tide of remembrance;
 inside the repeated Name,
 the wall of ego breaks.
 Hearing, singing, remembrance, service,
 at every step a practice of surrender;
 salutation, servitude, the sweetness of friendship,
 deep love of self-offering.
 Paths are many, the centre one;
 as many feelings, so many colours.
 Bhakti is not a dry cord of rules,
 but the inner pulse of life.
 Sometimes peace, sometimes service,
 sometimes the free laughter of friendship;
 sometimes the tender shade of parental affection,
 sometimes the deep thirst of love.
 Feeling changes, relation deepens;
 God no longer remains a distant power.

Through many rasas of intimacy,
an inward presence begins to flow.
If liberation means only release,
the heart of love is larger than that;
heaven, accomplishment, the pride of knowledge
can become small before devotion.
Meeting alone is not the final desire;
service itself becomes festival.
In love, fruit and means become one;
the journey itself becomes the supreme celebration.
The teacher's compassion is the first sign,
a lamp in the darkness of the road;
through the living touch of tradition
a sleeping recognition wakes within.
But not outward reverence alone -
let the teaching descend into conduct.
Humility, service, practice of the Name
open the inward house.
Pride of caste, lineage, wealth, scripture
grows small before love;
where the heart is pure and the Name sincere,
there devotion rises in flower.
The door stands open to every living being;
the measure of eligibility is the heart's thirst.
Equality here is not merely a rule,
but shared breath in a Name sung together.
In the Name of love the infinite opens;
difference remains, yet distance does not.
The world remains, yet the source is not lost;
selfhood remains, yet unity does not die.
The more intellect draws boundaries,
the more the heart builds bridges;
in the music of this inconceivable meeting,
life recognises its home.

The Unseen Bridge Behind Action

Dharma is no distant mist;
 its imprint lies within action.
 When uttered words awaken duty,
 life receives a measure of discipline.
 Desire alone does not make the path,
 nor is dharma weighed by fruit alone;
 where the call 'this must be done' arises,
 the voice of duty awakens.
 Speech is not merely sound;
 within injunction it bears the weight of meaning.
 Sometimes command, sometimes prohibition,
 sometimes praise opens a door.
 Name, mantra, story, indication -
 each performs its own work.
 Which statement is primary, which auxiliary?
 Intelligence seeks the subtle order.
 One line does not speak alone;
 companion sentences shape its meaning.
 Ground of context, relation of place,
 signs in naming open the way.
 Direct statement, indicative mark,
 unity of sentence join together;
 in the meeting of six directions of indication,
 a deep knot of meaning opens.
 Daily action has the rhythm of the sun,
 its place in ordinary life;
 occasional duty calls at a special moment,
 arising from a particular cause.
 Desire-motivated action walks with desire for fruit,
 taking steps toward a wished-for end;
 prohibited action gives a warning,
 telling us not to cross the boundary.
 The act is done and the moment passes,
 yet the fruit may come much later.
 How is the distance between them joined?
 The mind pauses before this question.
 Visible action comes to an end,
 yet a potency remains;
 like an unseen bridge,
 its force travels toward the future.
 If fruit does not appear at once,
 the act is not therefore futile.
 A seed seems lost in the earth,
 yet within it the sprout sleeps.
 Behind visible cessation too,
 an unseen power continues in sequence;
 today's duty and tomorrow's fruit
 remain bound by a subtle relation.
 The value of action is not gain alone;
 duty possesses its own standing.
 If hunger for fruit drives every decision,
 the law itself becomes dim.
 Act because the act is right -
 this thought carries firmness.
 Something greater than private desire
 flows through the heart as rule.
 If speech bears an enduring meaning,
 it is not bound only to a speaker's will.
 Through the long current of tradition,
 signals of duty remain alive.
 The deep relation of word and meaning
 is not memory alone, but discipline;

commands passing across generations
become a pulse of social consciousness.
But the forest of rules is dense;
one injunction may conflict with another.
Which is primary, which exception,
in what context does meaning change?
Then light the lamp of reasoning;
hold the thread of context.
Do not seize a hard meaning from an isolated line;
read the direction of the whole ordinance.
In the world of action, knowledge assists;
in the world of knowledge, action has worth.
Life does not receive a complete law
from a palace of thought alone.
Doing requires understanding;
understanding bears responsibility.
Between speech, action, and fruit
an unseen watchfulness moves.
The unseen bridge behind action,
the raga of duty within speech;
daily, occasional, desired, prohibited -
together they make portions of life.
What we do today with awareness
also shapes tomorrow's direction;
the subtle discipline of duty
leaves its mark beyond time.

A New Dawn of Experience from the Problem

The world is no frozen picture;
 mind is not separate, nor the outer world alone.
 At the meeting of life and environment,
 every moment becomes a play of experience.
 What we see is born in relation;
 what we do gives rise to meaning.
 Like river water, consciousness flows;
 truth does not arise in a halted moment.
 Experience is not merely an inward shadow;
 it includes body, environment, action.
 When the hand touches an object,
 mind receives a new colour of meaning.
 The boundary between outside and inside
 melts in the heartbeat of action;
 within this flow of living relation,
 knowledge makes its form.
 When a problem blocks the road,
 thinking wakes.
 When the easy stream of comfort breaks,
 the first wave of questioning rises.
 Which means can open the way?
 Which idea will work?
 Intelligence becomes a tool,
 not a repeater of blind conjecture.
 Thinking is not merely silent luxury;
 it is the work of solving a problem.
 Imagination creates many possibilities;
 testing gives them a voice.
 What succeeds in experience
 receives provisional standing.
 New circumstances bring new questions,
 and old answers are tested again.
 Knowledge is no mirror
 that copies the world exactly.
 It is map, instrument, plan,
 through which action finds direction.
 To know is to be able to change meaning,
 to form new relation with circumstance.
 The human is not a passive spectator;
 one is an active participant in experience.
 Truth has no fixed throne,
 no once-found final word.
 Thought that survives in practice,
 that opens the knot of a problem, has weight.
 But usefulness is not private gain alone;
 it must face the test of wider experience.
 Tomorrow's new evidence may challenge
 today's success again.
 If certainty turns to stone,
 the road of growth is blocked.
 If doubt becomes only blind fog,
 action loses direction too.
 Between them lie inquiry,
 question, test, reconsideration.
 The dignity of knowledge is this:
 it can change its own shape.
 Values and ethics too
 are not stones fallen from the sky.
 They must be examined
 within the experience of a living society.
 Which actions let life flower?
 Which decisions increase suffering?

Ethical meaning is tested
upon the social ground of consequences.
A good life is not solitary;
it is joined to the well-being of community.
An individual truly grows
when shared life can flower as well.
Democracy is not merely counting votes,
but open practice of shared intelligence;
through dialogue, education, participation,
society reforms itself.
Education is not a vessel filled up,
nor a burden laid upon a child's mind.
Learning by doing, testing, asking -
experience becomes the school's doorway.
Education is not merely preparation for life;
education is itself life's current.
Tomorrow's capacity grows in today's activity -
this is development's true mould.
If religion is only fear of an afterlife,
its relation with life breaks.
But when an ideal gathers the mind,
scattered desires find direction.
Faith has worth when
it fills life with courage;
the higher aim of human effort
descends into daily action.
A new dawn of experience from the problem,
new roads opening from questions;
with action, thought, and consequence,
life writes its own definition.
No conclusion is final;
know no question to be useless.
In a changing world, changing intelligence
continually creates human knowledge.

The Form of the Moment, the Language of Negation

When the eye touches a single moment,
 form comes in its own light;
 the net of names has not yet fallen,
 the lines of thought have not yet formed.
 What is here now, uniquely so,
 bears its own shape in the moment;
 a clear wave of unshaped cognition
 enters through the doorway of perception.
 When the name arrives afterward,
 it gathers class, quality, relation;
 mind places the unique form
 inside a house already known.
 Then from particular comes universal,
 language draws its circle;
 after non-conceptual light,
 threads of construction descend.
 Two chief currents of knowledge flow -
 one direct, one through signs;
 one touches the form of the present,
 the other seeks truth by a mark.
 The eye does not see distant fire,
 smoke carries its report;
 from the visible sign intelligence
 finds a road to unseen meaning.
 But inference is not a leap of mind;
 the reason must pass three tests.
 Where the proposition is to be proved,
 the sign must be present.
 In similar cases it must accompany,
 in contrary cases it must not;
 without this threefold discipline,
 logic's boat cannot cross.
 Sometimes effect indicates cause,
 sometimes nature itself becomes a sign;
 sometimes the shadow of absence says:
 'It is not found here.'
 Non-being too may speak;
 an empty place can carry meaning.
 Through different movements of signs,
 the lamp of inference keeps burning anew.
 The object of perception is unique,
 the unequal form of one moment;
 inference takes the road of the universal,
 finding one pattern among many.
 On one side, the sharp presence of a point;
 on the other, the broad song of a class.
 The two wings of knowledge are different,
 yet both sustain one flight.
 When a word says 'cow',
 do all cows arrive together?
 No - language draws a boundary
 and sends other forms away.
 Between 'not this' and 'not that',
 a shape of meaning arises;
 within a circle of exclusions, language
 quietly takes hold of its sign.
 Meaning is not simply an image of the object;
 nor can a word seize it directly.
 In a plural world of different forms,
 recognition comes through exclusion.
 By negating the other, a name
 receives the shape of its own boundary;

inside negation, a positive
sprout of recognition appears.
Knowledge illuminates itself as well,
when the mind knows: 'I have known.'
Alongside outer form,
the imprint of cognition is also received within.
Known object and experience of knowing
glimmer doubly in one moment;
consciousness sees its own footprint
like a moon-mark fallen on water.
When error grows inside the net of names,
discernment opens its knot.
How much does direct experience say?
How much colour does construction add?
This subtle guard over distinction
gives knowledge a clean road:
keep what was seen simply as seen;
for inference, state the reason.
The form of the moment, the language of negation,
the road of signs, self-illumination;
knowledge is not a single doorway,
yet its clear sky preserves limits.
From the pure touch of direct cognition
to the far journey of reasoning,
mind follows the thread of truth
beyond forests of names and signs.

A Certain Voice in the Ashes of Doubt

Whatever you have accepted, test again,
 clearing old confidence;
 how long can an entire palace stand
 upon one weak foundation?
 The senses sometimes deceive;
 a distant tower appears small.
 If a witness could mislead us once,
 raise a question before its testimony.
 The boundary between waking and dream
 can blur within experience;
 the world that now feels solid
 felt just as true in dream.
 If doubt reaches even calculation,
 imagine some powerful web of deception;
 extinguish every lamp of certainty
 and see what remains at once.
 I doubt - but within this act
 the doubter is present.
 While thinking proceeds within,
 the awareness 'I am' is unavoidable.
 Let the body remain in question for now,
 let a veil fall over the world as well;
 but the thinking conscious existence
 stands before itself as its own evidence.
 Upon this first firm ground,
 build the house of knowledge again;
 what cognition shines clear and distinct,
 take as a direction toward truth.
 Some ideas arise in mind
 that do not come only through the senses:
 infinity, perfection, number, extension
 raise questions within intelligence.
 How could a finite consciousness
 fashion infinity entirely from itself?
 Within the idea of a perfect cause,
 the question of source rises again.
 But God is not merely a belief;
 God receives a role in the order of certainty.
 Perfect truth cannot be the root of deception;
 trust returns to clear cognition.
 Things possess two levels of qualities:
 extension is fundamental to body;
 colour and taste are forms of experience,
 while measurable shape receives objective standing.
 The body moves in a mechanical order,
 each limb joined by causal threads;
 when nature's events are read in mathematical language,
 the world grows clearer.
 Mind is an unextended centre of thought,
 body belongs to the different kind of extension;
 the two are distinct, yet in human life
 from where does their mutual bond arise?
 Pain occurs in body, experience in mind;
 desire makes a hand rise.
 Distinct beings live together,
 and the question of relation remains open.
 Discernment should govern desire
 without rejecting feeling;
 within the discipline of right knowledge,
 free decision can become sound.
 Doubt is not the goal, only a broom
 that sweeps away the dust of blind belief;

from a small clean seed of certainty
the tree of knowledge grows again.
A certain voice in the ashes of doubt,
the first light of existence through thought;
clear intelligence and discipline of causes
open the sky of modern questions.

The Light of the Moment, the Wings of Reason

Among the crowd of cognitions, truth
 takes its sign in that moment
 when what is apprehended does not mislead
 the road of action joined to it.
 That cognition which is no useless sign,
 which travels with the steps of life,
 becomes a clear current of pramana
 that melts the mist of distrust.
 Two chief doors stand open -
 one perception, one inference;
 one the near light of a form,
 the other a distant law through a sign.
 Each preserves its own boundary,
 each bears a weight of truth;
 to dissolve everything into one road
 erases knowledge's distinctions.
 When perception rises pure,
 the net of names has not yet arrived;
 the colour of construction is not laid upon it,
 nor has the shadow of error spread.
 As the moment is present in itself,
 so it flashes within consciousness;
 the unique touch of the object
 shines as unsayable light.
 Form enters through the doors of sense;
 mind raises a wave behind it.
 Inner pleasure, pain, desire, awareness too
 appear in their own light.
 The purified concentrated gaze of discipline
 touches subtle truth;
 different currents of perception
 fill from the same clear source.
 When knowledge knows itself,
 the lamp sees its own radiance.
 Along with outer form, within
 the tremor of cognition writes itself.
 Not only the object known remains;
 'I have known' wakes beside it.
 Consciousness sees its own footprint
 and makes a road in its native light.
 A moment is no fixed stone;
 with arising it bears the sign of decay.
 Whatever performs a function carries power,
 becoming a condition for the next moment.
 Forms change, the current continues;
 continuity is not merely illusion.
 Through subtle sequences of cause and effect,
 time makes a vessel for life.
 The wings of inference open
 when the reason bears three marks:
 present in the subject, joined in similar cases,
 absent where the contrary stands.
 This firm threefold discipline
 stops arbitrary flight;
 behind the sign, truth's relation
 slowly opens the sky of reasoning.
 Sometimes conclusion remains within one's own mind,
 sometimes words become a bridge for another.
 In one, a silent journey of discernment;
 in the other, reason and cause stand clearly.
 When a claim rises into language,
 an example shows the road.

The work of reasoning is not victory alone,
but creating shared ground of understanding.
If the reason is incomplete, reversed, uncertain,
the lamp of conclusion grows dim.
Even when its form appears proper,
a seed of defect may lie within.
Therefore vigilant guardianship of reasoning
recognises the costume of error.
The strength of evidence is not assertion alone;
it rests upon truth of relation.
Between contact with the outer world and consciousness
runs a subtle edge of questioning.
What is not contained in perception
receives shape from inference.
Even while accepting limits of knowledge,
the search for truth does not stop.
What is available is tested
by experience, reason, and efficacy.
The light of the moment, the wings of reason -
together they make a road for intelligence.
When construction and error fall away, perception;
when signs are regular, inference awakens.
Know the limit of what was seen;
keep the reason for what was thought.
Within every claim to knowledge,
light the lamp of vigilant examination.

The Light of Relation Within Emptiness

Whatever arises, arises through causes;
 whatever endures, endures through relation.
 The hard fortress of isolated essence
 collapses when examined from within.
 In the flower are soil, water, season, light;
 in breath, countless threads of the world.
 When pride in independent existence melts,
 the script of interdependence opens.
 To say 'emptiness' is not to say darkness,
 not a place where everything is erased.
 It means no fixed essence
 standing immovable by its own power.
 The deeper dependence is understood,
 the more alive the world appears;
 not empty, but filled with relations,
 growing new forms in every moment.
 If a thing were complete in itself,
 there would be no road for change.
 Cause, effect, meeting, separation
 would have no work to perform.
 But the world is a wave of motion,
 one form becoming another;
 when attachment to immutable essence falls away,
 the truth of change becomes clear.
 Say 'it is' and a boundary rises;
 say 'it is not' and another net appears.
 Say 'both' and a knot is tied;
 say 'neither' and another question comes.
 Beyond the enclosure of all four corners,
 a middle road of silence opens;
 where dust of concepts settles,
 experience becomes clear.
 How can cause produce effect
 if the two are eternally separate?
 And if the two are one thing,
 what could origination mean?
 Within intermediate dependent sequences,
 events receive their meaning.
 No sovereign cause exists alone;
 no effect is born by itself.
 The world has standing in ordinary dealings
 as it appears:
 bread, road, pain, affection,
 all flow with everyday truth.
 But at the final depth of analysis,
 no hard knot of own-being is found.
 The two truths are not enemies here;
 one becomes a doorway to the other.
 Without ordinary usage, even speech
 about deeper truth would be impossible.
 With words, signs, metaphors,
 we struggle to approach silence.
 Yet without deeper vision, ordinary life
 may become a house of delusion.
 Between the two shores, the boat
 moves upon a current of discernment.
 Where is the circle of samsara outside,
 if grasping is born within?
 By taking name and form as fixed,
 attachment spreads its net.
 When grasping loosens and insistence quiets,
 boundaries melt in that very moment.

Liberation is no distant city;
it flowers in a changed way of seeing.
Nirvana is not fleeing the world,
nor disappearing into a dark emptiness.
The heat of craving, hatred, delusion
grows still within.
The world is the same world, the road the same;
only the burden of grasping is gone.
The wave is the same, the water the same;
only the wall saying 'mine' is absent.
Language is necessary, language is limited;
the world is bound inside names.
Say 'this' and 'that' appears beside it;
the line of difference arrives at once.
When conceptual proliferation takes itself as truth
and climbs upon the throne,
the watchful gaze of silence
slowly reveals the limit of words.
The middle way is no pale compromise,
no fear caught between two extremes.
It loosens the grasp
on assumptions that create those extremes.
From the stone of eternalism and the pit of annihilation,
the mind frees itself;
the gentle intelligence of dependent arising
reads each thing through relation.
Within emptiness, the light of relation;
within openness, an abundance of life.
When the hard wall of own-being breaks,
a wide door of compassion opens.
If nothing is made alone,
suffering too belongs to no one alone.
In this interwoven world,
liberation too becomes a shared road.

The Raga of Non-Difference Within Difference

From one ground the world unfolds,
 yet every form remains distinct;
 a wave is made of the ocean's water,
 yet every wave moves in its own way.
 Difference remains, non-difference too,
 both truths awaken together;
 within each lives the other's shadow -
 the raga of non-difference within difference.
 The soul, the world, the Supreme Light -
 all three retain their own identity;
 none dissolves wholly into another,
 nor do they stand utterly apart.
 Like a part, the relation is deep;
 without its ground, selfhood is incomplete.
 Within limits the soul is conscious,
 the source infinite, pervasive, full.
 The world is neither shadow nor curtain of falsehood;
 it too is an unfolding form of truth.
 Earth, water, fire, air, ether -
 a world opening step by step from power.
 Within the cause lies the seed of the effect;
 through transformation form grows clear.
 From the primal power sustaining the world
 the current of creation descends.
 The relation of power and the possessor of power
 is like lamp and light.
 One is hard to understand without the other;
 together they complete the pulse.
 Creation, sustenance, dissolution
 move through one pervasive force.
 Within the silent depth of the attributeless,
 living forms of the qualified flower.
 The soul is small, yet a conscious flame;
 knowledge is part of its nature.
 Winds of karma and dust of desire
 veil its clear radiance.
 When ego calls the body alone 'I',
 the knot of bondage hardens.
 Forgetting the memory of one's source,
 the wheel of worldly wandering turns again.
 Pleasure and pain come and go
 again and again from seeds of karma.
 When desire is bound to self-interest,
 the doorway of birth opens once more.
 Yet within, a witness-awareness says:
 'I am not merely the body.'
 In that bright moment of recognition,
 the root of bondage cannot remain firm.
 Knowledge is necessary; action too is necessary;
 without love both are dry leaves.
 Reason alone cannot melt distance;
 action alone cannot open the night.
 When surrender springs within the heart,
 knowledge receives a warm radiance.
 Action becomes service, love becomes the path,
 and the self finds its dwelling.
 Love is not merely a wave of feeling;
 it is discipline, remembrance, meditation.
 When the movements of mind take one direction,
 the inward storm grows still.
 When attachment leaves the bondage of self-interest
 and becomes single-hearted surrender,

within every heartbeat of the heart
the Supreme itself draws near.
Liberation is not fleeing the world,
nor the total destruction of selfhood.
The soul keeps its identity
and still enters the dwelling of supreme joy.
Distance melts, relation grows clearer;
dependent selfhood remains awake.
Difference is not erased in union;
in love, difference itself becomes non-difference.
When the pride of knowledge bows,
desire for the fruits of action recedes.
Within love's natural act of reverence,
the wall of ego is cut away.
Grace rains only when
the vessel is open and the mind generous.
In the silent vessel of surrender
it fills experience with boundless sweetness.
If devotion is not merely petition,
it is a deep turning of consciousness.
Meditation, service, remembrance, surrender
join into a single mood.
When means and goal draw near,
love itself becomes the fruit.
The search for bliss comes to an end,
and bliss itself enters the heart.
The raga of non-difference within difference,
the dignity of difference within non-difference;
the soul remains soul, the world remains world,
yet the ground of both is one and great.
Within this sweet mystery of relation,
knowledge, action, and love stand together.
The finite heart opens toward the infinite,
and life takes on the colour of surrender.

New Fire from the Ashes of Old Values

Do not watch life from afar;
 enter the pulse within it.
 Sorrow, delight, defeat, exhilaration -
 make meaning with them all.
 How long can the glitter endure
 of a thought that dries life out?
 A culture that cuts creation's wings
 will collapse from within.
 When art is no mere decoration
 but a deep acceptance of life,
 even pain takes on form
 and gives birth to light within song.
 Measured line and unbound dance
 are different voices of consciousness.
 In the meeting of restraint and overflowing breath,
 creation opens a new home.
 Not every line of an old rule
 remains true forever.
 Time changes, mind changes,
 the meaning of value flows anew.
 A value born from fear,
 teaching only how to bow,
 meets the axe of questioning at its root
 and makes a road for new thought.
 If meekness is called a virtue
 only because it fears power,
 and courage is declared a fault,
 then the bridge of values is overturned.
 Self-respect does not mean oppression,
 nor a hard blow against the weak.
 To break the inertia within oneself -
 there lies an immense power.
 When the supreme command from outside
 falls silent one day,
 beneath an empty sky
 the human hears one's own sign.
 Life without command is not meaningless;
 responsibility becomes deeper still.
 The burden of creating one's own values
 draws a difficult line across the heart.
 Power is not merely the royal sceptre,
 nor merely the power to bend another.
 The longing within a seed
 to become a tree is power too.
 To rise again after suffering,
 to break a limit and take new form,
 to keep lit the inner fire
 of becoming greater than oneself.
 One who calls a weak habit fate
 and bears it silently
 closes the door of possibility
 and bows before time.
 But one who recognises one's fear
 and slowly overcomes it
 feels within a new human being
 an unseen shoot breaking forth.
 Greatness is no crown of lineage,
 nor standing above the crowd.
 It is the hard discipline of self-mastery,
 the sowing of new values within oneself.
 One who leaves the shadow of old ideals
 and accepts responsibility for creation

lets the face of the future
take shape for the first time within.
Imagine that every moment
of this life returns again and again:
this laughter, this pain, this decision,
repeated age after age.
Would I accept this moment again
and call it mine?
Or tremble under regret
and turn away from my own life?
Upon this touchstone of return,
the worth of every action changes.
The moment is not small; it is a door to the infinite,
within which the whole of life is held.
Live so that if it returned,
you would not be ashamed of the step.
Let the life you yourself chose
not become too heavy for your own shoulders.
The crowd seeks easy answers,
speaking everything in one voice.
But upon the mountain of a solitary question
one remains with one's own echo.
Solitude is never mere emptiness;
it is creation's dark womb.
There old idols break,
there new forms are born.
New fire from the ashes of old values -
let the flame be more than burning.
Let it rise within as light
and flow along the road of self-mastery.
The courage to say 'yes' to life,
to accept it even with suffering,
and surpass oneself again and again
opens a new door toward the future.

The Heartbeat of Meaning in the Body of Words

Sound rises and vanishes in a moment,
 yet from where does meaning endure?
 Even after letter after letter has broken away,
 how does the sense of a sentence awaken?
 The ear hears waves arriving and passing;
 the mind grasps one undivided sign.
 The body of a word may be momentary,
 yet meaning leaves a deeper pulse.
 Phonemes are many, pronunciations many,
 yet recognition remains the same.
 One throat is rough, another soft,
 yet understanding follows one pattern.
 Sound changes like an outer garment;
 the inward form is not stolen away.
 Many echoes of one word
 open the doorway of one meaning.
 A word does not awaken an object alone;
 class, quality, action also arise.
 Sometimes a proper name's precise gesture
 shows one singular form.
 Sometimes motion, sometimes description,
 sometimes the common stamp of a group -
 within each sign of language
 many levels of meaning are measured.
 To say 'cow' is not one cow,
 nor all bodies gathered in one place.
 Awareness of a common form arises,
 while individuals retain their own names.
 Individuals change, the class persists;
 without individuals, class is incomplete.
 Within this movement of meaning,
 language becomes the light of relation.
 The bond between word and meaning
 is not an agreement made only today.
 Signs moving across generations
 are not momentary shadows of memory.
 Pronunciation may become new,
 while threads of relation remain old.
 When language lives in society,
 meaning receives a shared identity.
 A sentence is not a heap of separate bricks;
 it becomes a house of whole understanding.
 Words may carry separate meanings,
 yet when joined their direction changes.
 Before and after, expectancy, coherence,
 the silent support of context -
 one word calls to another,
 and the door of the sentence opens.
 The road of knowledge is not limited to the eye;
 speech too can become a means of knowing.
 What was not seen, what remained far away,
 the mind can know through trustworthy words.
 But not every voice is true;
 the speaker must be competent.
 Coherence of meaning and strength of context
 allow testimony to become evidence.
 Inference reads the distant sign;
 perception touches the nearby form.
 Speech, through society's memory,
 brings unseen experience to us too.
 The three roads are different,
 yet the courtyard of knowledge is one.

What is seen, thought, and heard
together make the world's forms many.
Call it heaven or a rise toward happiness -
the question of action matters more than the name.
Behind action remain dispositions
that create new pulses within life.
Marks of good and bad are mental;
they shape future tendencies.
The subtle effect of today's action
returns within tomorrow's movement.
The body changes, sounds change,
yet some memory travels on.
The continuing current of saying 'I'
changes form from moment to moment.
Knowledge, desire, pleasure and pain
are not merely a game of matter.
Some thread of the knower within
continues through worldly passage.
Purification is not only of the body;
speech and mind have work as well.
If a wrong word distorts meaning,
a wrong feeling can distort the name too.
Careful discipline of pronunciation
joins the clarity of meaning.
The practice of language ultimately turns
toward a practice of consciousness.
The heartbeat of meaning in the body of words,
an undivided sign beyond sound;
phoneme, class, quality, action, individual
together make the bridge of meaning.
Learn to think within listening,
and responsibility within speaking.
Language is not merely speech -
it is a garden of consciousness, memory, relation.

When the Waves of Mind Grew Still

Many waves move across the lake of mind:
 sometimes memory, sometimes imagination,
 sometimes the blurred shadow of sleep,
 sometimes the mistaken construction of error.
 The more violently the waves rise,
 the more the mirror distorts form.
 When stillness descends within,
 true nature sees itself in its own light.
 The movements of mind sound within
 day and night from five directions.
 Valid cognition sometimes shows the road;
 error sometimes fills it with darkness.
 Imagination gives words their wings,
 sleep spreads a blanket of emptiness,
 memory reads the present doorway
 through footprints of the past.
 Restraint is not enforced muteness,
 nor turning the mind into stone.
 Through patient repetition of practice,
 let attention settle in one direction.
 Detachment does not mean escape;
 slowly open the knot of attachment.
 Watch what comes and what goes,
 but do not sell your heart to either.
 Breath arrives, breath departs;
 between them lies a subtle place.
 There the body's restlessness loosens,
 there the mind finds its own name.
 Posture is the body's stable dwelling,
 breath-discipline an inward bridge.
 When the rhythm of breath becomes conscious,
 the mind hears the reason of silence.
 The senses keep running outward,
 called by colour, scent, and taste.
 At the gentle turn of withdrawal,
 the gaze returns toward the inner door.
 Not abandoning the world to spread darkness,
 not becoming hostile to objects -
 only cutting the thread of servitude
 and taking the road of free attention.
 When the mind stands upon a single point,
 concentration is born.
 When that current continues unbroken,
 the river of meditation opens.
 When even the watcher slowly dissolves
 and the weight of the watched falls away,
 in the deep silence of one-pointedness
 samadhi opens its door.
 Without ethics, the high palace of meditation
 remains weak from within.
 Non-violence, truth, non-stealing
 make the soil of conduct firm.
 Restraint, non-possession, purity, contentment,
 the lamps of austerity and self-study -
 within and without in a single rhythm,
 life becomes a shell of discipline.
 Ego says, 'I alone am the doer.'
 Attachment says, 'This is my right.'
 Aversion is the shadow of old pain;
 fear guards the doorway of life.
 When the root of ignorance is not recognised,
 knot upon knot forms each day.

When discernment's lamp burns within,
the root of bondage begins to open.
The seer is pure, but the mind is coloured,
filled with impressions of experience.
Many clouds cross one sky,
yet the sky itself does not change.
When clouds are mistaken for the sky,
confusion is born.
When the seer is known in its independent light,
bondage recedes.
Surrender does not mean defeat;
it sets down the burden of ego.
Where limited desire grows tired,
the doorway of trust opens.
Act without clutching at fruit;
meditate without pride.
From the limitless confidence within silence,
the mind becomes naturally at ease.
Powers may glitter beside the road,
but they are not the destination.
Strange abilities, subtle experiences
can bind the mind again.
The path moving toward liberation
does not stop at fascination.
The single-minded light of discernment
slowly opens even the final knot.
When the waves of mind grew still,
neither life stopped nor the world.
Only the mist left the mirror,
and true nature appeared, clear and shining.
Practice, detachment, restraint, meditation,
rhythm of breath and alert reflection -
when inward silence fully flowers,
freedom becomes its own doorway.

The Sting of Doubt, the Meaning of Action

If thought remains only words,
 where can its wings ever fly?
 Meaning takes on a body only
 when something changes in practice.
 An idea that never touches life,
 that turns no direction of action,
 glitters like mist for a moment
 and breaks at the doorway of meaning.
 To understand the worth of an idea,
 look at its possible consequences.
 What circumstance could it alter?
 In what action would it receive a name?
 Meaning is not only inside words,
 nor only in a secret chamber of mind.
 Its outline becomes clear
 within possible conduct in life.
 Truth is no private lamp
 burning only in one's own room.
 Among many minds engaged in inquiry,
 it takes form through testing.
 Along the shared journey of long questioning,
 layers of error slowly fall away.
 The horizon of truth opens there
 where searching minds travel together.
 Belief is not the mind's lazy rest;
 it becomes a habit of action.
 What one believes leaves its mark on conduct
 along the lines of daily life.
 If a belief has no consequence,
 no change along the road of action,
 then behind different words
 no real difference of meaning remains.
 Doubt stings like a thorn,
 disturbing a settled mind.
 It shakes the plank of old confidence
 and opens the door of a new question.
 The mind does not wish to tremble forever;
 it seeks a place where it can stand.
 The journey from doubt to belief
 is the living name of that search.
 One way to preserve belief
 is to close one's ears around one's own claim,
 to flee another voice
 and spend the night with one's own conviction.
 But the world's countless voices
 cross even the highest walls.
 However tall the fortress of stubbornness,
 one question can become its crack.
 Sometimes power says, 'Believe this';
 sometimes society commands.
 The crowd's seal may keep a belief standing,
 yet a message survives within.
 Where the door of questioning is closed,
 peace appears only for a moment.
 Reason pressed into silence rises one day
 and asks again: 'Why? How far?'
 Sometimes what seems beautiful to intelligence
 is granted the throne of truth.
 Coherence, taste, intuitive appeal
 are made the final reasons for decision.
 But taste differs from mind to mind;
 many lines cross the sky.

What feels natural today may not tomorrow -
how can such a touchstone remain fixed?
A road is needed on which
the object can voice its resistance.
What exists beyond desire
must be allowed to answer in experiment.
Observation, testing, repetition -
an open field of shared inquiry.
Even while admitting the possibility of error,
these give knowledge a firmer life.
Open three wings of reasoning:
one moves from rule toward consequence;
one joins event after event
and fashions a general pattern.
The third, seeing an unexpected sign,
plants the seed of a possible cause;
imagination then asks for testing,
and the first lamp of new discovery burns.
Sometimes only possibility appears;
sometimes collision gives an answer.
Sometimes a bridge of relation forms,
and one sign reaches another house.
Quality of the moment, resistance of the object,
the broad mediating current of law -
the world beats in three rhythms,
and experience becomes many-layered.
The sting of doubt, the meaning of action,
sunlight of testing, the road of belief;
truth is not the prisoner of private insistence,
nor merely what power desires.
Never be afraid of questions;
judge thought by what it can bring about.
Keep the doorway of error open,
and refine truth through shared inquiry.

Grains of Sutra, the Infinite Forest of Language

Small grains of sutra,
 an infinite forest of language within;
 the heartbeat of rule in few words,
 a hidden pulse of dense meaning.
 Say only what must be said;
 do not burden it with repetition.
 A vast construction from a subtle line -
 this discipline has no easy substitute.
 Language is not water from a single ghat;
 country changes, pronunciation changes.
 Folk speech and ancient mantra
 nurture meaning in different rhythms.
 Attend also to the movement
 of living speech among the people.
 If shastra is severed from life,
 who will breathe life into the body of rule?
 A word is not a solitary leaf,
 but root, trunk, and foliage together.
 The root carries a deep indication;
 the suffix brings play into new forms.
 A small addition, a subtle turn
 can change the direction of meaning.
 Upon this loom of morphology,
 language weaves a new garment every day.
 When a noun is spoken, does an individual arise,
 or the wider stamp of its class?
 One particular cow, or cowness -
 upon which does the word fall?
 When people speak in a certain meaning,
 that context deserves its place.
 Sometimes individual, sometimes class -
 usage itself decides.
 The bond of word and meaning is deep,
 but not a simple straight line.
 One word opens many meanings;
 many words may travel one road.
 The bright courtyard of primary meaning
 sometimes receives a secondary shadow.
 Context, custom, and threads of relation
 become the key to the proper door.
 The same sound may be literal,
 at another time metaphor or indication.
 Between the 'mouth' of a house and the 'mouth' of a river,
 what is shared, what new bridge appears?
 Language is not rigid stone;
 it moves with people's intelligence.
 Through the gentle turn of transferred use,
 an old word receives a new meaning.
 A conventional word has built its own house
 and gives direct meaning through usage.
 A derived word tells through its parts
 the story of its own formation.
 When root and addition are clear,
 the seed of meaning can be recognised.
 Yet if people give a new meaning,
 grammar too must understand its movement.
 Must every part carry a meaning?
 Must every compound always speak piece by piece?
 Sometimes only the whole word lives,
 while its parts reveal no separate sense.
 Let the knife of analysis be sharp,
 but do not cut the body of life.

What lives as a whole in usage
must also be measured in its wholeness.
Logic and language are not far apart;
without words, thought is incomplete.
The subtler the form of the object,
the fuller the work of meaning.
Name, quality, action, relation -
through these threads mind understands the world.
As rules of language are examined,
the limits of thought too become visible.
A rule says, 'This is the form here';
an exception says, 'I too have a place.'
Order endures through both,
and living language does not break.
A general rule shows direction;
a particular context shows the limit.
Without flexibility, discipline
loses its own meaning.
Purity is not only an old form,
nor should living speech be despised.
Find the pulse of life
in the form that truly communicates.
Let classical measure and popular usage
remain in dialogue with each other.
Language fully flowers only
when rule and life flow together.
Grains of sutra, the infinite forest of language,
from root to branch, from meaning to speech;
roots and suffixes, class and individual,
the daily new sway of living usage.
A vast order in a few words,
yet the road of life remains open.
Do not bind language - understand it;
there the beauty of rule flowers.

A Lamp of Refutation

Do not lock the house of truth;
 let all its windows remain open.
 The thought that lives inside
 must meet the wind from outside.
 One sharp ray of questioning
 shows a crack within the wall.
 What can endure a hard light
 earns a little more trust.
 A thousand flowers may all be one colour,
 yet the rule does not become immortal.
 The colour of one unfamiliar flower
 can shake the foundation of old confidence.
 Counting may give confirmation,
 but not certainty in the hand.
 One true voice of contradiction
 can test the whole claim again.
 The boat of knowledge is not resting at the shore;
 it keeps moving in midstream.
 Even today's strongest sail
 must face tomorrow's new storm.
 The word 'final' is very heavy;
 science does not carry that burden.
 With provisional confidence,
 a new door of testing remains open.
 Imagination spreads its wings first,
 then measures the sky of evidence.
 Observation does not merely select seeds;
 the mind prepares a field of questions.
 First a problem awakens within,
 then a possible answer sprouts.
 When the answer meets the world,
 many errors break apart.
 No act of seeing is wholly neutral;
 the colour of questions lives in the eye.
 What we seek and what we understand
 change the manner of the scene.
 Yet the world keeps its own resistance;
 it does not stamp approval upon whim.
 However far imagination flies,
 testing weighs its wings.
 A claim designed so that
 it can never be shown wrong
 may look perfectly safe,
 but it accepts no risk of knowledge.
 Scientific courage awakens where
 there is a possibility of defeat,
 where one has the clear capacity
 to place one's statement in the fire of testing.
 If one result collides with the theory,
 first look again at all the causes:
 measurement, instrument, auxiliary assumptions -
 bring the lamp of questioning to them all.
 But do not keep adding new excuses
 only to escape every blow.
 Reduce trust in the brilliance
 of a theory that flees from testing.
 The wall between science and speculative thought
 is not always made of stone.
 Some ideas untested today
 may become testable tomorrow.
 To throw everything away as meaningless
 is not intellectual generosity.

But call it scientific only
when it accepts the touchstone of risk.
The search for truth is not
one mind's private game of victory.
Criticism, answer, criticism again -
without these knowledge cannot meet itself.
To endure the blow of another's question
is an ethical discipline of discernment.
In the fire of open dialogue,
ego melts and thought grows larger.
History too is no railway track
with the future written in advance.
Human decisions, errors, contingencies
together shape the form of time.
Do not bind the whole society's tomorrow
to one law alone.
Do not chain human freedom and possibility
with prophecy.
Knowledge grows not only by accumulation
but through courage to remove error.
New question, new conjecture, new test -
defeat too contains opportunity.
A thought that falls under examination
is not merely a failure;
it removes one thorn
from the road toward the next truth.
Light a lamp of refutation
and look into the night of blind belief.
Place the hardest question of all
before your own beloved thought.
Love of truth is not praise;
it is the bright edge of criticism.
A mind that can admit its error
holds an immense dawn of knowledge.

The Web of the World from Particle to Sound

The world is not merely one name,
 but many rooms and many questions.
 Body of substance, radiance of quality,
 motion of action weave the web.
 The universal joins what lies far apart;
 the particular says, 'I have my own place.'
 Within the deep knot of inherence,
 relation receives a name.
 Particles of earth, water, fire, and air
 do not all fall before the eye.
 From meetings of subtle grounds,
 the gross world slowly assumes form.
 Two particles form a subtle pair;
 then groups expand further.
 Behind the unseen, the visible body
 is born through an ordered chain of causes.
 A particle is small, but not meaningless;
 it carries its own mark of difference.
 A particle of earth does not become water;
 fire and air bear other signs.
 Without subtle recognition of particularity,
 similarity would dissolve everything.
 The final line of distinct existence
 preserves the world's plurality.
 The universal says: unity in the many,
 one stamp in many places.
 As cowness in many cows -
 forms differ, the shared name remains.
 Yet the universal is not itself an individual,
 nor something grasped by the hand.
 Among many particulars, intelligence
 finds the bond in its own light.
 Quality does not move by its own force,
 yet it marks the substance.
 Colour, taste, smell, number, measure
 reveal forms of pleasure and pain as well.
 Desire, aversion, effort's vibration,
 knowledge too takes the form of quality.
 From inert world to conscious life,
 the catalogue of qualities expands.
 Number is not mere counting;
 it is a road of awareness from one to two.
 'One' first appears within the mind,
 then 'two' becomes possible in meaning.
 See separate objects coming together;
 then awareness of duality rises.
 In the order of knowledge, unity comes first,
 then the flower of plurality opens.
 Creation is never chaotic dust;
 it forms through motion within order.
 Even subtle particles at rest
 begin to move through unseen impetus.
 Old impressions of karma and order
 join the form of a new body.
 The vast loom of birth and death
 keeps weaving with threads of cause.
 Supreme will is not merely a spectator;
 it relates to the world through law.
 The more complex the fruits of action,
 the more justly they must be apportioned.
 Creation, sustenance, and dissolution
 are no blind game.

The subtle account of each being's action
does not disappear behind time.
Sound is born in one place,
but how does it reach the ear?
The first wave awakens another,
which then moves a third along the road.
Like circles rising in water,
successive vibrations travel outward.
A wave of distant utterance
at last touches the doorway of hearing.
Inference is like a distant lamp,
grasping the unseen through a sign.
The reason must be present in the subject
and accompany similar cases.
Where the probandum is absent, the reason must be absent;
counterexample shows the road.
Through the alert meeting of three marks,
reason earns its trust.
Substance, quality, action are distinct,
yet dwell together in the world.
Within part and whole
inherence is an unseen confidence.
If separation destroys the very form,
that relation is no ordinary conjunction.
Upon this ground of deep relation,
existence is no solitary game.
From particle to sound, the web of the world;
from quality to number, from reason to knowledge.
The meeting of subtle difference and common form
creates the order of the universe.
Behind the object seen, search for
relation, cause, and the current of difference.
Every particle of the world seems to say:
even subtle thought can be boundless.

The Coherence of the Sentence, Knowledge's Own Light

When knowledge is born,
 it reveals its object together with itself;
 'I knew' is not a separate lamp -
 all three shine within one cognition.
 Knower, knowledge, and known
 take form in the same moment;
 another proof need not stamp cognition
 again and again every time.
 Knowledge rises carrying its truth
 like a first light;
 error is recognised later
 when a subsequent cognition breaks it.
 Mistake comes from blind mixture,
 when two valid cognitions are not distinguished;
 seen form and remembered object
 create error when their difference is missed.
 The gleam of shell, the memory of silver -
 each experience is sound in its own place;
 where the absent difference is not recognised,
 there the knot of error remains.
 Ignorance here is not creation of falsehood;
 non-apprehension of difference is the central point.
 When right recognition awakens,
 error itself loosens its grip.
 A word alone does not give meaning;
 coherence of the sentence gives it life.
 Words joined in relation
 generate meaning through that very connection.
 It is not that separate meanings are first added
 and only afterward become a sentence;
 as the words are heard, related forms
 awaken active meaning at once.
 An injunctive sentence turns toward life;
 words show the road of duty.
 Meaning is not merely a picture of an object;
 it carries an impulse toward action.
 Speech that remains wholly inactive
 leaves its main purpose incomplete.
 Meaning joined to duty
 gives fullness to the direction of action.
 The self is the enduring ground of knowledge;
 even as bodies change, continuity remains.
 Pleasure, pain, desire, memory
 flow within a single experiencer.
 Knowledge illuminates the object
 and at the same time reveals the knower.
 Like a lamp that lights another thing
 and manifests its own brightness too.
 The value of a means of knowledge lies in fresh cognition,
 bringing what was not known before.
 If needless reconfirmation were always required,
 an infinite regress would stretch away.
 The value of action is not fruit alone;
 injunction carries its own grave call.
 Toward what must be done,
 intellect and will open the door.
 The coherence of the sentence, the light of knowledge,
 discernment of difference, the voice of duty -
 in a single moment world, knower, and meaning
 together open the house of consciousness.

From the Cave of Shadows to the Sun of Forms

Upon the wall of a dark cave, shadows
 are taken by people for the world;
 behind them burns the source of fire,
 hidden from their sight.
 When the bonds loosen and the face turns,
 the first light hurts the eyes;
 old shadows feel familiar,
 new truth is hard to understand.
 Step by step, moving outward,
 the forms of things grow clearer;
 at last the sun's vast radiance
 reveals the source of knowledge.
 Visible things keep changing;
 the beautiful flower withers;
 but the pure meaning of 'beauty'
 is not exhausted by a single flower.
 See many things that are alike -
 where does their likeness reside?
 Behind particular forms intelligence
 turns toward a universal form.
 Knowledge is not merely the agitation of opinion;
 it seeks a stable ground.
 The senses report change;
 intelligence seeks deeper warrant.
 Learning is not merely filling oneself from outside;
 memory within must awaken too.
 The sharp dialogue of the right question
 rouses dormant understanding.
 Question after question arises;
 the shell of opinion slowly falls away.
 What survives opposition
 climbs higher upon the ladder of reason.
 Within the self are the horse of desire,
 the fire of spirit, the core of discernment;
 without balance among these three powers,
 life becomes a tangled chariot.
 Discernment gives direction, courage protects,
 desire accepts its proper limit;
 then justice flowers within,
 each part knowing its work.
 The state too is like a larger self;
 different functions must be harmonised.
 Power without knowledge goes blind;
 justice cannot endure without power.
 The highest seat of government requires
 not greed but long discipline in truth;
 one who conquers one's own desire
 may be entrusted with responsibility.
 Education is not merely information;
 it turns the vision of the soul.
 From shadow toward the sun,
 it slowly transforms the rule of life.
 If art is only the shadow of a shadow,
 it may increase our distance from truth;
 yet taking hold of beauty's wings,
 the soul may rise toward higher forms.
 Love may begin in bodily attraction,
 but if it does not stop there,
 from one beautiful form toward all beauty,
 it may finally reach beauty itself.
 From the cave of shadows to the sun of Forms,
 a long ascent from opinion toward knowledge;

justice within, responsibility without -
the light of truth becomes a way of order.

The Silent Light of the Seen World

When the eyes open, the world appears -
 colour, shape, distance, nearness;
 warmth of touch, vibration of sound
 form pictures of experience within the mind.
 Whatever we are able to know
 comes through the doorway of experience;
 in the silent light of the seen world
 meaning makes its own identity.
 Call it colour or shape,
 taste, scent, or gentle warmth -
 are these impressions within the object
 apart from our experience?
 When sensation is removed,
 for whom would that colour remain?
 The known world opens only
 together with consciousness.
 How firm is the wall between primary and secondary,
 how much of it is inference?
 Shape too is seen within the mind;
 motion too receives standing through experience.
 Whatever quality is known is known in awareness -
 what rule lies beyond cognition?
 If an object is merely a group of qualities,
 what marks some invisible substratum?
 If we assume some 'substance'
 that is neither colour, nor form, nor touch,
 neither shape, nor motion, nor sound,
 how could it ever acquire meaning?
 Something standing outside all experience
 remains only a shell of a name.
 How can the mind understand a claim
 that never comes before it at all?
 Yet the world does not disappear.
 Here are flowers, rivers, houses, trees.
 These are living sequences of experience,
 not merely a shore of empty nothingness.
 Objects are not only my imagination;
 they are regular gifts of experience.
 Whether I wish it or not,
 they arrive with their own definite behaviour.
 The mind cannot make red merely by wishing,
 nor stop rain by desire.
 The disciplined order of experience
 does not obey my private will.
 Behind such regularity appears
 the suggestion of a wider conscious ground;
 the stable rhythm of the world seems to say:
 'Behind me is a greater light.'
 My mind is an active spark;
 ideas are passive images.
 Through desire, memory, and attention,
 a conscious being gives fresh movement.
 I do not see myself as a picture,
 yet I recognise myself in action:
 the one who sees, desires, remembers -
 that is the living story within.
 Another mind's direct appearance
 is never given to me;
 yet through speech, movement, and action
 I continue to understand its consciousness.
 As there is activity within myself,
 so life is present within another;

behind what is visible, invisible consciousness
 is inferred through relation.
 The high palace of abstract thought
 can sometimes become mist upon the road.
 Without a particular colour, what is 'colour'?
 Without a form, how can 'shape' be pictured?
 A general meaning may become a sign,
 yet every image remains particular.
 Taking a convenience of language for a thing,
 intelligence gets caught in its own net.
 Distance is not measured by the eye alone;
 it joins with memory of touch.
 Visual signs and bodily experience
 together create the meaning of distance.
 Even what seems directly seen
 may be a relation we have learned.
 Many currents of experience meet
 to form the stable figure of the world.
 If the world lives in experience,
 it is not a prisoner of one private moment.
 Closing my eyes does not
 erase the existence of the tree.
 The undivided gaze of a wider consciousness
 sustains the order of creation;
 beyond my limited awareness,
 the regular world continues.
 The silent light of the seen world -
 a bridge of mind, experience, and order.
 When the shell of invisible substance falls away,
 living awareness becomes the central ground.
 Whatever is known is within experience;
 whatever is experienced stands near consciousness.
 In this vast forest of colour and form,
 the world becomes the light of philosophy.

The Voice of the Infinite in the Knot of Sutras

At the first tremor of inquiry,
 the mind asks: where is the ground?
 That from which birth arises,
 in which things endure, into which they finally dissolve.
 The visible world is countless waves,
 yet the ocean has one source.
 As the small knot of a sutra is opened,
 the infinite speaks in many refrains.
 Cause is not only the first push;
 it is ground, end, and support.
 Within shoot, leaf, flower, and fruit
 lies the hidden salutation of one seed.
 Behind the birth of the world seek
 that wide and silent foundation.
 Forms change, names change,
 the ground remains beyond every form.
 Speech flows in many directions -
 sometimes story, sometimes instruction;
 sometimes a deep sign of meditation,
 sometimes the subtle message of negation.
 Within differing lines search
 for one integrated current of meaning.
 Scattered pearls threaded together
 become a bright garland of knowledge.
 Words alone are not final;
 reason alone is not complete.
 Experience, reflection, revealed indication
 are not remote from one another.
 Where speech points toward a direction,
 intelligence places questions upon the path;
 and inward experience finally descends
 beyond the limit of words.
 If the 'I' changes with the body,
 is that all we mean by self?
 Through childhood, youth, and old age,
 what remains unbroken within?
 Memory may break, form may alter,
 yet the light of the witness remains;
 that which sees every change
 does not itself undergo each change.
 If the self is a portion of the primal light,
 how much distance can remain?
 If a wave is only a form of water,
 where can it stand apart from water?
 Difference arises along the road of experience;
 non-difference in deeper recognition.
 Where the narrow circle of 'I' melts,
 expanse opens within one's own life.
 Knowledge is not merely information,
 nor a weight of words upon the head.
 To know is for one's form to change,
 for the inward knot of ignorance to break.
 What I only heard about the ground
 still remained outside me;
 what I recognised within myself
 became the dawn of life.
 The world of action moves in its own rhythm;
 the road of duty remains necessary.
 But action is not the final shore;
 without knowledge, the journey remains incomplete.
 Action cleanses the stain of mind
 and gives discipline a clear ground;

then in the polished mirror
 the hidden name of self-luminous being appears.
 Many banners of differing views -
 for one, unity; for another, difference;
 for one, a pervasive being with qualities;
 for another, silent attributeless non-difference.
 The sutra, in its compressed body,
 opens doors to many interpretations;
 it does not impose one rigid mould,
 and so the life of questioning survives.
 Do not fear the opposing voice;
 enter dialogue through reason.
 Whatever is claimed about the world's ground
 must carry its reasons within.
 Refutation is not merely victory,
 but a road toward clarity.
 By the sharp edge of another's question,
 one's own understanding grows stronger.
 If revelation says, 'You are of That,'
 the mind asks: how, in what manner?
 If perception shows only form,
 inference joins the thread of cause.
 But when final recognition
 becomes self-luminous within,
 the distance among knower, known, and knowing
 falls silent in one light.
 The voice of the infinite in the knot of sutras -
 few words, boundless thought;
 from the birth of the world to knowledge of the self,
 many doors of one question.
 Keep inquiry alive;
 let the fire of reflection always burn.
 The ground that pulses within all
 may reveal itself within one's own being.

The Scales of Happiness, Society's Question

Two sentinels stand upon life's road -
 the silent signs of pleasure and pain.
 Behind an action, the mind asks:
 for whom will the sands of suffering diminish?
 Judge the worth of a rule that touches life
 through its consequences.
 Do not leave it upon a high throne of command;
 draw it into human pleasure and pain.
 Where is the mark of a good action?
 Where pleasure grows and suffering diminishes;
 where the circle of benefit reaches outward
 not to one mind but to many lives.
 If my pleasure is another's weeping,
 the calculation is incomplete.
 Only upon the shared scales of everyone's good
 does moral worth receive its measure.
 Pleasure too is not of one colour:
 how intense, how long?
 How near or distant its arrival,
 how certain, under what conditions?
 Does one pleasure give birth to another,
 or carry a seed of pain behind it?
 Across how many lives does its influence reach?
 Discernment must pause over all these questions.
 Momentary sweetness may glitter,
 while a stream of poison follows after.
 A hard decision may hurt today
 and yield wider happiness tomorrow.
 So do not judge by the first taste alone;
 look along the whole road of consequence.
 As far as the circle of action spreads,
 carry the reckoning that far.
 If law is merely the whip of fear,
 the worth of justice remains incomplete.
 It should increase society's well-being
 and remove causes of suffering.
 Punishment should not exist for revenge,
 nor be a blind blow of anger.
 Where necessary, let it remain limited -
 reform and protection are its grounds.
 Behind the locked door of a prison,
 humanity does not come to an end.
 The guilty person remains human;
 punishment must have its limit.
 If an arrangement itself breeds crime,
 then the rule must be examined.
 Institutions are made for people;
 people must not be lost for institutions.
 Education is not a lamp
 locked in a room for the privileged.
 The more knowledge reaches everyone,
 the less darkness ignorance can keep.
 Across the wide field of social well-being,
 education is like a stream of water.
 When opportunity reaches all equally,
 collective life begins to flower.
 If lawmakers look only
 toward the interest of their own class,
 then inside the name of order
 injustice quietly builds a house.
 A rule that touches everyone
 must account for everyone's good.

The more accountable power becomes,
 the more public trust awakens.
 The calculation of happiness is difficult;
 a human being is not merely a number.
 Feeling, dignity, depth of relation
 do not fit wholly upon a scale.
 Yet the question of consequence remains necessary:
 'What happened to whom through my action?'
 The bright sting of that single question
 has often broken moral sleep.
 Beyond the circle of private happiness,
 remember another face.
 Do not crush one weak person
 in the name of a happy majority.
 Common good is meaningful only
 when justice stands beside it.
 A number of pleasures without human dignity
 remains an incomplete line.
 The road of reform must enter
 the body of institutions, not words alone.
 Education, law, government, punishment -
 all must carry a view toward public welfare.
 An old rule is not sacred
 merely because it is old.
 What increases suffering must be reviewed;
 this is a duty of a new society.
 The scales of happiness, society's question -
 keep your eyes upon the fruits of action.
 Count how many lives are touched
 by the distant waves of your decision.
 Let pain diminish, opportunity grow,
 let justice join public welfare.
 By this measure human institutions
 must keep reshaping themselves.

Life Flowing Beyond the Clock

The clock says: moment after moment,
 place time into equal compartments.
 The mind says: this current is not like that;
 each moment changes its pitch and rhythm.
 A past moment does not vanish;
 it quietly enters the present.
 The deep living river of time
 cannot be cut into fragments.
 One moment is not separate from another,
 as notes are joined within a song.
 Without memory of the first note,
 the second would lose its sense.
 The present carries within itself
 the delicate imprint of time gone by;
 future possibility too
 takes measure within this heartbeat.
 Intelligence cuts objects into parts
 and gives measure, shape, number.
 In the world of practical action,
 stable frameworks serve us well.
 But when life flows continuously,
 changing form countless times,
 the rigid mesh of thought
 cannot contain the whole current.
 Then inward intuition
 moves together with the thing.
 It does not merely stand outside and measure;
 it catches the rhythm from within.
 To understand a raga,
 a table of notes is not enough.
 One must enter the raga and listen,
 only then does its life become clear.
 Life is not a copy of a machine
 already made in full.
 It is an unknown journey of creation
 in which new forms keep flowering.
 The future is not merely a copy of the past,
 nor a single predetermined law.
 At every turn novelty is possible -
 this is the true breath of life.
 An impulse rises from within,
 taking seed toward leaf and leaf toward flower.
 Forms change and make their road,
 without a fixed mould or rigid essence.
 Many branches stretch far away;
 some stop, some continue.
 The élan of creative life
 brings new possibilities into the world.
 Sometimes intuition knows
 what lies nearest within a thing.
 Sometimes intellect creates distance,
 fashions tools, maps roads.
 One touches life from within;
 one shapes form from without.
 Both powers, each in its proper place,
 carry the human journey forward.
 When intelligence created tools,
 the world opened as an object.
 The language of shape, number, and use
 flowered in the courtyard of practice.
 But with that victory
 a distance was born as well:

the mistake of taking life's undivided flow
 for a collection of stable pieces.
 Freedom is not a lawless leap,
 nor wholly detached from cause.
 It arises when the whole personality
 awakens in one moment from its deepest source.
 A decision that is not imitation,
 not the mechanical movement of habit,
 is an act in which the whole self
 creates its new time.
 Society's first discipline
 stands through custom, fear, restraint.
 For the protection of shared life,
 habit assumes the form of rule.
 This stable moral circle is necessary,
 yet it is not the final word.
 At times the open surge of love
 can flow beyond its boundary.
 When the heart opens from a limited circle
 toward humanity as such,
 duty ceases to be a burden of fear
 and becomes love's natural call.
 The hard boundary of a closed society
 turns toward open humanity.
 Beyond the written line of rule,
 morality takes the form of living compassion.
 Religion too may sometimes arise from fear,
 from hope of warding off harm.
 Imagination creates unseen protectors
 and gives an insecure mind breath.
 But when deep inward experience
 touches the source of love,
 beyond fixed ritual religion
 becomes a living light of creation.
 Life flowing beyond the clock -
 each moment new, yet joined to memory;
 lines of intellect and inward intuition
 together make its many colours.
 One who treats time as counting alone
 reads only half of life.
 Entering living duration,
 moment by moment one moves toward the infinite.

Undivided Light Beyond Fragments

The more we see the world in fragments,
 the more lines arise between them:
 this standing here, that standing there,
 relation weaving distance between.
 Yet behind every line
 one thing breathes in dependence upon another.
 When we look beyond the fragments,
 the sky of undivided experience opens.
 Thought says: object is separate,
 quality separate, relation separate.
 Then it asks: how can relation
 join two natures already separate?
 A third cord would be needed to join them,
 and that cord would need another relation.
 Climbing the ladder of logic,
 the breath of division grows tired.
 What was first a living experience
 is cut into pieces by words.
 Names draw boundaries
 and show many separate parts.
 Thought is necessary, yet incomplete;
 it cannot contain totality.
 A map can show the road -
 where can it bring the scent of earth?
 The visible world is not wholly false,
 yet neither is it final truth.
 Like a broken piece of mirror,
 it keeps its shine but not the whole.
 Within appearance lives a share of truth;
 within each share lives limitation.
 The wider the synthesis,
 the deeper the light becomes.
 We draw the body's boundary and say 'I',
 yet no 'I' can become itself alone.
 Without language, society, memory, relation,
 where would identity find its place?
 Selfhood joins itself to another
 and expands through duty.
 When the individual touches shared life,
 one's own form deepens.
 Ethics is not only external command,
 nor merely a private account of pleasure.
 Wherever life has placed us,
 there duty takes the form of character.
 Give shape to your power in shared good,
 not in ego.
 Self-fulfilment becomes deeper
 when relation with the world is right.
 Yet society too is not the final limit;
 every institution is an incomplete form.
 However useful a rule may be,
 it cannot contain the whole of life.
 Rising consciousness seeks
 a still wider place of harmony
 where opposing voices meet
 and receive the name of one music.
 Suffering, ugliness, error, opposition -
 must all these be thrown outside?
 If wholeness is truly whole,
 nothing can remain beyond it.
 A broken note too can change
 its identity within the raga.

Totality drinks opposition
 and becomes a deeper order.
 Whole truth is not a dry formula;
 it is the wide body of experience.
 Knowledge, will, pleasure and pain
 all find their dwelling within it.
 Where we see separate things,
 a hidden unity keeps flowing.
 In final synthesis difference is not destroyed;
 its meaning changes without measure.
 The measure of truth is not only 'yes',
 nor the hard wall of 'no'.
 Some claims are true within narrower bounds;
 some have a wider ground.
 The vision that gathers more relations
 and leaves fewer contradictions outside
 draws nearer to truth,
 as bright noon grows out of dawn.
 Wholeness is not a distant object
 to be reached only at the end of time.
 It lies hidden within every experience,
 its image present in incomplete form.
 Within finite consciousness, moment by moment,
 a quiet longing for the whole remains.
 When we look beyond fragments,
 undivided light becomes every raga.
 Undivided light beyond fragments -
 the web of relations, the current of experience.
 Even while accepting the limits of thought,
 the search for wholeness remains boundless.
 Whatever opposition you see,
 look within it for the possibility of harmony.
 Holding the hand of partial truth,
 walk step by step toward the whole.

Free Self-Knowledge Up the Ladder of Negation

The object stands before us;
 consciousness looks upon its meaning.
 But the knower is not merely a mirror;
 it also creates its own distance.
 To say 'this' draws one boundary;
 to say 'not' opens another door.
 Within the subtle act of negation,
 thought receives its shape.
 If the object were grasped completely,
 the knower would become identical with the object.
 But behind every determination, consciousness
 creates room for another question.
 Knowledge of the object climbs level by level,
 through form, fact, and meaning.
 Within every certainty something remains
 that opens the next road.
 The truth of knowledge is not mere correspondence,
 nor a copy of an outer image.
 Within relation between knower and object,
 certainty finds its own fruit.
 Sometimes attention withdraws from the object
 and consciousness turns toward itself.
 In the moment of 'I know',
 the shoot of self-awareness appears.
 The self does not stand before us like an object;
 trying to seize it changes its form.
 It is like a free centre behind
 the boundary of every experience.
 Freedom is not merely having alternatives;
 it is the power to pass beyond determination,
 to negate what has been given
 and create an open space for new meaning.
 Absence here is not dry emptiness;
 it is room for creation.
 When the boundary of an old form breaks,
 new possibility receives a name.
 If thought is a borrowed book,
 from where will the voice of the self arise?
 Independent thought, through questioning,
 creates the ground of its own experience.
 Do not reject the meaning of tradition,
 but leave blind repetition behind.
 Whatever you receive, test it yourself;
 join it to the fire of discernment.
 Truth is not an order from outside,
 nor arbitrary private opinion.
 When free intelligence becomes responsible,
 the path of knowledge opens.
 Self-awareness is no solitary prison;
 relation with the world of objects remains.
 Distance and nearness to the world
 both flow within consciousness.
 Complete freedom is not an objectless
 flight through emptiness.
 Knowing a boundary, it crosses that boundary
 and creates a new form of meaning.
 Climbing the ladder of negation,
 consciousness does not lose itself.
 As each shell falls away,
 free inward light becomes truer.
 Object, knowledge, self, freedom -
 four notes of one journey.

Where the question itself becomes answerer,
there free knowledge awakens.

Undivided Light Within the Word

Sound rises and vanishes in a moment,
 yet from where does meaning endure?
 Though letter after letter is heard in fragments,
 why does the sentence flash as one?
 The ear receives successive waves;
 the mind finds undivided light.
 Something awakens within the word
 whose dwelling is not easily broken.
 Each phoneme is like a separate lamp,
 yet meaning is not merely their sum.
 Counting pearls does not capture
 the wholeness of the garland's beauty.
 When the complete utterance breaks forth,
 meaning enters the heart at once.
 Behind the fragments an undivided sign
 shows its form in a moment.
 Sound is like an outer wave,
 awakening a seed of meaning within.
 However different the pronunciation,
 one recognition appears again.
 Throat, speed, tone, region may change,
 yet the thread of understanding does not break.
 Behind momentary sound
 a stable doorway of meaning opens.
 A word is not merely a sign;
 it can also be a lamp of consciousness.
 When meaning lies hidden in darkness,
 speech washes away its covering.
 As a lamp makes objects in a room
 take form one by one,
 so the light of words reveals
 the boundary between known and unknown.
 The seen object is one road of knowledge;
 reason speaks of what lies far away.
 Old trustworthy speech too
 can become a bridge toward subtle truth.
 But every road has its limit,
 every means of knowledge its own domain.
 Where the senses cannot reach,
 words may open another door.
 How separate are word and meaning?
 How can one be known without the other?
 If meaning awakens within the mind,
 the imprint of words is counted with it.
 The distance among knower, knowledge, and known
 sometimes grows faint within speech.
 In the deepest moment of awareness,
 all three rest in one light.
 To say 'word' creates a boundary;
 to say 'sentence' creates a raga of relation.
 One word calls to another,
 then whole meaning becomes an attachment among them.
 Sometimes we understand the sentence through words,
 sometimes words through the sentence.
 In this play of whole and fragment,
 language creates its own law.
 The road of standard speech is one thing;
 non-standard speech also carries meaning.
 Living utterance in people's mouths
 sometimes flows outside formal rule.
 Yet discipline of correct usage
 is joined to clarity of meaning.

Speech is not merely speaking -
 it flowers in the field of cultivation.
 At the sound of a name, form dances;
 on seeing a form, the name awakens.
 The bond between language and world
 is remade in living experience.
 Class, quality, action, individual
 enter within the shadow of words.
 Behind one small sound,
 how many forms of world can open.
 Grammar is not merely guard-duty over form;
 it is also discipline of meaning.
 Roots, suffixes, arrangement of words
 become disciplines of mind.
 If a wrong joining distorts meaning,
 right arrangement shows the road.
 As speech is purified,
 mind too removes its stain.
 If the whole world is a shadow of words,
 where is silence and where is speech?
 Sound is seeded within silence,
 and within sound lies fathomless silence.
 The vast forest of name and form
 rises from one primal vibration.
 Where the word recognises its source,
 the boundary of difference melts.
 Liberation is not merely a distant realm,
 but a moment when the form of awareness changes,
 when beyond the outer shell of words
 one sees undivided meaning within.
 Many sounds enter one source;
 many meanings hold one light.
 When speech turns toward its ground,
 consciousness fills with free radiance.
 Undivided light within the word,
 depth of silence behind sound.
 Climbing the ladder of phoneme, word, sentence,
 mind searches for meaning's true road.
 Speaking, hearing, understanding - all three
 are different dwellings of one consciousness.
 In the deepest interior of language,
 the clear door of the infinite opens.

The Lamp of Surrender Among Five Differences

The world is not a dream or blurred shadow;
 earth, water, body are all real.
 The laughter, labour, pain, and hope of beings
 each carry their own reality.
 The primal light is free and undivided;
 all else breathes in dependence upon it.
 Dependence does not erase existence;
 through relation the world receives trust.
 One difference lies between the ground and the soul,
 another between the ground and the world;
 a third between soul and soul,
 a fourth between conscious and inert.
 The fifth is difference among material things -
 five lamps making the lines clear.
 To erase difference into one colour
 would wrong truth's many forms.
 The soul is not a mere reflection of the ground,
 nor wholly identical with it.
 Conscious, willing, experiencing pleasure and pain,
 it has its own limited identity.
 Dependent, yet not negated,
 its selfhood remains awake.
 Union does not mean dissolution;
 even in nearness the raga of difference remains.
 Nor are all souls of one level;
 some carry greater knowledge and power.
 Some consciousness is ringed by mist,
 some roads more clearly lit.
 Different nature, different tendencies,
 different impressions of karma.
 Though the same sunlight falls,
 each vessel receives it differently.
 Bondage is not merely the body's snare;
 it is ignorance, delusion, the net of karma.
 When desire is bound to objects,
 birth and death raise their question again.
 The road of liberation opens inward
 when discernment awakens beside love.
 Recognising dependence upon the free ground,
 ego gives up its stain.
 Three doors of knowledge stand open -
 perception, inference, trustworthy testimony.
 Perception speaks the nearby form;
 reason joins a distant cause.
 Words can show the direction of a road,
 but hearing alone is not enough.
 Where understanding enters life,
 the lamp of knowledge burns truly.
 Devotion is not merely song,
 nor the burden of tears in the eyes.
 It is remembrance, service, truthful speech,
 compassion, protection, giving.
 Sometimes sweet repetition of the Name,
 sometimes holding a hungry hand,
 sometimes protecting a suffering being,
 sometimes reducing greed within.
 Service of the body too is discipline
 when ego does not stand between.
 If speech is truthful and beneficial,
 it can become a form of love.
 When the mind is full of compassion
 and trusts the teacher's word,

hearing, remembrance, and praise
 give the interior a peaceful dwelling.
 Liberation is not one uniform silence,
 but a song of many forms of nearness:
 sometimes sharing the same realm,
 sometimes great intimate presence,
 sometimes likeness to divine form,
 sometimes fulfilment in service.
 Yet the soul's selfhood remains;
 there lies liberation's sweet joy.
 Surrender is not admitting defeat,
 nor final destruction of personality.
 Knowing its own limit, the self
 moves toward a higher ground.
 When the mind says, 'I am not independent,
 yet I am not meaningless,'
 dependence ceases to be bondage
 and lives as deep acceptance in love.
 The world is real, the soul is real,
 difference is real, relation is real.
 Accepting these opens
 the deep beauty of plurality.
 Do not dissolve everything into one colour;
 do not turn distance into hatred.
 Remain different, yet through love's thread
 give life a new meaning.
 The lamp of surrender among five differences,
 a current of devotion beside knowledge.
 In this many-coloured world of truth,
 love becomes the nearest door.
 Selfhood remains, ego melts;
 the mind finds its place in dependence.
 Difference is not distance; difference is identity -
 through relation the song of life becomes whole.

The World Opening Through the Eyes of the Body

The world is not theory first;
 first comes the body's living touch.
 Feet feel the weight of earth;
 eyes open into the joy of colour.
 Seeing is not merely taking a picture;
 the body itself is the centre of vision.
 From where I stand there open
 near and far, right and left.
 Before the hand reaches toward a thing,
 it does not walk by drawing a map.
 Within the body's silent skill,
 direction rises by itself.
 Habit is not merely memory of mind;
 the body learns its own movement.
 Instrument, pen, road, tool
 become extensions of the limbs over time.
 A blind person's cane is not merely
 a piece of wood held outside the hand.
 It carries the limit of touch farther
 and extends bodily experience.
 The senses are not separate windows;
 they find coherence in one body.
 Colour may awaken a feeling of warmth;
 sound may suggest a shape.
 An object is never wholly present at once;
 the eye catches one side now.
 The silent testimony of its hidden side
 remains present within experience.
 Change the viewpoint and the object remains;
 each angle shows a new form.
 Wholeness is not merely the sum of all views;
 it appears as a living horizon.
 The world is not a shadow made by consciousness;
 nor is consciousness wholly separate from the world.
 Meaning is born upon the first ground
 where the two meet.
 Before thought there is already a trust:
 the world stands before me.
 Within this pre-reflective relation
 lies the soil of every theory.
 Another mind is not merely
 a mystery sealed behind glass.
 Gesture, body, speech, gaze
 are the language of its experience.
 Joy shines through laughter;
 fear takes form in trembling.
 The living expression of another body
 enters my world.
 My own body is an object too,
 but it is not merely an object.
 I can see it from outside,
 yet it is also the means by which I see.
 Because of this double meaning of the body,
 I am in the world and the world is within me.
 Boundary and openness together
 make life deeper.
 Language is not ready-made clothing for thought;
 thought may be born in the act of speaking.
 Words are meaningful gestures of the body,
 giving form to silent experience.
 Certainty is not the rigidity of stone;
 experience always keeps something unclear.

Meaning opens and then deepens again;
life remains richly many-sided.
The world opening through the eyes of the body -
touch, vision, language, relation.
When the hard wall between mind and world melts,
experience becomes a living bond.

The Mirror of Knowledge, the Thread of Reason

When knowledge knows itself,
 it simultaneously gives form to a new object.
 What had remained unilluminated
 is touched by the lamp of certainty.
 Not merely a blurred appearance,
 not the half-light of doubt;
 self-luminous definite cognition
 then becomes the doorway of evidence.
 Not everything seen is of one kind;
 illusion sometimes alters colour.
 A distant shell appears yellow,
 then near at hand declares itself white.
 A cognition broken by a later cognition
 stands on weaker feet.
 Certainty that survives examination
 carries stronger trust.
 Two principal roads of knowledge open -
 one direct, one indirect.
 One touches the nearby form itself;
 the other works through memory and reason.
 Each road has its own manner,
 each travels with the search for truth.
 Force every case into one mould
 and the road of knowledge closes.
 Direct cognition too has more than one form:
 sometimes the ordinary doorway of sense,
 sometimes inward purified consciousness
 where no instrument is required.
 Through eye, ear, and mind
 the daily world becomes known;
 but at the summit of deeper knowing,
 the knot of dependence loosens.
 Memory awakens an imprint of the past;
 recognition says, 'This is that.'
 Reason seeks necessary relation;
 inference reads distant meaning.
 Trustworthy speech too
 brings news from an unseen road.
 Many currents of indirect knowledge
 together enlarge awareness.
 Comparison can seem a separate doorway,
 yet it lives within recognition.
 A form heard of before and later seen
 receives light through resemblance.
 The bridge between name and object
 is renewed through old memory.
 Within one cognition another joins,
 and the flower of recognition opens.
 The life of inference is not mere form,
 but a deep invariable relation of reason.
 Where the sign is present, the probandum follows -
 logic lives in that bond.
 Binding reasons into three boxes
 does not make truth appear by itself.
 Correct recognition of unbroken relation
 becomes the wings of conclusion.
 Universal and particular both
 remain together within the object.
 To grasp only the name of the class
 misses the living form of the individual.
 To hold only the isolated particular
 loses the bridge of shared meaning.

Together they show the object's full face
 before knowledge.
 The fruit of a means of knowledge is not merely 'I know';
 the curtain of ignorance is removed.
 Mind turns toward what is beneficial
 and steps away from the harmful road.
 Where there is neither benefit nor harm,
 quiet discernment remains indifferent.
 Knowledge becomes a direction for life,
 not merely a collection of words.
 Some fruits arise together with knowledge,
 as darkness vanishes at once.
 Others flower later in conduct,
 as decisions of acceptance and rejection.
 Immediate light blooms within;
 consequential fruit arrives in action.
 When the seed of knowledge is sound,
 its crop grows within life.
 Where doubt stands, questioning is necessary,
 but doubt itself is not the final home.
 The glitter of error is deceptive;
 memory too is not direct perception.
 Know the limit of every cognition,
 what is known through which means.
 Knowledge gains dignity from knowing its limits,
 and discernment becomes firmer.
 The mirror of knowledge, the thread of reason -
 an open world of direct and indirect knowing.
 Memory, recognition, reasoning, inference,
 speech each opens a different door.
 See universal and particular together;
 recognise the fruits of benefit and harm.
 In the clear light of definite cognition,
 life receives an alert order.

Hands of Labour, a Changing World

The world is no frozen stone,
 within every particle lies a seed of motion;
 forms change, relations change,
 new things are born inside old shells.
 Contradiction is not merely an obstacle;
 it is the hidden call of transformation.
 One condition touches its limit
 and opens a door toward another form.
 Thought and matter do not stand apart
 like separate sky and earth.
 Within life's solid ground
 ideas acquire their own density.
 As labour changes form,
 so circumstances join with mind;
 human beings give shape to the world,
 and the world also shapes human beings.
 History is not merely crown and king,
 nor a garland of dates of wars.
 Plough, hammer, loom, furnace -
 the sweat of labour is history too.
 Which hands produce,
 which hands control the means?
 As these relations change,
 society changes again and again.
 When the worker stands estranged
 from the fruit of one's own labour,
 and what one has made
 falls under another's ownership,
 one's own creation confronts the worker
 as an alien power.
 Then labour loses its joy
 and the bitter knot of bondage grows tight.
 The distance is not from the product alone;
 the mind becomes alienated from the work itself.
 Within motion repeated all day,
 the voice of one's own creativity disappears.
 Work that might have become self-development
 turns into necessity for the belly.
 The living person slowly
 is sold like an object in the market.
 Relations with other people too
 then assume the form of calculation.
 Exchange sits where meeting should be;
 the field of trust dries up.
 The distance between one human and another
 grows higher than a wall of wealth.
 Cut off from one's own humanity,
 life gives birth to emptiness within.
 Yet change is not merely a dream;
 it asks for concrete conditions to alter.
 When the structure of production changes,
 relations too will change sooner or later.
 When an old order becomes
 an obstacle to forces newly born,
 from the heat of that collision arises
 the possible awareness of a new society.
 Equality does not mean one identical face,
 nor forcing everyone into one mould.
 Give every hand an equal chance
 for human capacities to flower.
 Amid hunger, fear, unemployment,
 freedom remains only on paper.

Without life's basic necessities,
 even high ideals wither.
 The question of shared means arises:
 whose labour creates whose gain?
 If many hands make prosperity,
 why should only a few possess the whole share?
 If property climbs above the human
 and turns the human into its servant,
 then rethinking the arrangement
 becomes justice's natural demand.
 Liberation is not merely filling the stomach,
 nor is a heap of goods the final goal.
 Song, thought, love, creation -
 these too are dimensions of human life.
 When labour is reunited with its meaning,
 the person recognises one's own capacity;
 in the open courtyard of shared life,
 the free human being takes fuller form.
 Religion, thought, institutions, law
 do not descend from an empty sky.
 Within the material relations of life
 they take historical form.
 Yet the human being is not merely stone:
 one reacts, creates, questions.
 The hand that changes circumstances
 also changes itself in every moment.
 Hands of labour, a changing world,
 a new dawn inside contradiction.
 Alienated labour becomes one's own again;
 the hard cords of the market break.
 Where the human is no longer a means,
 life itself awakens as the end.
 In the free light of shared labour,
 humanity sings again.

An Open Hand at the Door of Mystery

Not every question of life can be measured;
 some descend upon the scales, some do not.
 Some problems stand outside us;
 some remain within as breath.
 What we seek to solve from a distance
 may rightly be called a problem.
 What contains us within itself
 may awaken as mystery in the heart.
 To see an object piece by piece
 is one useful path of science.
 But the human being is not merely an object;
 one is a living vehicle of experience.
 Body, memory, fear, hope, love -
 all join within one life.
 Behind measured facts
 immeasurable mystery quietly opens.
 The more we gather saying 'this is mine,'
 the more the object stands outside us.
 House, wealth, status, possessions
 thicken the structure of ownership.
 But the silent experience of 'I am'
 can belong to no one's property.
 The deep open sky of being
 cannot be raised by walls of possession.
 Where the net of 'mine' grows dense,
 fear is born alongside it.
 Anxiety over losing things
 roams day and night through the garden of happiness.
 Where existence opens in its own light
 toward another person,
 the hard knot of ownership
 slowly begins to loosen.
 Freedom is not arbitrariness,
 nor cutting every bond and walking away.
 It is inward and attentive availability -
 remaining open for another.
 One shut inside one's own chamber
 is not free even while deciding.
 One who accepts the risk of love
 is not a slave even within bonds.
 Another human being is not an object;
 do not push them away as merely 'he' or 'she'.
 When the true moment of encounter arrives,
 open your heart and say 'you'.
 Living presence face to face
 creates relation beyond speech.
 Between two solitary consciousnesses,
 a bridge of trust slowly rises.
 Love does not demand possession;
 it is the art of remaining available.
 Listening, waiting, keeping company,
 not fleeing in the hour of pain.
 Fidelity is a long road through time,
 not the light of a passing emotion.
 Keeping tomorrow the word given today -
 there breathes the life of relation.
 Hope is not desire alone,
 nor a calculation of guaranteed results.
 It is trust within darkness
 where the road is not yet visible.
 It does not say, 'Everything will be fine,'
 but gives the firm voice: 'I will remain with you.'

Inside despair's closed room,
it opens an inward window.
Ultimate presence is not an object of logic
to be placed as proof upon a table;
nor a distant object in the sky
whose limits can be filled with numbers.
When the mystery of existence within
receives the deep touch of trust,
the question does not dissolve into an answer,
yet life's meaning becomes new.
Faith is not blind acceptance;
it is experience's inward yes.
Where the mind knows its own limit
yet keeps the lamp of meaning there,
accepting the discipline of reason
does not close the door of questioning.
Standing humbly before mystery
does not diminish human consciousness.
Loneliness clings to the modern body
like a weight of iron.
Even amid machines, crowds, conveniences,
the mind searches for a human call.
A small moment of presence,
participation, and trust can change the world.
When one person becomes available to another,
life can become a home.
An open hand at the door of mystery,
not the arrogant noise of solutions.
To be, to meet, to hope,
to cross the dawn with fidelity.
What cannot be understood into extinction,
learn to live beside it.
Within life's immeasurable depth,
see light with an open heart.

A Free Voice, the Deeper Measure of Happiness

Knowledge rises from the ground of experience;
 do not immediately accept claims floating in the sky.
 From life seen, tested, endured,
 recognise the seed of thought.
 Stay far from the pride of final truth;
 remain humble beside doubt.
 What stands beyond the reach of evidence,
 keep beneath the light of questioning.
 The world we experience
 is an ordered possibility of experience:
 colour, touch, motion, shape,
 regularly encountered in recurring ways.
 An object is not merely a shell;
 it is a permanent possibility of experience.
 Mind too is a living continuity
 of memory, awareness, and experience.
 The question of ultimate being arises:
 where is compassion in a world of suffering?
 If power is infinite and mercy infinite,
 why does the shadow of evil endure?
 When reason finds no complete answer,
 faith too must move knowing its limits.
 A humble mind before the unknown
 does not weave a net of blind certainty.
 The worth of happiness is not quantity alone;
 quality too has its own identity.
 Beyond the body's passing pleasures,
 there are higher joys of mind.
 Knowledge, art, friendship, self-respect,
 the deep expansion of consciousness -
 one who has tasted both has stronger standing
 to judge the higher pleasure.
 Happiness is not for oneself alone;
 it is joined to the good of many lives.
 If one person's laughter becomes
 another person's suffering, it is incomplete.
 Common happiness means this:
 the value of every life is equal.
 Beyond the small scales of private gain,
 public good receives wider weight.
 Yet the majority is not all-powerful;
 the individual's inner life has rights.
 Thought, speech, ways of living
 must not be policed by the crowd.
 So long as another is not harmed,
 one should be free to choose one's road.
 The open laboratory of individuality
 is a new principle of life for society too.
 A silenced dissenting voice
 may perhaps carry a lamp of truth.
 And if its claim is wrong,
 truth grows brighter by confronting it.
 Without debate belief hardens
 into a dry leaf of rigid doctrine.
 Hearing opposition protects truth
 and keeps free thought alive.
 Freedom of thought is not merely
 a luxury of the scholar's room.
 Within every human being lives
 the capacity and right to question.
 Experiments in conduct too
 increase life's knowledge.

Force everyone into one mould
 and human creativity withers.
 Let the power of the state remain limited
 and answerable to the people.
 Representation becomes meaningful
 when every voice can be heard.
 Education, participation, open discussion
 are grounds of civic discernment.
 Democracy is more than counting votes;
 it is the expansion of free personality.
 Do not assume that woman's intelligence,
 desire, or capacity is less by birth.
 Rigid restraints and unequal laws
 cut the wings of human progress.
 Equal opportunity, equal rights,
 an open place to choose one's life:
 if half of humanity remains bound,
 society's own life remains half.
 To seek cause is not merely habit;
 the order of experience must be examined.
 What occurs together is not therefore cause -
 where lies necessary relation?
 Agreement, difference, concomitant variation,
 knowledge of residual effects:
 through comparison among many events,
 the thread of cause gains identity.
 One event does not make a law;
 many examples must be sounded deeply.
 When an exception appears,
 examine the road again.
 Inference steps from past experience
 toward the future.
 But certainty is never infinite -
 new facts can alter old conclusions.
 A free voice, the deeper measure of happiness -
 the meeting of experience, reason, and rights.
 Human dignity and public welfare
 are incomplete without one another.
 Keep questions open, thought free,
 bounded by harm and joined to justice.
 In the bright search for higher happiness,
 human beings make their own road.

The Indefinable Light of the Good

Clearing the forest of words,
 first examine the knot of meaning;
 light the lamp of analysis
 to remove the mist of philosophical questions.
 Sometimes within a difficult problem
 ordinary language opens the road;
 when the glitter of complex names falls away,
 the face of the thing flowers clearly.
 We trust that there is an external world -
 body, hand, earth, time.
 Why should the firm ground of common sense
 be so easily called nothing?
 Doubt is useful, but not such doubt
 that calls even the hand imagination.
 Some foundations of everyday certainty
 remain even through philosophical storms.
 Do not dissolve the root word 'good'
 completely into some other property.
 Do not weigh it under one name
 of pleasure, desire, development, or utility.
 If 'good' simply meant pleasure,
 why could we ask, 'Is pleasure good?'
 The question remains open;
 the two meanings do not appear identical.
 Calling value merely some natural property
 does not end its mystery.
 Between description and evaluation
 the subtle distance is not meaningless.
 Like the simple quality of yellow
 that cannot be broken into further parts,
 'good' too may appear
 as a basic meaning directly apprehended.
 Failure to find a definition
 does not make a word meaningless.
 Some basic qualities are recognised
 without disappearing into other words.
 Pleasure can be valuable,
 yet pleasure is not the only good.
 Friendship, knowledge, the experience of beauty
 are not trivial in themselves.
 Measure consequences, but also
 look for value within the act.
 Distinguish what condition is good in itself
 from what is merely a means.
 Choose actions that produce
 more good consequences.
 But let calculation not go blind;
 read intrinsic value as well.
 A beautiful world, true friendship,
 the clear open sky of knowledge -
 such harmonies within human life
 become deep dwellings of value.
 Confusion is often born from words,
 unclear questions, mingled meanings.
 When analysis opens distinctions,
 half the noise of dispute becomes needless.
 While protecting the ordinary world,
 honour the subtlety of value too.
 Say clearly what is clear;
 know the limit of what is not simple.
 The indefinable light of the Good,
 with analysis's clean mirror beside it;

upon the firm earth of ordinary certainty,
discernment seeks the road of value.

The Shoot of Compassion, the People's Realm

The human heart is not stone;
 within it lives a shoot of compassion.
 See a child fall into danger -
 the hand reaches forward of itself.
 Before calculation of gain and loss,
 pity awakens as an unnamed thirst.
 Within that spontaneous tremor,
 humanity takes its first breath.
 When shame awakens before injustice,
 it is another tender seed of moral life.
 When respect becomes humility,
 the leaf of civility unfolds.
 The capacity to distinguish right from wrong
 is intelligence's fourth bright flower.
 If these four shoots are tended,
 virtue becomes a root of life.
 Good nature is like a seed,
 but the field still needs care.
 If no water comes and the soil dries,
 how much greenness can remain?
 Hunger, fear, the hard wind of greed
 can dry tenderness in the mind.
 Right education, habit, company
 can awaken goodness within again.
 A realm does not endure by the sword;
 it endures on the grain of trust.
 When the people's stomach is empty,
 the heavy voice of law cannot be sold.
 Food, security, justice, respect -
 these come first as foundations of public life.
 The crown comes afterward;
 public welfare is the fundamental right.
 If a ruler drowns in private pleasure,
 the people turn their faces away.
 Authority does not fall from the sky;
 public trust surrounds and sustains it.
 Heaven's sign is not far away;
 its imprint lies in the people's hearts.
 When the people accept, rule stands;
 when they abandon it, rule falls.
 Calling someone king does not make injustice sacred;
 office cannot wash away wrongdoing.
 Where oppression crosses its limit,
 resistance too becomes a duty.
 Counsel, warning, the voice of truth
 must not be suppressed in court.
 A government that crushes humanity
 loses its legitimacy.
 Land may be won by force,
 the heart cannot.
 Government by fear is like night;
 it can break with the dawn.
 Compassionate rule slowly
 builds a home of public trust.
 Then state power becomes service
 and bears fruit over long time.
 Land is not merely a measured line;
 it is hunger, labour, the depth of life.
 Clear boundaries and just distribution
 bring peace to the field.
 If taxation crushes the body,
 a household dries even amid harvest.

Governmental wisdom is tested here:
 let people labour and also receive the fruit.
 Do not leave the old person alone;
 let no child remain hungry.
 Let the eyes of government fall
 upon the pain of widow, weak, and sick.
 Everyone's happiness will not be identical,
 but life has a minimum standard.
 A state that supports the weak
 gives compassion the form of law.
 Honour for the learned is not greed for office,
 but an open place to speak truth.
 Give work into capable hands;
 flattery must not be government's breath.
 If counsel becomes only 'yes, yes,'
 the road of rule turns blind.
 The capacity to hear a different voice
 protects a ruler from error.
 Ask about benefit, but before moral duty
 the question of gain grows small.
 In every decision, human worth
 must remain greater than the value of coin.
 If the court adopts the scales of selfishness,
 relations become a marketplace.
 If the lamp of duty burns within,
 politics takes on a human form.
 The shoot of compassion, the people's realm -
 flowers of respect, justice, discernment.
 Within human beings lives a possibility of goodness,
 the root of society's hope.
 People first, office afterward;
 let power remain service.
 When the heart becomes the centre of government,
 the people's realm truly flowers.

The Innermost Witness Beyond Neti, Neti

Wealth, name, form, every relation
 one day reaches its boundary.
 Why is what is dear, dear?
 The question turns toward the source within.
 Is a husband dear merely for being husband,
 a wife dear merely for the name?
 Beneath every intimate attachment
 lies a subtle covering of love for the self.
 Things are dear, the world is dear, life is dear
 because consciousness touches them.
 Without awareness of one's own ground,
 outward desire keeps wandering.
 Saying 'not this, not that,'
 remove the shells of name and form.
 Turn attention toward that witness
 which cannot be grasped as an object.
 How can the eye see the one who sees?
 How can the ear hear the one who hears?
 How can the silent ground of all knowledge
 itself become merely an object?
 The witness is not one item
 in a list of things known.
 Yet without it there is no knowledge;
 upon every bright page of experience
 it is an unwritten presence.
 The waking world, scenes of dream,
 the dense still night of sleep -
 states change, yet behind them
 there remains a deep continuity of experience.
 Like an innermost ruler,
 it seems to dwell within every being:
 that which sustains from within
 is not seen by the outer eye.
 Beyond earth, water, fire, wind,
 mind, speech, and breath,
 one imperishable silent ground
 extends through every form.
 What is born must surely change;
 what is accumulated must decay.
 The search for imperishable truth
 then raises its gaze beyond change.
 Desire becomes the seed of action;
 action in turn shapes the future.
 As the desire, so the resolve;
 as the resolve, so life's course moves.
 When desire grows quiet at the root,
 the knot of attachment loosens.
 Bondage tied within the heart
 melts under the heat of knowledge.
 Knowledge here is not information;
 it is recognising oneself within oneself.
 When every outer support falls away,
 know the unshaken ground within.
 Death is the final boundary of the body,
 but the witness's question is larger.
 If one binds oneself to form,
 does one perish wholly with that form?
 What remains beyond neti, neti
 is not the dry darkness of nothingness.
 It is the self-luminous innermost witness
 in which the world finds its ground.
 Do not understand another person as an object;

in them too resounds that consciousness.
As self-knowledge deepens,
the hardness of difference grows faint.
Outer accumulation will finally fall away;
inner knowing travels with us.
In recognising this imperishable silence,
the wordless dawn of liberation flowers.

The Light of the Self in the Fire of Limits

All the bright instruments of knowledge
 measure the forms of the world very far:
 stars, bodies, matter, events
 bound and displayed in formulas of law.
 But the question rising within -
 'Who am I, why do I live?'
 cannot be wholly contained
 upon the paper of measurement.
 Science is luminous in its own field;
 knowing its limit is knowledge too.
 Over what can be seen and tested,
 it speaks with firm discipline.
 But life's final meaning
 is not an object in a laboratory.
 The answer to the soul's deep unrest
 is not merely a list of facts.
 We are first present in the world -
 among body, objects, and time;
 hunger, labour, habit, conduct
 water the ordinary ground of daily life.
 Beyond this outward presence,
 a call awakens within.
 Bearing the weight of one's own decisions,
 the person begins to make a self.
 The self is no ready-made object
 given complete at birth.
 Through choice, fidelity, crisis,
 it slowly takes form.
 Where I accept my own action
 and do not push away the burden of fault,
 within this finite body
 I shape a free consciousness.
 Freedom is not arbitrariness;
 it is another name for responsibility.
 To flee the consequence of a chosen road
 turns freedom into mere price.
 In the decisions I myself make,
 my own form is made.
 Every 'yes' and every 'no'
 draws the future of the self.
 There are places in life
 where all remedies become exhausted:
 before death, within pain,
 beside the shadow of guilt.
 Struggle, contingency, failure
 stand like walls across the road.
 In those hard boundary-situations,
 the self sees its deeper form.
 Death may be forgotten day after day
 as distant news.
 Yet one day its shadow
 stands at one's own door.
 When mortality becomes clear,
 the value of the moment changes.
 Life seems like borrowed time,
 and every breath receives responsibility.
 Seek a road away from pain,
 yet not all pain will disappear.
 Some wounds belong to the truth of life
 and cannot be hidden by deception.
 Even within that suffering, a question rises:
 shall I break, or become deeper?

Meaning is not always found in pleasure;
 sometimes it comes through wakeful endurance.
 When the burden of fault is mine,
 why place it upon another?
 What went wrong, accept it honestly
 before one's own self.
 If shame becomes only a curtain for hiding,
 darkness thickens further.
 In the hard light of acknowledgement,
 new responsibility stands upright.
 Solitude is necessary, but not complete;
 without another the self remains incomplete.
 In the living moment of truthful dialogue,
 mind discovers its own light.
 Where I do not make the other a means,
 but honour them as free consciousness,
 dialogue becomes more than language -
 it is recognised as a bridge of existence.
 True communication is very difficult;
 false agreement is the easier path.
 To remove one's mask and say,
 'This is how I am,' requires courage.
 Listening openly to another voice
 makes one's own boundary clear.
 In the meeting of two free selves,
 loneliness slowly melts.
 The nameless light beyond the world
 cannot be held as an object,
 nor bound in a net of concepts,
 nor filled within limits of measurement.
 Sometimes sign, symbol, silent moment
 gives an immeasurable indication.
 Within the visible, the touch of the invisible
 opens a doorway of transcendence.
 Faith is not blind obedience to command,
 nor a counterfeit form of certain knowledge.
 It rises with awareness of limits
 as openness toward the infinite.
 Where reason knows its own boundary,
 the question does not die.
 To look at the sky with humility
 is not defeat by ignorance.
 The light of the self in the fire of limits -
 amid death, pain, and guilt.
 Freedom, dialogue, transcendence
 water life's deepest current.
 Measure the world, but do not let yourself
 become merely a number.
 Awaken within finite life
 and remain open toward the infinite.

Particles of Logic, the Transparent Sky of Language

When the forest of thought grows dense
 and vines of words cover the path,
 logic's sharp and clean knife
 distinguishes knot from knot.
 Open the inner structure of a complex statement
 down to its subtle particles.
 Cut away unnecessary weight
 and refine it toward simplicity.
 The first rule in the house of knowledge:
 do not give mist the name of truth.
 What can be stated clearly
 must not be given an obscure veil.
 Within the form of a sentence
 a whole city of confusion may live.
 When logical lines are made clear,
 deception loses its shape.
 Why assume that hearing a name
 guarantees that a thing exists?
 'King', 'centre', 'final master' -
 first examine what the statement means.
 Sometimes when the shell of a name is removed,
 a whole formula of relation appears.
 Even non-being can be clearly stated;
 language then emerges from confusion.
 The world is not one solid lump;
 it is many small combinations of facts.
 Particle joins particle through relation
 to make the broad organisation of experience.
 Upon subtle foundations of simple facts,
 the complex world takes form.
 When logic recognises the structure,
 reality appears more clearly.
 Knowledge by acquaintance is a near touch;
 description is like a bridge from afar.
 One I see, touch, experience directly;
 the other receives standing through relations.
 A name is not sufficient acquaintance;
 description is not a copy of perception.
 Understanding these as two different roads
 makes the movement of cognition clearer.
 The palace of mathematics and the ground of logic
 do not stand far apart.
 Number, order, class, relation
 grow firm through threads of rule.
 Behind symbols lies discipline of thought;
 each step of proof is made clear.
 Where calculation enters logic,
 rigour receives its measure.
 The road of science remains humble;
 every conclusion is a provisional lamp.
 A new fact may one day
 bring an old boundary closer to revision.
 Logic gives direction, experience tests;
 together they enlarge knowledge.
 Staying far from the pride of certainty,
 intelligence accepts new truth.
 Language is not merely clothing;
 it is also the body of thought.
 Bad stitching, bad joining
 can create a figure of confusion.
 The grammar of a sentence appears on the surface;
 its logical form may differ within.

When the inner line opens,
 the face of meaning grows clear.
 Ethical talk is not mathematics,
 nor is there one law of proof for all.
 In saying 'good' there is desire, feeling,
 a place for human aspiration.
 Yet discernment's work does not end;
 test desire as well.
 Measure the boundary of your decision
 against another life's pleasure and pain.
 Love, marriage, bodily relation
 must not remain locked in a room of fear.
 The hard guard of inherited command
 does not define the end of human life.
 Freedom with responsibility,
 consent with respect -
 even in private life's questions
 let compassionate discernment be the law.
 If society takes pride in war,
 what becomes of the lamp of knowledge?
 If power falls into destructive hands,
 what meaning remains in civilisation?
 Peace is not merely a slogan;
 reason must walk with humanity.
 Only when the brilliance of science saves life
 does its glory find fulfilment.
 When power declares itself absolute truth
 and closes the door of questions,
 freedom of thought
 quietly begins to die within.
 Protect the right to doubt;
 do not kill the voice of dissent.
 Defending truth is not obedience -
 light the lamp of open debate.
 Particles of logic, the sky of language,
 a clear current of simplicity.
 Fact, relation, number, experience -
 together they open the doorway of knowledge.
 Whatever you say, examine its form;
 whatever you believe, believe with questions.
 With clear intelligence and a free heart,
 recognise the complexity of the world.

The Knot of Language, the Mind's Invisible Movement

Sometimes the problem is not in the world,
 but lives in the way our words are joined.
 A knot language ties for itself
 may be mistaken by thought for truth.
 Look at the proper place of each term,
 the category in which it belongs.
 Place a word in the wrong house
 and countless troubles are born.
 After seeing all the buildings of a city,
 if someone asks, 'Where is the city?'
 and searches for it apart from the row of buildings,
 one becomes lost in one's own question.
 What is a whole should not then
 be grasped again as one more object.
 When the mist of category-error clears,
 a complex mystery becomes simple.
 Do not treat mind as an object
 neighbouring the body in a separate room.
 Do not attach the name of invisible substance
 and lose the meaning of behaviour.
 Thought, desire, courage, cleverness
 take form in ways of acting.
 How a person behaves -
 there mental meaning emerges.
 A ghost of laughter behind laughing,
 a god of walking behind the walk?
 By creating such doubled entities,
 intelligence makes new divisions for itself.
 What the living body itself does
 does not require another duplicate.
 Understanding many styles of one life
 makes the road clearer.
 'Knowing' takes two forms -
 one a statement, one skilled performance.
 Remembering a formula is different
 from having the living ability to do.
 All the rules of cycling may be memorised
 and yet one still cannot ride.
 Skill in hand, eye, practice
 shows its own evidence.
 Intelligence is not an inward drama
 that first runs inside the mind
 and then the body copies
 when it appears outside in action.
 Choosing the right step at the right time,
 learning from error, then improving -
 in such living patterns of disposition
 the face of intelligence becomes bright.
 Anger is not some object
 like red smoke stored inside.
 It is a disposition - how and when it may erupt,
 a way of speaking and acting.
 To be 'breakable' like glass
 does not mean breaking at every moment.
 Capacity, disposition, possibility
 follow a different grammar.
 Everyday words in ordinary speech
 take form through long experience.
 Our laughter, fear, hope, skill
 fit naturally into that language.
 Technical terms can be useful,
 but do not forget the ground beneath them.

Do not leave the soil of living use
 to build castles of imagination.
 The meaning of a word is not dictionary alone;
 it lies in the movement of its use.
 In what context and in what way it is spoken
 opens the web of meaning.
 The same sound can perform many tasks;
 context gives the proper identity.
 When language moves within life,
 its law becomes intelligible.
 Analysis is not merely cutting meaning into pieces;
 look at relations too.
 Which statement is tied to which,
 where lies the root of confusion?
 If a problem is born in language,
 language itself may open its door.
 The ordinary light of clear use
 can dissolve many mysteries.
 Keep far from the pride
 that philosophy creates a new world.
 First examine what we actually say
 and understand its own rules.
 Sometimes the answer is no new fact,
 only the pleasure of a knot coming loose.
 When words return to their proper places,
 mind regains a natural face.
 The knot of language, the mind's invisible movement,
 the colours of life within the body.
 Skill, disposition, styles of action -
 all are waves of one human life.
 Stop searching for a separate ghost;
 look toward the road of living behaviour.
 As the mist of category fades,
 make the sky of thought transparent.

One Light Between East and West

Two directions, one sky,
 different languages, kindred questions;
 one path turns inward,
 another seeks outward evidence.
 Where the lamp of dialogue is lit,
 distance loses its name;
 between East and West one light
 makes its home in the human mind.
 If tradition is merely a burden,
 why should consciousness carry it?
 And if novelty cuts away the root,
 how long can new leaves survive?
 Let the deep soil of old experience
 meet the rain of new questions;
 whatever truth remains alive
 should flower again in changing meaning.
 If religion is afraid of science,
 the ground of faith grows weak;
 if science denies the questions of the self,
 knowledge too remains incomplete.
 Measured fact has its own grandeur,
 silent experience its own depth;
 when both recognise their limits,
 the road of synthesis opens.
 The world is no inert prison;
 it is a living current of transformation.
 Moment by moment new forms arise;
 creation keeps unfolding.
 Reality is dynamic;
 becoming is its inward breath.
 Even as forms change, the deeper centre
 holds infinite possibility.
 Self, world, and supreme light -
 three names, a deep relation;
 neither wholly cut off from one another,
 nor a simple line of sameness.
 If the world were only illusion,
 where would experience find meaning?
 If the Supreme were wholly apart from the world,
 how would the bridge of relation arise?
 When we recognise within ourselves
 the silent unity of the ground,
 the world's forms do not disappear;
 we simply understand their measure anew.
 Difference remains upon the earth of practice,
 unity remains at the inward root;
 the two truths need not fight -
 they are leaf and flower of one tree.
 The first road of knowledge is sense,
 bringing news of form, taste, and touch;
 the second is discerning reason,
 which repeatedly joins relations.
 But final inward experience is not
 only the dry proof of argument;
 where the knower is transformed,
 wisdom receives its name.
 Experience is not blind feeling,
 nor the enemy of reason, nor illusion;
 it is the flowering of alert consciousness,
 where inner and outer find one order.
 Reason tests, questions, analyses,
 keeping the mind clear and clean;

wisdom does not discard reason,
 but gives it a wider horizon.
 Religion's worth is not a title,
 nor a wall of outward signs;
 if it drives human beings
 away from one another, its meaning is lost.
 True religion is what lessens fear,
 and renders the thorns of hatred fruitless;
 where compassion, justice, and friendship dwell,
 there spirituality becomes fulfilled.
 Before a hungry body,
 songs of liberation alone are not enough;
 while slavery, exploitation, ignorance endure,
 spiritual speech remains incomplete.
 A consciousness that sees unity
 cannot stay silent beside injustice;
 inner light must flow into outward life
 as justice and service.
 Liberation is not a distant realm,
 nor a solitary flight abandoning the world;
 it is the breaking of ignorance's enclosure,
 knowledge of one's deeper unity.
 Where the narrow wall of 'I'
 opens toward humanity,
 the vastness of the self appears
 also in another life.
 If faith endures examination,
 its light becomes clearer;
 if doubt is not merely destructive,
 it can become a measure of truth.
 Tradition, reason, experience, wisdom -
 let all four walk hand in hand;
 like different streams from one source,
 let them become the river of human knowledge.
 One light between East and West -
 not a tale of victory or defeat;
 through one another's deepest questions,
 our own limits become visible.
 Where science, religion, and philosophy
 meet with human dignity,
 the many voices of the world
 flower into one vast music.

One Ground in Many Forms

The world is not merely a hazy deception,
 nor is the life of beings meaningless;
 colour, body, desire, labour, relation
 all carry their own truth and meaning.
 Though the primal light is one,
 many forms are not therefore remote from it;
 one ground, many forms -
 unity within difference is not incomplete.
 Within the wide body of that conscious ground
 beings and world are contained;
 to call them wholly separate from that basis
 would tear the thread of existence.
 Like the relation of body and self -
 difference, yet dependent union;
 one is hard to understand without the other,
 relation completes the whole play.
 Though the being is conscious and the world inert,
 neither is a meaningless shadow;
 within the primal ground each
 receives the dignity of its own form.
 Diversity lives within one truth,
 and unity within diversity;
 if unity devours difference,
 the very name of truth becomes incomplete.
 When knowledge touches an object,
 it does not see only the formless;
 with form, quality, and relation,
 it records the object's fuller identity.
 The undifferentiated is not an empty sky;
 truth becomes visible through particulars.
 With qualities, the primal light
 flowers more clearly within consciousness.
 In every cognition a 'this' awakens,
 yet 'this' is always something particular.
 Without colour, form, quality,
 would the object of knowledge remain complete?
 The meeting among many experiences
 does not deny unity;
 when particulars remain within the universal,
 the ground of knowledge does not scatter.
 The primal light is the cause of the world,
 yet does not destroy itself in creation.
 Like a seed that gives another form,
 the truth of the cause is not lost.
 The world lies gathered in subtle state,
 then emerges outward in gross form;
 in dissolution's silence it is gathered again,
 and the cycle takes another shape.
 The individual self bears limited knowledge,
 experiences, and shares in action;
 even as bodies change,
 a continuing consciousness sustains its song.
 The coverings of ignorance and action
 restrict the expansion of knowledge;
 when liberation removes the covering,
 the self's light opens.
 Liberation is not total destruction of selfhood,
 nor a uniform dissolution into emptiness;
 the being preserves its identity
 and walks the path of nearest bliss.
 Distance lessens, bondage breaks,
 love deepens toward the ground;

the clarity of dependent selfhood
 enters liberation as service.
 Knowledge is necessary, but alone
 cannot untie the heart's knot;
 without the warm surrender of love,
 dry thought eventually grows tired.
 Meditation, remembrance, loving service
 change life's direction;
 when known truth becomes beloved,
 devotion takes its complete form.
 Surrender is not another name for defeat;
 it sets down the burden of ego.
 When one's limited power
 is acknowledged before the primal ground,
 the wall of 'mine' loosens
 and a deep doorway of trust opens;
 the rain of grace flowers there
 as fearless love.
 The discipline of action purifies the mind;
 knowledge gives direction and understanding;
 devotion gives life to both
 and ends their inward conflict.
 These paths are not enemies;
 discipline deepens step by step.
 From duty comes clarified consciousness,
 from consciousness, the worship of love.
 The Supreme is not found by abandoning the world;
 the world too is its unfolding.
 The suffering of beings, service, compassion
 are doors of spiritual life.
 The ground that gives support to all
 must be loved through all beings.
 If devotion seeks only private liberation,
 its meaning remains incomplete.
 One ground in many forms,
 a song of unity within difference;
 being, world, and primal light
 together weave love's truth.
 Do not abandon the world as illusion;
 do not inflate the pride of selfhood.
 Dependent yet real,
 recognise home through the road of love.

A Free Dawn in Human Hands

Questions rise from the dust of earth;
 do not lose them in fear of the sky.
 The world living before our eyes
 must give the road its laws.
 Star, body, soil, consciousness
 take form in nature's rhythm;
 leave the throne of invisible fear
 and let humanity walk by its own reason.
 If truth is cut away from experience,
 it becomes only a palace of words.
 Let what claims to be known endure testing;
 there trust can stand.
 Eye, reason, memory, inference -
 open doors of shared examination.
 Knowledge is no miraculous gift,
 but a world earned by human effort.
 Consciousness is not a shadow far from the body,
 but a complex flowering of life;
 within the long journey of particles
 thought awakens as a lucid breath.
 Do not belittle nature,
 nor turn humanity into a god.
 As we learn the laws of the world,
 let us recognise our own limits.
 Morality is not born from fear,
 nor a bargain with another world.
 Truth, fidelity, cooperation
 are grounds of human life itself.
 The art of living with others,
 trust, justice, responsibility -
 within society these become
 guardians of good conduct.
 Freedom is the highest lamp,
 but not another name for solitary desire.
 One who binds another
 is not oneself free.
 Alongside the right to choose for oneself,
 remember the other's right as well.
 The flower of free life opens
 where mutual respect is its nourishment.
 If the state rises above the human,
 if institutions become ends in themselves,
 where can social progress come from
 after crushing individual consciousness?
 Order is a means, the human the end;
 do not reverse this sequence.
 To lose the people in the people's name
 is not the road of freedom.
 Behind party, sect, power, flag,
 do not reduce the person to a shadow.
 Give every consciousness a share
 in the open sky of free thought.
 If obedience destroys discernment,
 unity becomes bondage.
 Alongside agreement, disagreement too
 must have a place in living society.
 National borders may be useful,
 but they are not greater than humanity.
 The glory of a flag is incomplete
 if it cannot see a neighbour's pain.
 In the name of one country's interest,
 do not open wounds in another.

Beyond borders, let the shared future of humankind
speak together.

Victory in war is the final defeat
when the earth is soaked in human blood.
If science rises into destructive hands,
civilisation loses its face.

The glory of intellect is bright only
when it protects life;
let the power of knowledge fill public welfare
with possibility, not death.

Society changes not by proclamation alone;
the individual must change with it.

Free mind, scientific outlook,
moral courage - four colours together.

If revolution gives birth to new slavery,
only the old chains have changed.

Liberation comes when the right to question
flowers within the human being.

Humanism is not compassion alone;
it is the disciplined lamp of discernment.

Breaking the ring of selfishness,
it looks toward a shared future.

Pleasure, pain, labour, knowledge, freedom -
seek their meaning upon this earth.

Before hoping for a distant heaven,
make human life better here.

A free dawn in human hands,
the raga of compassion beside reason;
no god of fear, no intoxication of power,
no blind passion for flags.

Where the person is alert and society just,
the world becomes a shared family;
there humanity by its own strength
opens the bright door of the future.

From the Forest's Free Breath to the City of the General Will

Human beings are not born in chains
 beneath the open sky;
 the simple needs of the natural body
 breathe within nature's lap.
 Small desires, limited means,
 spontaneous pity awakens in the heart;
 a sudden sight of another's pain
 can halt the step of violence.
 When civilisation teaches comparison,
 it stretches the scales of 'I' and 'the other';
 with honour, prestige, envy,
 new bonds arise within.
 When the first deep line was drawn
 upon the earth - 'this land is mine' -
 alongside the fence of property
 the city of inequality slowly grew.
 Wealth summons power;
 power takes the form of law.
 Sometimes law, though called equal,
 protects the advantage of the strong.
 Natural differences may remain small;
 social differences can grow immense.
 Rank, wealth, high and low birth
 cast nets over human dignity.
 Yet returning to the old forest
 is no simple remedy of history.
 The question is: build a society
 where freedom does not die.
 The person gives one's power with all others
 into one shared body;
 but surrender need not be slavery
 if the rules remain equal for all.
 A mere sum of private desires
 is not the general will.
 The discerning voice of common good
 must rise beyond the limits of private gain.
 Law becomes legitimate
 when citizens make it for themselves.
 Obeying a rule one has given oneself
 becomes a new form of freedom.
 Power does not stand above the people;
 original authority remains in them.
 Representatives carry out government,
 but do not steal sovereign will.
 Freedom is not simply 'whatever I want';
 it is the name of moral self-rule.
 When desire is bound to justice,
 citizenship finds its dwelling.
 Do not mould a child into a fixed form;
 let growth follow nature's movement.
 Let experience teach, let questions rise;
 let understanding flower with time.
 Before the weight of books, let there be world,
 hand, eye, the lesson of labour.
 When the mind becomes self-reliant,
 discernment finds its road.
 If the glitter of the city crushes the heart,
 the word progress remains incomplete.
 Alongside the glory of art and science,
 keep the question of character alive.
 Let the forest's natural breath of freedom
 return within the city as justice;

common good, equal law,
the people's will limiting power.
Let the human not flee society;
let society not enslave the human.
In the shared city of free citizens,
let dignity and compassion flower together.

The Natural Way of the Silent Current

Naming creates a boundary;
 the primal current lies beyond names.
 From it sky, earth, and life
 rise again and again.
 When we try to speak, words fall short;
 silence speaks more deeply.
 That which gives birth to all forms
 does not itself fit inside form.
 Being and non-being are two notes,
 not simple enemies of one another.
 An empty vessel becomes useful -
 what would form mean without space?
 Visible timber makes a house;
 the empty room gives it life.
 What is and what is not seen
 together create use.
 Where would darkness be without light,
 how know height without low?
 The easy receives meaning beside the hard;
 hold the two poles together.
 Opposing currents do more than collide;
 they give birth to one another.
 Within difference, mutuality
 sustains the rhythm of the world.
 Nature does not force a flower open,
 nor does a river push itself downstream.
 Seasons change in their own order;
 the seed waits for time and sprouts.
 In action without pride of acting,
 there is a natural efficacy.
 As needless interference decreases,
 life regains its own nature.
 Non-action is not laziness;
 it is the art of unforced action.
 Where ego does not intrude,
 work becomes natural music.
 A cord pulled too hard will break;
 too much tightening breeds resistance.
 At the right time, a small touch
 can change the whole movement.
 One who keeps pushing oneself ahead
 may sometimes fall behind.
 One who humbly gives space to all
 may become the centre without seeking it.
 The river takes the lowest place,
 and so every stream meets it.
 Within humility's deep emptiness,
 great strength gathers silently.
 Soft water carves stone
 slowly across the years;
 a rigid branch breaks in the storm,
 a flexible twig saves its leaves.
 Gentleness that looks weak
 can become greater than force.
 Life that knows how to bend
 survives the changing seasons.
 When the fire of excessive desire burns,
 peace of mind runs far away.
 The more accumulation, the more fear;
 every possession becomes a bond.
 There is a clear taste of contentment in little,
 a deep wealth in simple living.

One who knows one's true need
 finds an untroubled mind.
 If learning increases arrogance,
 the lamp of knowledge turns to smoke.
 True wisdom knows its boundary
 and stays silent before the unknown.
 One who says, 'I understand everything,'
 closes the door of questions.
 One who recognises what is not known
 keeps the road of learning open.
 If government measures every breath,
 the people's natural ease dies.
 Too many rules, too much fear of punishment
 create new roads for theft.
 Simple policy, less interference,
 a natural road for public life;
 when the ruler reduces the shadow of power,
 society finds room to breathe.
 The glitter of war is not victory;
 it is the hard drumbeat of grief.
 Even if the blade of weapons wins,
 life receives deep sorrow.
 Let the strong remain peaceful,
 without pride in oppression.
 Violence is no festival of victory;
 it is an age of human loss.
 Small community, simple desire,
 nearby labour, nearby relations;
 as the greed for distant conquest declines,
 life regains its fragrance.
 Possess means without vanity,
 travel if possible without craving.
 Finding meaning in one's own ground,
 the mind need not forever seek elsewhere.
 Creation moves in circles;
 the extreme point turns back again.
 An overfilled vessel spills;
 an overdrawn bow bends back.
 Within the beginning lies the shadow of the end;
 within the end, the seed of beginning.
 In this quiet cycle of transformation,
 the world keeps breathing.
 The natural way of the silent current -
 silence, humility, a gentle step.
 Doing less, yet letting more flower;
 emptiness becomes the vessel of use.
 Keep opposing notes together,
 reduce greed, abandon violence.
 Place yourself within nature's rhythm
 and turn again toward life's source.

One Harmony of Invisible Centres

The world is not only outward spread;
 within it are countless inward centres.
 Not fragments, not parts of one another,
 yet each remains alive with power.
 Not every form appears to the eye,
 yet the music of effects can be heard.
 Each subtle existence, in its own way,
 shapes the image of the whole world.
 One centre does not open a window
 and enter inside another;
 yet in each the world's reflection
 descends according to its own level.
 As many mirrors before one sky
 show it in differing forms,
 no mirror creates the sky,
 yet each gives it shape from its own view.
 Consciousness does not have one measure:
 somewhere dim, somewhere radiant.
 Somewhere only a sleeping vibration,
 somewhere a clear movement of experience.
 Here memory joins the past,
 there a deep sense of 'I' awakens.
 Though levels change, life's current
 rises through one ordered ascent.
 Within what is called inert,
 do not imagine a house of total nothingness.
 Recognise a trace of extremely subtle experience
 like an underground current.
 Plant, animal, human consciousness
 opens increasingly in stages;
 through memory, experience, self-awareness,
 life expands its own boundary.
 Body and mind are like two clocks;
 they do not push one another.
 Yet within one rhythm of time,
 each keeps its own movement.
 When resolve rises within,
 action outside appears alongside it;
 a pre-established harmony
 makes two currents one music.
 If the harmony of the clocks astonishes,
 behind it lies deeper order.
 The world does not run through chaos;
 the thread of order remains.
 Each centre follows its own law,
 yet keeps accord with the whole.
 Even within independent movement,
 one rhythm of the universe breathes.
 The highest conscious light,
 in which no boundary or lack remains;
 complete knowledge, power, compassion,
 nothing lies beyond it.
 All other limited centres
 receive their primal possibility from it;
 the first ground of the total order
 stands as cause of the world.
 Why is there something rather than nothing?
 The question asks for a reason.
 To say merely 'it happened'
 does not satisfy intelligence.
 Seek a ground behind every truth,
 a sufficient reason behind every order;

beyond the endless darkness of causes,
 all bridges join in one source.
 Some truths stand so firmly
 that their opposite seems impossible;
 number, logic, laws of relation
 intelligence keeps within itself.
 Other truths depend upon events -
 this occurred, though another could have occurred.
 These two different grounds of knowledge
 live within one consciousness.
 Mind is not born a blank tablet
 on which only outer letters are written.
 Some seeds are already within;
 experience makes them germinate.
 The senses give occasion and material;
 intelligence gives form and relation.
 Without the meeting of inner and outer,
 knowledge would remain incomplete.
 Experience is necessary, reason necessary;
 neither completes the other alone.
 Observed fact without thought is mute;
 thought without fact has no direction.
 What lies asleep as possibility within
 awakens through outward touch.
 Knowledge is not reception alone;
 mind also gives its own structure.
 Seeing suffering, fault, incompleteness,
 why call the world good?
 But how can the whole order be understood
 by cutting out and isolating one part?
 Sometimes a small darkness
 belongs within a brighter whole picture;
 what limited vision calls defect
 may receive meaning in a wider order.
 Yet to say 'everything is good' and fall silent
 does not remove moral responsibility.
 Within choice remains accountability;
 one cannot stand apart from the fruit of action.
 Human will, within the chain of causes,
 chooses direction through character.
 Freedom is not magic,
 but a quality of resolve joined with reason.
 One harmony of invisible centres,
 many mirrors, one world;
 from dim consciousness to self-awareness,
 the doors of life gradually open.
 Cause, reason, experience, harmony -
 together they compose the world's raga.
 In the silent light of subtle being,
 the whole finds its own affinity.

A Free Signature on Experience's Blank Page

The mind is not born as a finished book,
 nor are letters written beforehand.
 On experience's blank page,
 life's first line slowly appears.
 Outward touch is one doorway,
 inward activity another road.
 Seeing, hearing, desiring, thinking -
 these fill the page of consciousness.
 Colour, scent, sound, heat, shape
 give simple signs through the senses.
 Memory, desire, doubt, thought
 are differing inward experiences.
 From both currents simple ideas rise;
 mind did not fashion them beforehand.
 It receives what comes,
 then enlarges form through its own work.
 Gathering the bricks of simple ideas,
 mind builds a complex house.
 It joins, compares, separates,
 and gradually gives names within.
 One flower, one tree,
 then the wider current called 'forest'.
 From particular experience, general meaning
 is formed again and again.
 Some qualities do not seem apart from things -
 shape, motion, number, extension.
 Some experiences awaken in mind -
 the hue of colour, the world of scent.
 The object gives a causal sign;
 experience takes its own form.
 Understanding the difference between outer and inner,
 knowledge recognises its limit.
 The ground that bears all qualities
 remains obscure in form.
 We see qualities and understand relations,
 yet do not finally state the substratum itself.
 Giving it a name does not end the mystery;
 the boundary of ignorance remains.
 Where perception cannot reach,
 a humble question awakens.
 The first light of knowledge is immediate -
 the agreement of two ideas appears at once.
 The second path is the ladder of proof,
 where certainty comes link by link.
 A third cognition concerns the outer world,
 news of the present through the senses.
 Degrees of certainty differ;
 not every place has the same force.
 Our knowledge is limited;
 do not treat this limit as a fault.
 Where evidence exists, stand there;
 where it does not, acknowledge possibility.
 Belief and inference are necessary,
 but not every form is knowledge.
 When intelligence knows its circumference,
 it stays free from blind certainty.
 Moral rules are not innate;
 society teaches many distinctions.
 Desire for pleasure, distance from pain
 become one guide in human action.
 But not private taste alone:
 rules leave their mark upon action.

Divine, social, civic measures
 shape the direction of conduct.
 An action that increases lasting happiness
 and reduces causes of suffering
 receives honour from discernment;
 habit then gives it form in life.
 Education is not words alone;
 character needs practice too.
 Right formation in a child's mind
 helps make the road of the future.
 Human beings are not slaves by birth;
 life, liberty, fruit of labour
 and one's own body, one's own work
 carry a natural claim.
 The earth's gift may be shared,
 yet when labour joins with it,
 the mark of effort gives private right
 a practical form.
 The state is made for human beings;
 human beings are not instruments of the state.
 Security, peace, protection of rights
 are proper foundations of government.
 Power rises from the people's consent;
 limits remain above the ruler.
 Law applies equally to all;
 arbitrary authority is not to be endured.
 The lawmaker too stands within the law,
 not absolute and therefore unrestricted.
 When private interest replaces public good,
 government loses legitimacy.
 If power lays an unjust hand
 upon property, life, or liberty,
 the people may open the door of resistance
 to defend their rights.
 Majority decision is useful,
 yet the person does not disappear.
 The social compact gives security;
 it does not sell self-respect.
 Governmental authority is borrowed power;
 the people remain the original owners.
 When trust breaks, political bonds
 must again submit to review.
 On experience's blank page
 make a free signature.
 Build knowledge from what is seen and heard,
 yet keep the lamp of doubt beside it.
 Limited intelligence, open society,
 rights joined to responsibility;
 when knowledge and freedom meet,
 human dignity makes a home.

The Fire of Faith, the Free Voice of Conscience

When a coin at religion's doorway
 claims to name the price of absolution,
 conscience raises a question:
 can grace be sold in the market?
 A wound deep in the heart
 is not healed by an outward payment.
 True repentance awakens within;
 liberation is no purchased name.
 From the breath of birth, the human being
 struggles with one's own weakness.
 Ego, greed, fear, desire
 cast their shadows within.
 By merely counting good deeds,
 the soul does not become spotless.
 When trust in grace awakens,
 the form of guilt is transformed.
 Faith is not merely speech upon the lips,
 but complete inward trust.
 There the court of fear collapses;
 there compassion gives new awareness.
 'I shall cross by my own strength' -
 that boat of pride begins to sway.
 When surrendered consciousness opens,
 the current of grace rests there.
 Good deeds certainly have value,
 but must not turn into a bargain.
 If virtue becomes a ladder
 for purchasing liberation, its meaning is lost.
 Action born from love has fragrance,
 not the bookkeeping of reward.
 If the tree of faith is alive,
 flowers of service bloom day and night.
 The word of scripture is not
 a possession only for scholars far from ordinary doors.
 Common people too must be able to read
 and understand its meaning - this is a right.
 When the word finds their own language,
 the locked room opens.
 As the light of knowledge reaches house after house,
 the courage to question grows.
 If the high throne of authority
 stands above truth itself,
 at whose door can conscience
 ask for justice?
 Tradition certainly deserves respect,
 but do not bind it as infallible.
 What cannot endure truth's touchstone
 is command alone, not truth.
 Within every believer lies
 a direct door of prayer.
 No compulsory wall stands between,
 no special privilege by birth.
 All souls are equal before grace;
 no fixed high and low remains.
 One who serves should remain a servant,
 not climb onto the head as power.
 Like memory of baptismal water,
 initiation awakens a vow of new life.
 Within shared bread and cup,
 fellowship declares its meaning.
 Outer form has value only
 when inward faith is awake.

Ritual remains upon the body alone
 if the soil of the heart is not moistened.
 Life is sacred not only in the monastery,
 but amid field, home, and marketplace.
 Labour, family, responsibility
 all can be watered by faith.
 If daily work is joined to truth,
 it too can become service.
 Holiness is not leaving the world,
 but living faithfully within it.
 Freedom of conscience
 is not an open licence for whim.
 Faith liberates within,
 yet does not cancel the debt of love.
 Free for oneself, yet for another
 service becomes a natural duty.
 The free soul can bow
 for compassion - there lies the meaning.
 When power and faith join hands
 to suppress human discernment,
 one fearless spark of questioning
 can tear through an age's darkness.
 The courage of words is not a sword,
 yet it can shake a throne.
 One clear inward voice
 can wake a million sleeping minds.
 The fire of reform is not only destruction;
 it must rebuild within.
 Alongside removing corrupt practice,
 consciousness needs a new order.
 If old bonds are broken
 but new arrogance grows,
 the road of liberation again
 wanders through the jungle of power.
 The fire of faith, the free inward voice -
 grace, discernment, and service together.
 Human dignity beyond the market,
 truth beyond authority.
 Whoever reads, thinks, questions,
 and fills life with acts of love,
 finds this clear inward freedom
 giving humanity a new dawn.

The Liberation of Labour, the Song of a Changing Earth

The earth moves, changing form;
 nothing is rooted as final.
 Within contradiction motion surges;
 no new shape is born without struggle.
 An old structure reaches its limit
 and hears the approach of another road.
 Change is not an outer game of the world;
 it becomes a law within life.
 Matter first, consciousness later;
 the world leaves its imprint upon the brain.
 Objects outside exist independently of mind,
 yet take reflected form within knowledge.
 The test of observed and examined practice
 distinguishes illusion from truth.
 When thought joins itself to life,
 its meaning emerges clearly.
 History is not only crown and king;
 the worker's hand is also its foundation.
 Who controls which means -
 from this the shape of society changes.
 Plough, factory, tool, land,
 relations of production run deep.
 As the structure of production changes,
 so too does society alter its form.
 When the means remain in only a few hands
 while many hands continue to labour,
 the person cut off from the fruit of labour
 keeps carrying an alien life.
 Work ceases to be one's own creation
 and becomes a compulsory cord of livelihood.
 The worker sells one's own power;
 the daylight of life grows dim.
 Shared labour means this:
 its fruit should reach society.
 Production must not become
 one narrow landing-place of private gain.
 Right to work, security of life,
 a just share in common means -
 when labour receives a human form,
 the stain of alienation diminishes.
 If new technology reduces labour,
 let it become a blessing for humanity.
 If only a few gather its benefit,
 inequality grows deeper still.
 The movement of machines is not humanity's enemy,
 provided their fruit is shared.
 Let greater production bring greater leisure;
 let life be more than wage-work alone.
 Equality does not mean uniformity,
 nor declaring every capacity identical.
 Opportunity, rights, dignity, security
 must stand upon equal ground.
 Class, gender, walls of birth
 must not measure human worth.
 Everyone's labour and everyone's life
 share the right to respect.
 If the state stands above the people,
 change remains incomplete.
 Without popular participation, power
 carries an old burden under a new name.
 People must share in decision-making,
 with accountability and equal rights.

Democracy is not merely a ballot box;
 it is a doorway to active participation in life.
 Freedom is not merely running
 in the marketplace of competition.
 Amid hunger, unemployment, exploitation,
 freedom written on paper is not enough.
 One who is free from fear, secure in life,
 with access to education and work,
 upon that ground real freedom
 reveals its deeper meaning.
 Morality does not descend from the sky
 as a ready-made eternal list.
 Human relations, class, conflict
 give it form within social life.
 Yet compassion, cooperation, fidelity
 become values of shared existence.
 Conduct that joins human being to human being
 also helps shape the future.
 Revolution is not only a change of rulers;
 relations too must change.
 If a new government preserves old inequality,
 the road remains unfinished.
 Production, rights, participation,
 daily life - all must be transformed.
 Human liberation deepens only
 when the ring of exploitation is broken.
 But no slogan is truth by itself;
 test the results within life.
 Openly criticise an order
 that diminishes human dignity.
 If theory is severed from practice,
 it hardens into a lifeless formula.
 New conditions raise new questions;
 thought must face examination again.
 The liberation of labour, the changing earth -
 a bright raga of shared life.
 Motion of matter, struggle of history,
 a growing longing toward justice.
 Let the one who labours receive honour;
 let the one who lives, live with dignity.
 Let society's fruit flow through society
 and water a new human future.

A Sweet Current of Grace upon the Real World

The world is no curtain of falsehood,
 nor merely an illusion before the eyes.
 From one infinite primal light
 form and formlessness receive their power.
 Though appearing in countless forms,
 the source does not lose its purity.
 Many waves rise upon the ocean;
 the ocean does not lose its depth.
 Being, consciousness, bliss
 are wholly gathered in one ground.
 In some places bliss shines intensely;
 elsewhere it lies hidden beneath covering.
 Forms change, power is not destroyed;
 only the level of manifestation changes.
 One light in many vessels
 gleams according to each vessel's way.
 The individual is not a wholly separate substance;
 it is like a portion of that infinite.
 Yet becoming limited consciousness,
 it does not know the full expanse of bliss.
 Though a ray of knowledge remains within,
 the mist of ignorance covers it.
 Forgetting its own ground, consciousness
 runs after lesser pleasures.
 Some consciousness remains clear;
 some is bound in the knots of worldly life.
 Some cuts through bondage, becomes free,
 and rests again in love of the source.
 The world is not the cause of bondage;
 the net is woven from attachment and ignorance.
 The world is real, but the mind of 'mine and yours'
 creates the tangle of suffering.
 World and samsara are not the same -
 this distinction carries deep meaning.
 The world is the real unfolding of the ground;
 samsara is a line drawn by ignorance.
 When knowledge opens the knot of confusion,
 the burden of samsara grows lighter.
 Yet the real world does not vanish;
 it remains as a form of the source.
 Maya is not only deception;
 it has a twofold identity.
 One current builds the barrier of ignorance;
 another opens a doorway toward knowledge.
 The power that makes the being forget its ground
 creates the road of darkness.
 The power that turns it back toward the ground
 becomes a bridge of light.
 The path of action gives discipline;
 the path of knowledge cuts through confusion.
 But love's natural surrender
 also softens the heart's hardness.
 Liberation is not merely saying, 'I know';
 love for the source awakens within.
 When one drop of grace falls,
 the dried soul blossoms.
 Grace is no wage that has been earned,
 nor a gift received in exchange for a bargain.
 It is the free rain of favour
 where the human spirit becomes humble.
 When pride in one's own strength is set down
 and the heart remains open,

into that empty vessel the nectar of love
 flows without being forced.
 Devotion is not merely the sound of a song,
 nor a momentary bow in a temple.
 It flows as service day and night;
 the Name lives as remembrance.
 Labour of the body, right use of wealth,
 surrender of the heart - all three together.
 When love descends into conduct,
 discipline receives its colour.
 Reverence for the teacher, company of the good,
 a current of remembrance of the beloved.
 Body and mind immerse in service of form;
 ego descends again and again.
 If service is only display,
 the inside remains dry.
 The silent loom of selfless love
 clothes the soul in a new garment.
 Love's highest form appears
 where there is no account of self-interest.
 The question 'What shall I receive?' is forgotten;
 only nearness is desired.
 Public shame and calculations of gain
 all fall behind.
 Finding one's own happiness in the beloved's happiness,
 the narrowness of the heart breaks.
 Liberation then is no distant realm;
 it is a living recognition within love.
 Abandoning the world is not its condition;
 seek the source within the world itself.
 Form, colour, relation, service -
 in all of them the One unfolds.
 See the real world through love,
 and the doorway of bliss opens.
 A current of grace upon the real world -
 knowledge, service, love together.
 Consciousness freed from the net of ignorance
 does not turn the world into a game of renunciation.
 One source in countless forms,
 countless forms returning toward one direction.
 In the sweet light of a surrendered heart,
 life recognises its home.

Dreams of Form in the Stream of Consciousness

The world changes form from moment to moment;
 no knot remains eternally one.
 What is born moves toward decay;
 nowhere stands the mark of a permanent self.
 Action remains, the fruit of action remains,
 but where does an eternal doer stand?
 The current keeps flowing,
 drop by drop changing in an unbroken flood.
 Form, feeling, recognition, formations,
 five waves in the current of consciousness.
 What we seize and call one 'I'
 is the changing colour of countless moments.
 When delusion stamps this group
 with the seal of permanent selfhood,
 attachment is born from that confusion
 and the net of suffering spreads wider.
 Nothing arises without cause;
 each moment is joined to another.
 Like one lamp kindling another,
 the current continues while form changes.
 The old moment does not remain whole,
 nor does a new moment arrive from nowhere.
 The fine thread of cause and fruit
 carries life's sequence onward.
 Some forms arise from causes;
 some forms of peace lie beyond conditioned production.
 The unobstructed openness of space
 and two subtle kinds of cessation.
 Whatever is born and fashioned changes;
 unconditioned peace follows another law.
 Understanding the difference, the mind sees
 the true mark of momentary life.
 Form of body, taste of feeling,
 recognition, formations, current of consciousness -
 together they make the chariot of life.
 Yet where is an eternal charioteer?
 The 'I' spoken day and night
 is a useful convention of naming.
 Look deeply within and there moves
 a world composed of clusters of moments.
 The world seen outside -
 is it only a burden standing outside?
 Sometimes even a dream feels solid;
 sometimes illusion takes on shape.
 Consciousness, from impressions of its seeds,
 projects a world of forms and objects.
 Even waking vision sometimes
 fills things with colours of its own formations.
 When the eyes show two moons,
 there are not two moons in the sky.
 The form of error is real as experience,
 but the outer object is not thereby doubled.
 From this a deeper question rises:
 where is object, where is knower?
 A division arising within consciousness
 calls itself another form.
 The silent cellar of deep consciousness
 stores countless seeds.
 Subtle effects of former action
 find occasion and taste new form.
 Memory, desire, habit, longing
 leave impressions in that storehouse.

Though momentary, the current continues
 moving forward like one stream.
 The five windows of the senses awaken;
 mind joins them as the sixth.
 The inward insistence of the clinging 'I'
 lays a hand upon every experience.
 What is seen is called 'mine';
 what is thought is taken as 'I'.
 This fine knot of self-grasping
 thickens the forest of distinctions day by day.
 Understand three levels of form:
 one a web made by imagination;
 one dependent upon causal conditions,
 changing from moment to moment.
 The third is that clear true state
 where the claim of duality dissolves;
 the hard boundary of knower and object
 melts within peaceful wisdom.
 In imagined form, the magic of names;
 in dependent form, the movement of causes.
 In complete form, the emptiness of division -
 neither falsehood nor a solid tangle.
 Where consciousness sees its own construction
 as subject and object made separate,
 when that confusion breaks, the hard wall
 between thing and mind loses its hold.
 Liberation is not only the stopping of suffering;
 the coverings upon knowledge also fall away.
 With the dense smoke of attraction and aversion,
 subtle ignorance too is gradually cut through.
 Compassion, wisdom, the path of discipline
 keep cleansing consciousness.
 As the small enclosure of self-interest breaks,
 another's pain begins to feel like one's own.
 Dreams of form in the stream of consciousness,
 the world expanding from seeds of moments.
 When the firm grasp upon a stable 'I' is released,
 a fearless and clear doorway opens.
 Order of cause, seeds of consciousness,
 imagination, dependence, pure light.
 When the mind awakens beyond division,
 it finds its dwelling in peaceful compassion.

A Bridge of Discernment Among Many Paths

In the forest of knowledge there are many paths;
 each shows its own direction.
 One lights the lamp of logic;
 another lets the silence of meditation speak.
 If one path denies another,
 the sky of truth grows small.
 When discernment becomes a bridge,
 different viewpoints understand one another.
 The meaning of a statement is not sound alone;
 purpose becomes its breath.
 What action it moves someone to perform
 gives direction to conduct.
 Speech that shows the road of welfare
 does not remain fruitless letters.
 When meaning joins itself to life,
 words become human movement.
 Why does the mind move on hearing an injunction?
 From where is motivation born?
 When the desired result is understood,
 the foot of action moves toward it.
 Yet understanding an injunction requires
 context, competence, desire.
 Words alone do not shove the mind;
 expectation completes the distance.
 The relation between word and meaning
 is no arbitrary knot of a single moment.
 Within long familiarity of use
 it builds a stable road of meaning.
 Though words in a sentence stand separately,
 they carry mutual expectancy.
 Fitness, proximity, relation
 together open the full colour of sentence-meaning.
 To infer fire from smoke
 is not merely noticing that both have appeared together.
 Where there is smoke, there is fire -
 the task is to grasp that unbroken relation.
 Co-presence and contrary absence
 both test the bond.
 Inference receives strength
 when pervasion has crossed beyond doubt.
 Does inference itself need another proof?
 Where would that question end?
 If every proof demands a further proof,
 the chain becomes infinite.
 Some cognition by its own light
 shows its trustworthiness.
 When doubt arises, examination is needed,
 but not every moment needs an outer seal.
 'It is not there' is also a form of knowledge,
 not merely the darkness of emptiness.
 Where the expected object is not found,
 absence is not meaningless.
 An empty courtyard says many things:
 what was sought has not arrived.
 Awareness of absence within experience
 takes on its own distinctive identity.
 Prakriti is a moving current of qualities;
 the conscious witness is another light.
 One is entangled in the world of action;
 the other watches its development.
 Both enjoyment and liberation become questions
 where the distinction of consciousness and Prakriti is understood.

When the knot of mistaken identity breaks,
 the witness regains its freedom.
 Without practice, discernment remains incomplete;
 waves of mind keep rising again.
 Within breath, meditation, discipline,
 restless tendencies slowly diminish.
 Knowledge is not only a subject of debate;
 it must change the form of life.
 If intelligence does not descend into conduct,
 the shine of formulas will not endure.
 The question of ignorance runs very deep:
 what does it cover, upon whom does it fall?
 If the individual itself arises from ignorance,
 where did ignorance first reside?
 If one says it covers the primal light,
 why does that light not destroy it?
 Within this subtle entanglement,
 discernment tries many answers.
 Consciousness shines like a reflection -
 somewhere limited, somewhere expanded.
 The sky in a pot, the vast sky outside:
 the burden of limiting adjuncts makes difference appear.
 When the pot breaks, the sky does not break;
 only the illusion of boundary disappears.
 So when bondage falls away, consciousness
 recognises its wider nature.
 Liberation is not gaining a new object
 that had once existed somewhere outside.
 It is the removal of mistaken identification,
 revealing what was always true within.
 The light of knowledge cuts ignorance;
 action reduces the stains of mind.
 Discipline, logic, meditation, revealed teaching -
 each performs its own part.
 Do not declare the truth of one path
 wholly false within another.
 Questions differ, languages differ,
 yet seek the ground of experience beneath them.
 Where opposition appears,
 first measure the context.
 Understand the proper limit of each viewpoint
 and draw the line of reconciliation.
 A bridge of discernment among many paths -
 word, logic, meditation together.
 The silence of absence, the thread of inference,
 the deep play of consciousness and Prakriti.
 When the knot of ignorance opens,
 different views no longer remain enemies.
 In the vast open sky of truth,
 each perspective names its own place.

Four Doors of Pramana, One Road to Liberation

If knowledge remains only words,
 it cannot remove life's darkness.
 Right understanding fulfils its work
 when the knot of confusion comes undone.
 Recognising one cause after another of suffering,
 discernment places its foot forward.
 Testing thought upon truth's touchstone,
 it slowly takes the direction of liberation.
 What is directly seen has its own light,
 a direct gift of eye, ear, touch.
 But what is distant, understand through signs,
 through deep recognition of cause and effect.
 Sometimes infer cause from result,
 sometimes result from cause;
 sometimes through a general relation
 unseen meaning comes before us.
 When smoke rises, infer fire;
 when the river swells, think of rain.
 From the sun's motion, seek the order of time
 through joined experience within.
 Inference is not mere guessing;
 regular relation must be sounded deeply.
 Where the causal thread is unbroken,
 there conclusion finds its road.
 Similarity too is a bridge of knowledge -
 what was heard before is later seen.
 When memory of 'such a form'
 meets a new object,
 holding the bridge of familiar qualities,
 the meaning of an unfamiliar name opens.
 Comparison is a simple practice of life,
 flowering as a new window of knowledge.
 Trustworthy speech is the fourth door,
 but not every voice is evidence.
 One who has seen, understood, and speaks truth
 does not give useless testimony.
 The word of a trustworthy person has worth
 when the mist of deceit is absent.
 Words become a bridge to distant truth,
 flowing beyond the boundary of direct experience.
 Perception, inference, comparison, speech -
 light from four directions of knowing.
 Different instruments upon one question
 open different skies of truth.
 First understand each instrument's limits;
 do not force one to do another's work.
 Where a given pramana is fitting,
 look by that road with confidence.
 Calling something a reason is not enough;
 the form of the reason must also be clear.
 Present in the subject, stable in agreement,
 absent in the contrary case.
 A reason doubtful in itself
 cannot carry the burden of conclusion.
 If a fallacious reason enters between,
 the chariot of logic turns the wrong way.
 Question, proposition, reason, example,
 then a clear statement of relation.
 At the end, when conclusion emerges,
 intelligence receives a complete demonstration.
 This sequence of dialogue is not only scripture;
 it is useful in ordinary debate too.

Keeping each step open
 reduces confusion and increases connection.
 Reflection on word-meaning is necessary:
 is sound momentary, or an enduring light?
 What is uttered passes in a moment,
 yet tradition preserves a dwelling of recognition.
 Name, meaning, use remain connected
 through social memory.
 Though sound vanishes, the stream of meaning
 flows again in a new utterance.
 Absence too can give knowledge -
 the silent news of an empty place.
 What was expected is not found;
 that too leaves an effect in experience.
 Yet for every new distinction
 a separate pramana need not be invented.
 First ask whether the available instruments
 can explain it adequately.
 The world extends through many objects and relations,
 quality, action, universals;
 particularity keeps its own identity,
 relations join threads within.
 Classification is useful when
 it builds a road toward understanding.
 Not merely a list of names,
 but awareness of the nature of things.
 If the self is taken as the ground
 of a long current of conscious experience,
 then ask with whom pleasure, pain, desire, memory
 are joined.
 Liberation is not an accumulation of pleasure,
 but the destruction of suffering's root causes.
 Bondage of ignorance, defect, action
 slowly dissolves through knowledge and discernment.
 Highest peace is no outer object,
 nor merely a greater extension of momentary pleasure.
 Where the seed of confusion no longer grows,
 there bondage reaches its end.
 Means of knowledge exist for life,
 not merely for the sport of debate.
 If truth does not take the form of practice,
 the victory of intelligence remains incomplete.
 Four doors of pramana stand open,
 one deep road toward liberation.
 The lamp of perception, the thread of inference,
 comparison and speech beside them.
 Purity of reason, discipline of language,
 clear thought about the nature of things.
 When knowledge cuts the root of suffering,
 there the door of peace opens.

The World's Boundary in the Games of Language

The world is not merely a heap of things;
 it is a living weave of events and relations.
 What happens, what is possible,
 within these the world's measure opens.
 When a sentence stands like a picture,
 it shows the form of a state of affairs.
 If the order of words agrees with the world,
 the statement points toward truth.
 Through subtle joining of simple signs,
 the palace of a complex sentence is built.
 A name alone does not state the world;
 relations together shape the body of meaning.
 As lines join on a map
 to bring the form of a city before us,
 so the logical structure of a statement
 shows the possibility of events.
 Some sentences picture truth;
 some are only empty frameworks of logic.
 What remains true in every possible case
 does not report a new fact about the world.
 Contradiction is always impossible;
 at the other extreme lies a fruitless tautological play.
 Among possible propositions between them,
 facts of the world find correspondence.
 What stands beyond the limits of language
 is difficult to bind in words.
 Where the instruments of saying come to an end,
 silence acquires a deeper meaning.
 Ethics, beauty, the wonder of life
 do not always arrive wholly in sentences.
 What can be shown
 cannot always be said.
 Yet language is not only a picture;
 its forms in life are many:
 command, question, story, prayer,
 laughter, bargaining, song, judgement.
 Each context carries its own rules;
 every game has a different move.
 The meaning of the same word changes,
 taking colour from life.
 Meaning is not some secret jewel
 locked inside a word.
 It flows from how people use it.
 Market, home, school, play -
 language moves differently in each place.
 Leaving the earth of use
 to search for a 'pure meaning'
 can itself become a trap.
 To seek one common property in every case
 is sometimes intellectual haste.
 Games are many: here a ball, there cards,
 here a race, there strategic contest.
 One formula is not found in all,
 yet relation is not therefore broken.
 Like likenesses among family faces,
 resemblances overlap from one to another.
 Reading the rules does not complete the game;
 learn to live the rules in practice.
 When is a move fitting, when different -
 see it within shared activity.
 A private mind's secret sign alone
 cannot be the stable measure of language.

Meaning stands upon shared life,
 where use preserves rules.
 To say 'pain' is not only to name
 one secret object hidden inside.
 Crying, treatment, calling out, sympathy -
 none is separate from life's conduct.
 If a feeling were to be enclosed
 in a private sign for oneself alone,
 without a shared criterion of checking,
 the cord of meaning could not hold.
 Philosophy's work is not always
 the discovery of a new hidden realm.
 It may be to untie knots of language
 and see where a question has taken the wrong form.
 A problem born from verbal confusion
 melts upon the earth of use.
 Return the sentence to its home,
 and the mind's entanglement slowly recedes.
 In one period language is like glass,
 holding a picture of the world.
 In another it becomes a tool,
 filled with many tasks of life.
 The two views are not merely enemies;
 they are a journey from one limit to another.
 From rigid structure toward living use,
 thought changes its vessel.
 Clarity is no final palace;
 it is a lamp that removes the mist of confusion.
 For a question that has become meaningless,
 searching an answer is itself excessive.
 First ask how the question was formed,
 which word slipped from its proper place.
 By treating language step by step,
 intelligence finds natural ease.
 The world's boundary in the games of language -
 a raga of statement, silence, and use.
 From picture-logic to family resemblance,
 language changes its affection.
 Seek meaning in living conduct,
 in a shared world alongside rules.
 Where words return to their proper places,
 there the doorway of thought opens.

The Human Being Seeking Meaning in a Web of Rules

Society is not merely a count of the crowd;
 within every action lives meaning.
 Why does someone extend a hand?
 Toward whom does that intention flow?
 Watching outward movement alone
 does not reveal the distinction of human action.
 When the actor's intention is understood,
 social meaning slowly flowers.
 Action becomes social
 when its meaning turns toward another.
 One's own desire, expectation, response
 become joined to another's conduct.
 A solitary sneeze is not society,
 but a reply to a greeting is.
 Once the invisible thread of meaning is grasped,
 the whole form of behaviour comes together.
 History is an endless forest of events;
 all leaves cannot be counted at once.
 When the question is raised clearly,
 the lamp of selection gives direction.
 A deliberately constructed ideal type
 does not simply copy reality.
 It becomes a sharp mirror for comparison
 through which the complex world is understood.
 A single straight cord of cause
 is seldom found in history.
 Many conditions, opportunities, intentions
 meet together toward one result.
 Before saying, 'This happened because of this,'
 measure the alternatives.
 Which condition, if removed, would alter the outcome?
 Seek an answer through discerning comparison.
 The relation between religion and economy
 is not a one-way command.
 Belief changes the movement of life,
 and life does not stand outside belief.
 Restraint, labour, discipline, saving
 can take economic form.
 Inner discipline may awaken
 new modes of conduct in the outer world.
 The desire for gain is very old,
 but new is a discipline of rational order:
 calculation, time, regular labour,
 planned accumulation.
 When work itself becomes duty,
 wealth is no longer merely luxury.
 The worldly discipline of a restrained life
 can enlarge the flow of capital.
 Yet the story of wealth is not only greed,
 nor did religion alone create all history.
 Material means, institutions, markets,
 beliefs - all move in relation.
 Society is not made by one cause;
 many currents arrive together.
 Once the seduction of a simple answer is left behind,
 the complexity of history appears.
 The modern world learned calculation,
 rules, records, the web of offices.
 Personal favour gradually recedes;
 impersonal procedure takes its place.
 Work is allotted by qualification,
 the boundaries of office made clear.

Paper, rule, ladder of procedure
 shape the body of institutions.
 Rationalisation brings many advantages:
 predictability, efficiency, equal measure.
 Yet an iron-like enclosure of rules
 can leave its imprint upon human breath.
 Where everything becomes calculation,
 the forest of wonder may dry.
 Within the bright house of order,
 the free self may become imprisoned.
 Power is not force alone;
 legitimacy is its deeper ground.
 Why do people obey?
 This question opens the meaning of authority.
 Here stands sanction from ancestral custom;
 there the radiance of extraordinary personality;
 elsewhere the legitimacy of written rules -
 three grounds upon which rule may rest.
 Tradition says, 'It has always been so.'
 The charismatic voice says, 'Follow me.'
 The lawful office says, 'Look to the rules.'
 Recognise the differing grounds.
 From person toward office, from favour toward rule,
 forms change through history.
 As power changes the basis of its legitimacy,
 society's structure too is reshaped.
 Extraordinary attraction cannot endure forever
 in one unchanged form.
 Without successor, office, and rule,
 a group's order cannot continue.
 When radiance becomes institution,
 personal brilliance is distributed into offices.
 The current of living impulse
 slowly enters regular administration.
 Politics is not pure sentiment alone;
 it must also bear the burden of consequences.
 Good intention is not sufficient;
 keep sight of the fruit of action.
 The fidelity of conviction has value,
 yet responsibility must stand beside it.
 Hands that work with power
 must know how to understand outcomes.
 Knowledge's work is not to issue commands;
 the decision about 'what ought to be' belongs to value.
 Study can reveal cause and effect
 and clarify the value of alternatives.
 When the boundary of fact and value is understood,
 thought becomes more honest.
 The lamp of research shows the road;
 the human being chooses whether to walk it.
 Seeking meaning in the web of rules,
 the human being makes a path.
 Intention, power, religion, economy
 all become joined to one another.
 In rationalisation's bright light,
 see its benefits and know its bonds.
 Do not bind society's complex living heartbeat
 within one single formula.

The Infinite Flow of Creation in the Womb of the Moment

The world is not a standing heap of matter;
 it is the ceaseless birth of events.
 Each moment gathers within itself
 the dense relations of the world that has passed.
 What has been is not wholly destroyed;
 it enters the new moment as influence.
 Creation continues without pause,
 each present assuming a new form.
 Reality is not merely particle;
 its root is the living event.
 Each unit, in its own form,
 is a distinct, complete, momentary flower.
 It is not wholly cut off from another;
 relation is its inward breath.
 One event gains identity
 as a confluence of many influences.
 To know is not merely to look outward;
 within, there is a subtle act of reception.
 The world leaves its imprint inside,
 and consciousness receives a web of experience.
 Some things are accepted, some refused,
 some drawn near, some kept far.
 In this selective rhythm of reception,
 the moment fashions its own form.
 Each new event does not simply repeat
 a complete copy of its past.
 It takes former facts within itself
 and creates a new combination.
 Old causes provide the material;
 the present act of creation decides.
 Thus order remains in the world,
 and novelty too wins its place.
 Creation's primal heartbeat is creative power,
 joining form to form.
 The achievement of one completed moment
 leaves itself as seed for another.
 Completion here is not the end;
 it becomes the ground of what is to be born.
 Every fulfilment opens in the next moment
 a doorway to new possibility.
 Possibilities are not mere nothingness;
 they are like pure images of form.
 Colour, number, proportion, beauty -
 experience receives order from them.
 They do not become events by themselves,
 yet take form within events.
 An infinite treasury of possible shapes
 accompanies creation's acts of selection.
 What has passed is not dead;
 a later moment receives it.
 As object within new experience,
 it leaves the imprint of its influence.
 One moment was subject for itself;
 once complete, it becomes fact for another.
 Through this astonishing transformation,
 history is strengthened day by day.
 Cause is not merely a push;
 it is inheritance within experience.
 A prior event enters within,
 giving ground to the new moment.
 This tradition of living relation
 binds the world upon one thread.

Distinct complete events
 make order through mutual reception.
 When groups repeatedly maintain
 relations of the same pattern,
 habit, structure, and shared rhythm
 create the form of a stable society.
 Body, plant, community, star -
 all are webs of many events.
 Stability within transformation
 is the marvel of repeated relation.
 Every moment has its own direction:
 it receives some things and leaves some behind.
 Among many possibilities,
 it chooses a form of its own.
 Fulfilment is then no outer command;
 it awakens as an inward aim.
 The attraction of value, like a distant lamp,
 draws the moment toward its better form.
 Happiness is not merely the name of pleasure;
 value is a wider harmony.
 When intensity is joined to consonance,
 the song of life becomes beautiful.
 If excess destroys relation,
 it becomes discord.
 Abundance exists where diverse voices
 form one more spacious music.
 Evil too is not merely a separate thing;
 sometimes it is the wound of broken harmony,
 sometimes the incomplete growth of possibility,
 sometimes the hard effect of collision.
 Where the world's creation remains free,
 risk necessarily travels beside it.
 The direction of value stays open,
 but choice produces its own fruit.
 Within one supreme conscious ground,
 possibilities receive their order.
 Amid the multitude of infinite forms,
 the direction of value grows clear.
 It is no iron hand of command,
 but a gentle call of attraction,
 repeatedly drawing every moment
 toward its best possibility.
 Whatever the world experiences
 is gathered also within supreme consciousness.
 Suffering, beauty, struggle, love -
 all these experiences are received there.
 Thus the primal ground is not remote,
 nor separate from the world's pain.
 It bears changing experience,
 yet the source of value does not diminish.
 One aspect is the pure, timeless order
 of infinite possibilities.
 Another continuously receives new experience
 from the history of the world.
 One gives direction to creation's choice;
 the other gathers the world's achieved result.
 Together they form creation's deep mystery,
 a bridge between past and future.
 In the womb of the moment, creation flows -
 reception, selection, new formation.
 From event to event, from form to form,
 the song of the universe keeps being born.
 Beyond the rigid limits of fixed substance,
 see the living web of relations.

Every present rises from the past
and casts a new seed toward the future.

One Light Beyond Three Layers

Whatever changes is not ultimate;
 whatever is born moves toward decay.
 Behind form there is a stainless being
 that neither lessens, grows, nor disappears.
 Amid the coming and going of name and form,
 that silent witness remains undivided.
 Waves arise and dissolve again;
 the sea continues in its depth.
 In darkness a rope may be taken for a snake,
 and fear truly rises in the body.
 When light falls, no snake has to die -
 only mistaken recognition disappears.
 So too the world of experience continues,
 but its final meaning changes.
 When confusion falls, what remains
 flowers as the light of truth.
 Ignorance has two deep movements:
 first it covers the face of truth;
 then it projects upon the mind's sky
 the form of what is not there.
 Covered light and rising shadow
 together arrange the world of bondage.
 As discrimination's lamp is lit,
 concealment and projection slowly break.
 Understand truth in three layers:
 one undivided, never shaken;
 one the shared earth of practical life,
 where action, relation, and rule continue;
 the third a private illusion like dream,
 dissolved at once by waking knowledge.
 Refusing to measure all three alike,
 intelligence escapes its own confusion.
 The first knot of bondage is tied
 when 'I' is fastened to the body.
 Taking the waves of mind for the self
 makes the forest of suffering thicker.
 Gross body, subtle desire and memory -
 all are only instruments of experience.
 That by which every experience is illumined
 cannot itself be reduced to the bodily vessel.
 In waking, the world is many-coloured;
 in dream, another world appears.
 In deep sleep all forms lie still,
 yet afterward memory says, 'There was happiness.'
 The three states come and go;
 the witness remains behind them.
 The knower of changing states
 cannot itself be merely one of those states.
 Upon the practical ground, the individual is limited,
 while a wider regulator is affirmed.
 One appears little-knowing, another all-knowing,
 difference arising through maya's conditions.
 But when the veil is removed, at the root
 there do not remain two separate lights.
 The distance named limited and vast
 finally melts within one consciousness.
 Action purifies the mind;
 worship gives one-pointedness.
 But the primal darkness of ignorance
 is cut only by the lamp of knowledge.
 Action's fruit creates a new condition;
 truth was already present before it.

How could that which is one's very nature
 be newly produced by action?
 Discrimination first clears the road -
 what is transient, what is enduring.
 Detachment says: do not run
 again and again after passing pleasure.
 Calm of mind, restraint of the senses,
 endurance, trust, focused aspiration;
 joined with a burning thirst for liberation,
 the inward life becomes knowledge's dwelling.
 Listen to that teaching which awakens
 the sign of unity within.
 Then let rigorous reflection
 open and remove the knots of doubt.
 Carry meaning into continuous meditation,
 until insight flows through the body like blood.
 What was first heard only in words
 becomes direct self-recognition.
 Liberation is not a distant realm,
 nor merely a door after death.
 Bondage can break in the living body
 if false ego dissolves.
 The force of past action may keep the body moving,
 yet inward attachment need not remain.
 The inert wheel may continue to turn,
 while the witness moves free and quiet.
 When the body completes its course
 and returns again to earth,
 where can bondage cling
 to one whose knowledge is already undivided?
 Ignorance is the cause of return;
 when the cause goes, the fruit goes too.
 The river lets go of name and form
 and finally meets the sea's peace.
 If devotion is only outward petition,
 distance in the heart may remain.
 The search for one's own pure nature
 can itself become a deep discipline of love.
 Remembering the ground that is
 the inward being of all melts ego.
 Knowledge and love are not enemies;
 both move toward the same centre.
 Beyond three layers, one light;
 from illusion's snake to the stainless rope.
 Behind waking, dream, and sleep,
 the witness remains an unchanging dawn.
 Action purifies the mind, knowledge frees,
 discernment opens the final road.
 When the net of name and form melts,
 one fathomless consciousness remains.

The Invisible Seed of Duty Within the Law of the Word

Life asks: what is to be done?
 The eye does not always provide the answer.
 Visible things can be seen,
 but duty calls from an unseen direction.
 Perception has its definite limit;
 the senses grasp the form of things.
 But the meaning of 'do' and 'do not do'
 does not arise from colour and touch alone.
 When speech arrives as injunction,
 it moves the mind toward action.
 Here words are not merely information;
 they join themselves to life's next step.
 Dharma is no visible substance,
 no measurable place with shape.
 Trustworthy speech that enjoins duty
 gives it a practical name.
 The long relation of word and meaning
 is not made by a momentary wish.
 The discipline of inherited usage
 stabilises sentence-meaning.
 One word alone is not complete;
 context opens its meaning.
 Injunction, prohibition, praise, indication
 take shape through mutual relation.
 Is the self only another name for the body?
 Memory raises the question again.
 Saying of past experience, 'It was mine,'
 reveals a continuing knower.
 States of the body keep changing -
 childhood, youth, old age.
 To whom is the subtle thread of identity
 joined through every experience?
 When knowledge arises,
 the form of its object comes before us.
 If doubt later arises about its truth,
 a subsequent cognition tests it.
 Inference follows signs;
 similarity becomes a bridge of recognition.
 Absence too, when expectation breaks,
 gives the fruit of an empty place.
 Distant matters arrive through speech
 when the source is trustworthy.
 There are many doors of knowledge;
 one mould cannot fit them all.
 Why is the fruit distant when action is finished?
 The interval raises a question.
 An unseen potency of accomplished action
 links itself to a future result.
 This invisibility is no magic,
 but reflection on relation between duty and fruit.
 The moral weight of today's action
 extends toward tomorrow's direction.
 The purpose of knowledge is not debate alone;
 right action must also be recognised.
 When speech awakens responsibility,
 life's direction does not remain incomplete.
 An invisible seed within the law of the word,
 the harmony of direct and indirect knowing;
 memory of a knower beyond the body,
 duty opening the road through time.
 The reason for what must be done
 rises above the fruit of greed.

Upon the silent earth of disciplined action,
human meaning slowly flowers.

The Fine Line of Difference, the Silent Thread of Relation

Things are many, the world one weave;
 within difference runs a line of relation.
 Adding names does not add truth;
 demand a true account from every category.
 If thought can proceed without assuming something,
 why grant it a separate existence?
 Lighten the burden of thought
 and recognise the thing's own nature.
 Space, time, direction, consciousness -
 must each be given a separate house?
 Or within one wider ground
 do limiting conditions show many forms?
 Where difference is only boundary imagined,
 do not treat it as an independent thing.
 Within one pervasive reality,
 examine distinctions of place and time.
 Time is one continuous current;
 we divide it through names in practice.
 'This moment', 'that day', 'this age' -
 limiting terms give separate shapes.
 If a moment is only a changing phase of activity,
 we need not make it another substance.
 Where movement displays altered form,
 there recognise the sign of time.
 Direction too is no distant deity,
 but a name of position in relation.
 East-west, before-behind
 find their place within relation.
 Where the reference point changes,
 the meaning of direction changes too.
 To grasp direction apart from relation
 is to run after an empty shadow.
 The final particle of subtle matter
 is not proved merely by assertion.
 If it still contains parts,
 the word 'final' defeats itself.
 If everything is rescued by calling it supersensible,
 where does the doorway of evidence open?
 At experience's subtlest boundary,
 the question is born again.
 Why posit a new entity called 'particularity'
 at every point merely to explain difference?
 One thing may be distinct from another
 simply through its own nature.
 If difference itself demands further difference,
 the chain runs without end.
 The clear simplicity of intrinsic nature
 removes the extra burden.
 Why can one cause yield many effects?
 The question rises within reason.
 The same fire is sometimes gentle,
 sometimes erupts with intensity.
 Power latent in the cause
 changes form with circumstances.
 Instead of multiplying kinds without end,
 one power can yield many results.
 'Power' is not an empty word;
 it is the pulse of possibility in action.
 Where a cause under particular conditions
 produces a particular result, there it moves.
 The relation of causality and effecthood
 becomes clear within events.

Living capacity behind the name
 is recognised through its result.
 When we say 'relation', why make
 a third thing between two things?
 If bearer and borne are naturally connected,
 why create a fresh entity?
 If the bond is simply the thing's own mode,
 the name 'relation' is enough.
 Adding endless mediating terms
 only exhausts the road of intelligence.
 The bond of pot and colour,
 the connected movement of action and agent -
 if we keep seeking a separate 'glue',
 relation itself becomes a net of questions.
 What cannot be understood apart from one another
 may stand mutually related in their very form.
 Experience of relation does not demand
 an additional substance beyond it.
 Absence too is not blank nothingness;
 when expectation fails, meaning arises.
 The cognition 'it is not here'
 speaks about the examined place itself.
 Yet every difference and every negation
 need not receive a new entity.
 Read the form of language with the nature of things;
 confusion then becomes less.
 Number, selfhood, subjectivity, power -
 some forms demand new thought.
 The old list is never final
 when questions cross new boundaries.
 Classification is useful
 when it helps the world become intelligible.
 If the list itself becomes the goal,
 words hide knowledge of things.
 The beauty of logic lies in simplicity:
 fewer terms, clearer light.
 Discard what is unnecessary;
 give place to what is indispensable.
 Thing, quality, action, relation -
 examine all by the touchstone of evidence.
 Step away from the crowd of names
 and uncover the silent structure of nature.
 The fine line of difference, relation's thread,
 the current of time, the pulse of power.
 Cause and effect, intrinsic nature, absence -
 seek the fitting relation in each.
 As thought lays down needless burdens,
 truth comes nearer.
 Less invention, clearer evidence -
 intelligence finds a cleaner road.

Four Skies of Trust Beyond Doubt

Ask with doubt's sharp edge:
 must everything I see be true?
 Even experience can be questioned;
 keep an alert gaze upon memory too.
 Yet questioning has no end
 if everything becomes doubt again.
 The natural trust by which life proceeds
 must finally support the step.
 To seize the present moment and say,
 'Only this is true,' is not complete.
 Past memory and future hope
 belong to the same stream of life.
 If everything were only momentary shadow,
 with no body, world, or ground,
 the sequence of experience would itself break
 and the practical world disappear.
 Trust does not first demand an argument;
 life is born already moving with it.
 The natural belief that an outer world exists
 stands behind every action.
 Bread, water, road, relation -
 all move through this confidence.
 Doubt performs the work of intelligence,
 but it does not stop life entirely.
 The form of a thing and the existence of the thing
 must not be treated as identical.
 Do not bind the pure form of red
 to one particular object.
 Form, in its possible purity,
 can stand beyond limits of time and place.
 A particular thing is one occasion
 where form descends into experience.
 The deep earth of inert matter
 flows within time and space.
 Forms change, bodies arise,
 and in dissolution form changes again.
 Consciousness emerges from matter,
 yet matter does not thereby itself become conscious.
 Life within bodily organisation
 takes on a distinctive activity.
 Consciousness is no disembodied king
 ruling over matter from outside.
 It is the inward light of the living body,
 which sees meaning, value, and aim.
 The seen object may remain material,
 but the act of seeing is mental.
 Within this difference of two levels,
 experience becomes more fully real.
 Truth is no momentary event,
 nor a private game invented by mind.
 What is, was, or could be
 belongs to a wider factual order.
 Whether we know it or not,
 truth does not lose its place.
 Knowledge touches it only in part;
 truth remains larger than knowledge.
 Like four skies the world opens:
 form, matter, truth, consciousness.
 They are not wholly severed from one another,
 yet each has its own mode.
 Form gives possibility, matter gives ground,
 truth gives a wider order.

Consciousness, through choice, value, and ideals,
 creates meaning in life.
 The life of intelligence is not bread alone;
 it is also a garden of ideals.
 Common knowledge helps build society,
 and gives wings to art and science.
 Within family, country, institution,
 intelligence fashions images of value.
 As civilisation rises upon nature,
 humanity shapes its own world.
 If religion becomes the power of fear,
 the soul becomes its slave.
 But if it is deep remembrance of ideals,
 life receives greater meaning.
 When reverence rises beyond selfishness,
 the human recognises limitation.
 Fidelity to higher value
 makes the inward life more free.
 Ethics may move through three modes:
 natural impulse as the first ground;
 reason examines and refines it,
 giving desire a fitting shape.
 Then spiritual vision rises higher
 and lightens the limits of self-interest.
 Ethics is no longer mere repression,
 but a form of the better life.
 Happiness is not merely fulfilment of desire;
 desire itself needs education.
 To satisfy every wish
 is not the meaning of morality.
 Reason must discern which desires are worthy,
 sifting the web of impulse,
 showing the direction of lasting good.
 Within disciplined desire, quiet joy endures longer.
 Art is not a servant of utility,
 yet neither is it far from life.
 The forms of house, tool, clothing
 can themselves become beautiful.
 An object fulfilling a need
 may also receive sweetness of form.
 Intelligence shapes nature's raw material
 into new forms of beauty.
 Beyond doubt, natural trust;
 the four skies stand open.
 Purity of form, the earth of matter,
 the order of truth, conscious reflection.
 Intelligence fills life with meaning,
 ethics gives shape to desire.
 Art gives beauty beyond utility,
 and humanity makes a home in the world.

The Open Sky of Self-Creation

No form is written before birth,
 no destiny arrives ready-made.
 The human first comes into the world,
 then fashions an identity.
 As letters of action slowly appear
 upon an empty page,
 life builds its own essence
 through the steps it chooses.
 If there is no map fixed from above,
 responsibility grows deeper still.
 Which road to choose, how to live -
 the question presses upon oneself.
 There are fewer excuses behind action;
 the weight of decision rests on one's own head.
 Freedom is not gift alone;
 it comes with difficult responsibility.
 An inert thing simply 'is';
 it does not question itself.
 But consciousness creates distance from itself
 and moves toward the future.
 Within what I am now
 awakens the possibility of moving beyond it.
 In this open space of incompleteness,
 a new project is born.
 Consciousness is no full box
 that merely stores things inside.
 It is an outward-opening movement
 that searches for meaning every moment.
 It never wholly stops
 as a fixed object within itself.
 Where the power to say 'no' awakens,
 the doorway of possibility opens.
 Emptiness is not mere nothingness;
 it is an active structure of consciousness.
 Creating distance from what is,
 it shapes the next possibility.
 Searching a hotel for a friend,
 the absent face appears in mind.
 What is not found - its very absence
 takes a place within experience.
 Freedom is no easy wing of happiness;
 it is a dizzying depth of sky.
 When all options appear open,
 an anxious light rises within.
 With the awareness 'I can choose'
 comes also a voice of fear,
 because each chosen step
 gives form to one's own future.
 Anxiety, anguish, despair
 are not simply names for weakness.
 They arise when free consciousness understands
 that no fixed support stands above it.
 Not everything possible is certain;
 the fruit of what is chosen remains unknown.
 Upon this uncertain open ground,
 decision becomes the dignity of the human being.
 When another's eye looks at me,
 I no longer exist only for myself.
 I endure the sharp experience
 of becoming an object within that gaze.
 The moment of shame says, 'I have been seen';
 pressure falls upon my freedom.

Through the presence of another consciousness,
 a new feeling of relation is born.
 Yet the other is not merely an enemy;
 the other is an unavoidable note in my world.
 What I become is shaped also
 by the gaze that comes from beyond me.
 Conflict remains, recognition remains,
 reciprocity forms a difficult world.
 For oneself and for another -
 two open doors of life.
 Bad faith is born in the moment
 when we flee from freedom.
 'I am simply like this; I cannot change' -
 circumstance becomes an excuse.
 A role is made into the whole self,
 and possibility is suppressed.
 The social mask becomes a pretext
 for escaping the burden of decision.
 No servant is only an office;
 no student merely a name.
 A role is one condition of life;
 the whole person is not its slave.
 One who turns oneself into an object
 and says, 'I have no choice,'
 weaves a net of self-deception;
 freedom does not therefore disappear.
 Authentic life is where a person
 clearly recognises the situation as well.
 One accepts the limits that exist
 without surrendering choice.
 Body, history, poverty, war -
 all circumstances exert influence.
 Yet how one responds, and how far,
 is where free consciousness moves.
 Freedom is not merely a solitary lamp
 inside a private room.
 Social structures and class relations
 are not outside life.
 The person breathes within history;
 history takes form through persons.
 Private choice and collective circumstance
 create meaning in relation.
 If an order turns the human into an object
 and narrows available choices,
 liberation as inward declaration alone
 cannot remove social bonds.
 Institutional criticism must stand
 beside personal responsibility.
 When freedom becomes shared,
 humanity can be called more complete.
 The open sky of self-creation -
 no essence written beforehand.
 Choice, nothingness, gaze, responsibility -
 life's meaning is not ready-made.
 At every moment we fashion our form
 and make history with others.
 Leave excuses, understand limits,
 and place the signature of free action.

The Noise of the Senses and the Inner Lamp

Society is no single mould;
 age after age it changes its eyes.
 Sometimes invisible inward truth
 becomes life's highest measure.
 Sometimes only tangible things
 take the form of measure, taste, and gain.
 Between these two extremes, human culture
 swings upon its long arc.
 Where spiritual truth stands first,
 the senses are declared limited.
 Renunciation, restraint, inwardness
 become the higher aims of life.
 Art becomes a silent language of symbols;
 ethics, an unchanging command.
 Deep fidelity to the unseen
 keeps distance from bodily pleasure.
 Where the kingdom of the senses expands,
 visible things become final evidence.
 Wealth, convenience, enjoyment, experiment
 become life's chief principles.
 Art gathers the colours of earth;
 science opens matter's mysteries.
 But if pleasure becomes the only measure,
 how will inward hunger speak?
 Between these two extremes lies a third road:
 do not despise the body,
 nor drown the soul's silent call
 in the noise of the marketplace.
 Form and meaning, science and value -
 give both a place upon one seat.
 There a balanced culture
 takes the fuller shape of the human being.
 Art too is a mirror of its age,
 sometimes symbol, sometimes representation.
 Sometimes it creates heavenly peace,
 sometimes the living form of the body.
 Whatever a society takes for truth,
 art clothes in its colours.
 Painting, music, story, architecture
 bring inward values outward.
 Ethics is not merely a list of rules;
 it is a deep voice of culture.
 Where eternal values are trusted,
 command becomes an unwavering guard.
 Where calculation of pleasure dominates,
 ethics takes the colour of utility.
 When values change again and again,
 conduct too becomes unstable.
 If wealth remains merely a means,
 life gives it its proper place.
 But once wealth becomes the highest value,
 the human measure itself changes.
 Accumulation, consumption, market-glitter
 bring a new scale of prestige.
 What cannot be bought
 slowly seems to lose value.
 If freedom means only desire -
 doing whatever one happens to want -
 bondage may appear broken,
 while new costs grow within.
 The more desire becomes endless,
 the farther satisfaction moves away.

Without restraint, the 'free' person
 becomes a slave to desire.
 When power forgets value,
 trust in force grows larger.
 When law becomes a shadow of fear,
 the bridge of trust slowly collapses.
 The expansion of violence, deceit, and greed
 is not merely a tale of crime;
 it is a deeper cultural crisis
 where shared values have disappeared.
 Prosperity can grow while peace declines
 if the inward life dries out.
 Many things but little meaning -
 then life loses its centre.
 In the race toward greater consumption,
 the wings of contentment are broken.
 Beyond the limits of enjoyment, the human
 again goes searching for the source of meaning.
 The brilliance of science is priceless,
 but it is not the only direction.
 Science can tell us what is possible;
 it cannot alone answer what is right.
 Technology places power in our hands;
 value determines its use.
 Without discernment, knowledge's sword
 may protect or destroy alike.
 A crisis of an age is not merely decline;
 it can become the womb of transformation.
 When one order moves into excess,
 an opposing desire is born within.
 A tired culture recognises its limit
 through the experience of suffering.
 The slow seed of a new balance
 germinates within that breakdown.
 History is no straight staircase,
 nor movement forever in one direction.
 Rise and fall, then synthesis -
 such are its many-coloured tremors.
 Old forms do not wholly die;
 new forms do not arise from nothing.
 Memory, struggle, and reaction together
 create a new cultural age.
 When crisis becomes very deep,
 people may split between two extremes.
 Some increase the noise of consumption;
 some seek refuge entirely within.
 If no bridge is built between them,
 the body of society tears more deeply.
 Discernment must gather again
 the rightful share of both truths.
 The noise of the senses and the inner lamp -
 both belong to human life.
 One gives the solid earth of matter;
 the other, deep devotion to value.
 Neither blind race after pleasure is right,
 nor harsh victory through abandoning the world.
 When balance becomes culture,
 humanity receives its music.

The Ground of Identification, the Silent Presupposition of the Sentence

There are two impulses in understanding the world -
 one redraws the map;
 the other clarifies the structure already in use
 and lets its form appear.
 It is not always necessary to build a new palace;
 sometimes count the rooms of the house.
 Recognise the foundations of ordinary understanding
 by the lamp of analysis.
 Identification is not merely a name;
 the question is what we call what.
 From a crowd, choose one object
 and say, 'This is this' - there particularity begins.
 Place, time, shared experience,
 the body's solid presence become a ground.
 Upon this earth a reference can stand;
 then the door of identification opens.
 Some things can identify themselves;
 others are known by means of them.
 Distant matters, qualities, events, concepts
 receive meaning from a solid basis.
 What stands before us as an object
 becomes the centre of reference.
 Many other abstract identifications
 arise through relation to it.
 A human being is not merely the body's name,
 nor a separate invisible kingdom within.
 Laughter, pain, desire, movement
 belong today to the very same person.
 Physical and mental statements
 may turn toward one and the same subject.
 In that primary identity of the person,
 both kinds of qualities are held together.
 The relation of particular and universal
 opens within the sentence.
 When we say, 'This flower is red,'
 one subject and one quality appear.
 One side holds the identified thing;
 the other tells us its form.
 This ancient structure of language
 becomes a fundamental line of thought.
 But the artificial moulds of logic
 do not contain every form of speech.
 Living language relies upon
 many tacit presuppositions.
 If a formula becomes excessively sharp,
 it may cut away ordinary meaning.
 The natural complexity of common speech
 may remain larger than the map.
 When 'and' joins two statements,
 it is not merely mathematical addition.
 Order, context, implication, tone
 preserve further shades of meaning.
 A dictionary draws one boundary;
 use stretches that boundary further.
 The same connective in different contexts
 takes on different colours of relation.
 Before some sentences are spoken,
 they silently assume certain things.
 Those things have not been asserted as true,
 yet the statement stands upon them.
 If the ground is absent from the world,
 the statement's truth or falsity begins to sway.

When the presupposition collapses, the sentence
 does not speak through the ordinary pair of truth-values.
 To say, 'The king is wise,'
 first assumes: there is a king.
 If no person occupies that office,
 where can the claim of truth stand?
 The negated sentence too quietly
 carries the same ground with it.
 Even in saying, 'The king is not wise,'
 the king's existence is already presupposed.
 Do not take sentence and actual assertion
 as one and the same thing.
 The same verbal form can recur,
 yet attend to its use on an occasion.
 By whom, when, and for whom -
 from such context the assertion is born.
 The burden of truth or falsity often
 belongs to the utterance actually used.
 The meaning of general statements too is subtle:
 to say 'all' does not always assert existence.
 Even when a class is empty,
 the logical form of the formula need not break.
 But ordinary language can sometimes
 understand an empty class differently.
 Formal rule and common meaning
 do not always run upon one line.
 When asking whether inference is justified,
 we need no endless external stamp.
 Some standards arise within practice itself
 as criteria for saying 'this is reasonable'.
 Thinking from past regularity toward the future
 is an established movement of human intelligence.
 Its justification lies within that practice,
 not in some higher tribunal beyond it.
 If every rule required another rule,
 and every proof another proof,
 thought could never take a step;
 only a wilderness of questions would remain.
 Some criteria within the game
 tell us what counts as a proper move.
 In searching endlessly for an outer basis,
 let intelligence not lose its own ground.
 The ground of identification, silent presupposition,
 the meeting of person, sentence, and context;
 the clean line of formal logic,
 the living play of everyday language.
 Before attending only to what was said,
 look at what had already been assumed.
 Within language uncover the world's structure
 with careful discernment.

One Infinite Current, a Necessary World

One ground, cause of itself,
 outside which no other place remains;
 within the infinite expanse of being
 there is no alien foundation.
 Where mind gives different names,
 difference of form awakens;
 the primal reality, in its infinite modes,
 opens a sky of attributes.
 Thought is one pervasive dimension,
 extension another open line;
 both are expressions of one ground,
 neither written upon the other.
 Bodily events keep the body's order;
 thought follows the order of thought.
 In the equal rhythm of one truth
 both move together without pushing one another.
 Mind, which forms awareness of body,
 and body, which takes form in the world,
 are not two emperors of separate kingdoms;
 one order holds them both.
 No event is an independent accident;
 every event is bound by cause.
 Within the vast web of necessary law,
 every form receives its place.
 The thought, 'It might have been otherwise,'
 arises from our incomplete knowledge.
 Seeing the whole chain of causes,
 the event declares its necessity.
 Freedom then is not arbitrariness,
 nor the name of a causeless leap.
 Understanding the causes of one's own nature
 opens freedom's deeper dwelling.
 When emotion surrounds us,
 we can become its slave.
 In storms of attachment, fear, and anger,
 the direction of reason is easily obscured.
 When the cause of feeling is clearly understood,
 passive suffering changes form.
 What we understand and become active toward
 becomes power gathered in consciousness.
 Every thing carries within itself
 the striving to preserve its being.
 This natural firm endeavour of life
 becomes the primal current of action.
 Joy marks an increase of power;
 sorrow leaves the trace of diminished power.
 Desire is the conscious form of that current,
 measuring the direction of life.
 But private gain is not the final end;
 reason recognises a common good.
 Cooperation with other human beings
 also increases one's own capacity.
 Hatred grows through hatred;
 understanding and generosity are its answer.
 The rule of reason is not harsh punishment,
 but the clear ground of understanding causes.
 Do not seek the world's ground in a distant king;
 recognise it within the world itself.
 When distance between nature and the ultimate dissolves,
 sacredness is known in every form.
 Highest love is not blind attachment,
 but joy born from knowledge of truth.

In clear understanding of a necessary world,
the mind finds an unwavering relation.
One infinite current keeps flowing,
the twin light of thought and extension.
Understanding causes, becoming free of passive emotion,
consciousness receives an open sky of freedom.

A Many-Coloured World from a Simple Seed

At first the form is simple, one-coloured;
 then leaves of difference begin to sprout.
 One seed spreads into many branches
 as it expands through time.
 Where motion and matter join,
 new structure is born.
 From simpler states toward complexity,
 the world continually changes form.
 Cloud, mountain, plant, body -
 society too belongs to this sequence.
 Uniformity gradually breaks,
 and specialised functions awaken.
 Parts that were once alike
 take different work over time.
 Though differentiation grows, mutual dependence
 still sustains the whole together.
 Development is not merely growth in size,
 but a deep expansion of relations.
 Many parts, with specialised tasks,
 share one thread of life.
 Difference grows, yet not mere scattering -
 integration stands at the other end.
 Complexity becomes fruitful
 when coordination remains strong.
 Life learns in relation to environment;
 adaptive patterns endure.
 What makes a fitting relation with circumstance
 continues its course.
 Outer pressure and inner structure
 touch one another.
 The long transformation of living form
 flows across countless generations.
 Knowledge enters through the doors of sense;
 reason understands their relations.
 Yet ultimate reality
 cannot be caught within the whole net.
 What we see is manifest form;
 what we think is the depth of relation.
 The primal mystery remains beyond the boundary;
 there intelligence becomes deeply humble.
 Science says: seek the laws.
 Religion says: acknowledge primal mystery.
 If both understand their limits,
 why must they deny each other?
 Humility before the unknown
 can reduce the heat of conflict.
 Manifest law and unmanifest ground
 remain two ends of one question.
 Changing the name of mystery
 does not itself solve it.
 Call it 'cause' or 'primal power' -
 the final depth still remains unknown.
 The farther intelligence advances,
 the clearer its boundary becomes.
 Respect for knowledge grows deepest
 where ignorance too is recognised.
 Ethics does not suddenly descend from the sky
 as a ready-made list.
 Within the long experience of life,
 standards of conduct take form.
 Behaviour that preserves life
 and increases harmony, happiness, development

gradually gains acceptance
 and becomes moral habit.
 Pleasure and pain become signs,
 showing benefit and harm in life.
 But momentary pleasure is not the final measure;
 long consequences must be seen as well.
 The individual seeks private good;
 society too requires security.
 Right coordination of both interests
 makes the road of better conduct.
 Total denial of self-interest is impossible;
 without concern for others society is incomplete.
 The desire to preserve one's own life
 and compassion toward another both remain.
 At first collision may be sharp;
 with development coordination grows.
 Where private interest joins public good,
 morality becomes more natural.
 Government's work is not to seize every step,
 but to give the individual room to breathe.
 Keeping unnecessary restraints low,
 it opens the road of free endeavour.
 Yet freedom is not such
 that it crushes another's rights.
 Its limit stands where one's own action
 wounds another life.
 Society is certainly joined like a body,
 but the human being is not merely a cell.
 An organ lives for the whole,
 yet a person is not without aims of one's own.
 Social harmony is necessary,
 and private consciousness still has value.
 The whole must not swallow the person;
 both should nourish one another.
 Where hard force is dominant,
 command rises above the individual.
 From such a form, gradually,
 society moves toward voluntary cooperation.
 Trade, labour, agreement, contract
 replace force with relation.
 Society matures
 when fear decreases and consent grows.
 An ideal society is a distant image,
 where external policing is less.
 Moral disposition developed within
 itself sustains fitting conduct.
 Not only the rebuke of law,
 but character's harmony gives order.
 Free mind and social good
 breathe in one rhythm.
 A many-coloured world from a simple seed -
 a song of differentiation, integration, development.
 The bright earth of manifest law,
 the silent rule of unmanifest mystery.
 Person, society, ethics, science -
 all cross the current of transformation.
 Where complexity flowers through harmony,
 there life receives expansion.

From the Thrown Moment to Time Open Toward Death

The world does not stand before consciousness
 merely like an object across a gap.
 We are already in the world,
 an open realm amid relations.
 Seeing comes only afterward;
 living is the first experience.
 Only by dwelling within the world
 does the silent movement of existence open.
 To say 'is' seems simple,
 but the meaning of 'to be' is deep.
 Things are present in their form;
 the human being questions restlessly.
 The capacity to understand
 the meaning of one's own being is a distinctive gift.
 From the one who questions one's own existence
 knowledge of Being opens.
 We do not choose some empty place
 from which to begin our birth.
 Eyes open already amid language, body, history,
 and circumstances.
 This 'thrown' life is not a defect;
 it is the hard acceptance of fact.
 Upon the ground that has been given,
 we create the world that comes next.
 But the given limit is not the end;
 the human being opens forward.
 What is not yet becomes possibility
 flowering along the road of the future.
 Always projecting oneself ahead,
 one takes the form of a project.
 The present is not merely a halted moment;
 it opens the door of what is yet to be.
 In the easy flow of the everyday crowd,
 we can become 'like everyone else'.
 What people say, what people believe
 can cover our own voice.
 This falling is not simply a moral verdict;
 it is an ordinary movement of life.
 But to lose one's own possibilities in the crowd -
 there lies the snare.
 Care is not merely the burden of work;
 it is a primal relation of existence.
 World, others, one's own possibilities -
 all three are held in one deep bond.
 What through love, fear, and labour
 we call our own day and night
 fills the lines of our existence
 within this web of care.
 Sometimes anxiety suddenly strips away
 all familiar meanings.
 House, objects, work, identity
 grow pale for a moment.
 Then before us, like 'nothing',
 there remains a deep open emptiness.
 That nothing is not merely destruction;
 it speaks the boundary of possibility.
 Fear is always fear of something;
 anxiety bears no named object.
 It lays the human being bare
 before oneself, without comfort.
 When supports become loose,
 the weight of one's own choosing appears.

In the merciless light of this unease,
 one's freedom wakes.
 Time is not only the ticking of a clock;
 consciousness is stretched in three directions.
 Possibility comes from the future;
 the past gives thrown identity.
 The present holds both together
 and makes meaning in the moment of action.
 One flow of these three currents
 is called life's temporality.
 The past is no dead page;
 it continues to move within us.
 Language, custom, memory, choice
 have changed form in today's body.
 History is not an external list;
 it is one layer of our own being.
 One who reappropriates inheritance
 creates the future more wakefully.
 Death is no distant accident;
 it is the final boundary within life.
 No one else can die in my place;
 there lies the intimacy of this knowledge.
 It is one possibility of the future
 that closes every other possibility.
 Before it, the living moment
 takes on a truer meaning.
 Awareness toward death
 is not the darkness of despair.
 It is awareness of borrowed time
 that refuses to let the moment drain away.
 Leave the borrowed life of the crowd
 and hear the voice of your own decision.
 Accept the truth of finite life
 and choose your own possibilities.
 A solitary person cut off from others
 is not the complete human form.
 To be in the world means to be with;
 there is no life outside shared language.
 Yet crowd and fellowship are different:
 one can erase individuality.
 The other can preserve each voice
 within an open space of respect.
 History, time, death, care -
 all together say, 'You are finite.'
 But finitude is no deficiency;
 through it, choice receives value.
 If infinite time lay in our hands,
 today's decision would grow light.
 The final boundary gives
 gravity to every step of life.
 From the thrown moment toward death,
 time opens in a deep flow.
 Beyond the noise of the crowd, one's own voice;
 within anxiety, a place for truth.
 Dwell in the world, carry history,
 take steps toward possibility.
 In the wakeful light of finite life,
 make the meaning of your own being.

From the Field of Fear to the City of Covenant

The first doorway of knowledge is sense;
 the touch of what is outside enters the mind.
 Colour, sound, taste, motion, shape
 leave impressions within consciousness.
 Even when an object has gone far away,
 its image remains for a while.
 From that fading representation
 memory and imagination rise again.
 Mind is no separate sky,
 no secret region cut away from the body.
 Movement, impulse, motion, effect
 together create the field of experience.
 Particles of the world are continually in motion;
 from motion comes the spread of change.
 Where causal impact reaches,
 form repeatedly changes.
 Not every meaning we place in a name
 is itself an outward thing.
 Sometimes a word is only a convenience
 that keeps thought's reckoning ordered.
 General forms are constructions of mind;
 particular things stand in the world.
 Through names we mark groups,
 but the name itself does not thicken the thing.
 Before speaking of invisible substance,
 ask for the ground of evidence.
 About what cannot be known,
 humility is intelligence's road.
 How long is the final chain of causes?
 The question can remain open.
 But merely naming the unknown
 does not make knowledge complete.
 Human desire moves toward its own pleasure
 and away from pain.
 What seems pleasing is called 'good';
 what seems displeasing, 'bad'.
 The same object need not carry
 the same value for everyone.
 From different directions of desire, value
 changes from person to person.
 Happiness is not a settled stillness;
 desire fulfilled gives rise to desire again.
 One goal follows another;
 life is a road forever moving.
 Power, security, means, honour
 are stored for the future.
 Today's achievement, fearing tomorrow,
 scatters seeds of still more desire.
 Where there is no shared government,
 each person becomes one's own protector.
 Within equal hopes and equal fears,
 seeds of conflict gather easily.
 One object is desired by two hands;
 the basis of trust grows thin.
 Fear, suspicion, pre-emptive attack
 set human being against human being.
 In such a condition, the fruit of labour
 is safe for no one.
 Can farming, trade, art, learning
 endure properly amid fear?
 Where life is uncertain at every moment,
 how can a house of happiness be built?

Within the unstable jungle of force,
 the lamp of civilisation goes out.
 Then reason says one thing:
 give up some freedom together.
 Where all accept one rule,
 peace begins to take colour.
 'I shall not do what I would not want
 another to do to me' -
 from this seed of mutual restraint
 the first line of covenant is drawn.
 But a promise without power is weak
 if there is no fear of enforcement.
 Then covenant becomes mere paper
 and tears in the storm of self-interest.
 Therefore a firm centre
 of common authority must be made.
 All surrender some portion of power
 and raise a government of security.
 The primal reason for government is peace,
 not merely a glorious throne.
 Stopping inward war and giving society
 security is its task.
 Without law, stable boundaries
 between 'mine' and 'yours' are difficult.
 Justice too gains meaning
 when acknowledged rules apply to all.
 Yet the protection of life is a basic right;
 it cannot be wholly traded away.
 An order to destroy oneself
 cannot be binding upon a person.
 If the power for which government was made
 seeks to cut down life itself,
 the natural right of self-defence
 appears again in that moment.
 Forms of rule can be many,
 but divided sovereignty is difficult.
 One centre's clear decision
 can restrain disorder for longer.
 Still, government is a means
 for the security of public life.
 If power is severed from peace,
 the bridge of trust can break.
 From the field of fear to the city of covenant -
 knowledge from sense, world from motion;
 desire, pleasure, suspicion, self-preservation,
 many waves of the human mind.
 The shelter of rule becomes necessary
 when the fire of conflict is fierce.
 Sharing away some freedom, human beings
 build a common house of security.

From the Fire of Impressions to the Causality of Habit

What first touches us with sharp intensity
 is the primary mark of experience.
 Its fainter copy later
 takes identity as an idea.
 Brightness of colour, sting of pain,
 taste, sound, current of pleasure;
 their memory rising again in mind
 has a less intense form.
 Open a complex idea and look within:
 its thread runs back to simple impressions.
 Without the material of experience,
 from where could imagination make a form?
 Yet mind is not passive;
 it joins, cuts, combines forms.
 Golden colour and the shape of a mountain
 become one new imagination.
 Ideas move toward one another
 with the aid of three natural bridges:
 resemblance, contiguity, order of cause,
 which carry the boat of memory along.
 When we say 'cause', what do we actually see?
 One event follows another.
 Where in the first is there such a power
 that must necessarily produce the second?
 The eye sees succession, not power;
 habit awakens within intelligence.
 Events repeatedly occurring together
 tie a cord of expectation.
 The sun will rise again tomorrow -
 life moves by this confidence.
 But past sequence yields
 no logical necessity for the future.
 Trust in nature is necessary,
 yet it is not reason's final proof.
 The bridge of habit is very useful;
 it is no infinitely certain law.
 Search deeply within for the 'I';
 you find a moving crowd of experiences:
 sometimes pleasure, sometimes pain,
 sometimes memory, a nest of desire.
 To seize a stable self apart from these
 is not easy within experience.
 No witness standing outside the current's sequence
 is directly perceived.
 Yet life continues;
 memory makes a bridge for conduct.
 Philosophical doubt does not turn
 the everyday world wholly into nothing.
 Good and bad cannot stand
 as dry reasoning without the heart.
 Seeing another's pleasure and pain,
 a tremor of sympathy can arise.
 Moral approval is joined to feeling;
 reason alone does not command.
 Without human sensibility,
 even the word 'duty' does not live.
 Keep away from excessive certainty,
 and guard also against excessive doubt.
 Accept what evidence experience gives;
 where it gives none, draw a limit.
 From the fire of impressions comes the smoke of ideas;
 from habit, belief in causation.

In the clear air of humble doubt,
knowledge finds a human dwelling.

The Light of the Object at the Door of Consciousness

Whatever comes and stands before us,
 we immediately say, 'This is the world.'
 Yet within this simple moment of seeing,
 how many silent relations are sounding.
 For a moment place in brackets
 the burden of what has already been assumed.
 Do not deny the world; only
 look at how it appears.
 As for the flower's existence,
 let judgement wait for now.
 First see how colour, scent, and shape
 flow within conscious experience.
 Consciousness is no empty room,
 no dark place inside a closed vessel.
 It is always open toward something -
 seeing, thinking, remembering.
 Every experience has its direction;
 every feeling moves toward someone or something.
 Where is love without a sign of the beloved?
 Where would fear arise without something feared?
 The object is not a prisoner inside mind,
 nor is mind cut away from world.
 The living relation between them
 is the first ground of meaning.
 The eye sees one side of a table;
 the other side remains concealed for now.
 Yet the meaning of that same whole table
 is joined to its unseen side.
 What is seen is always limited;
 the object promises further sides.
 Change viewpoint after viewpoint,
 the same object continues.
 Within this incomplete completeness
 lies the astonishing discipline of experience.
 What is present points also
 toward the possibility of what is not yet present.
 If imagination varies the form -
 remove colour, change shape -
 observe what can change
 without breaking the object's meaning.
 Among these different possible forms,
 what stable thread survives
 dances before consciousness
 like a glimpse of the thing's essence.
 Knowledge is not merely a heap of facts,
 nor the private smoke of mental states.
 Within a shared structure of meaning,
 intelligence finds a clear well.
 Listen carefully to a melody:
 the note is not merely this present point.
 Without the faint shadow of the note that passed,
 the present note would not be music.
 The note that has gone is not wholly dead;
 it remains beside the present.
 Expectation of the note not yet arrived
 flows alongside it too.
 The blurred retention of the past,
 the living light of now, the pull ahead -
 all three together make time,
 not merely the clock's dry counting.
 Within its own flowing stream,
 consciousness experiences itself as well.

Every moment is new, yet not wholly broken;
life flows as one current.
How do we see another mind?
Inside, it is invisible like our own.
Yet gesture, body, speech,
the tremor of pain make it present.
For me the world is not merely 'mine';
another gaze touches it too.
Shared objects, shared paths, shared language
weave a public earth.
Without trust in this world-with-others,
how could science itself stand alone?
One measurement, one object, shared result -
they meet the acknowledgement of other consciousnesses.
The natural ground of everyday life
comes before every theory.
House, road, labour, body, relation
form knowledge's silent foundation.
When science climbs to abstract heights,
do not forget this living earth.
Behind number hold the experienced world;
behind formula hold the human being.
Removing the film of prejudice,
let the object come in its own way.
Do not throw up the dust of hasty judgement;
let the nuances of experience be read.
Neither blind belief nor denial,
nor external measurement alone as proof.
Within the open relation of consciousness and object,
meaning receives a new identity.
The object's light at the door of consciousness;
at the object's door, consciousness asks.
What appears between the two
is the deep vibration of experience.
When you look at the world again,
do not impose names made in advance.
As it opens before you,
weigh its form with patience.

Through the Sevenfold Window, Nonviolent Truth

Truth's house has no single door;
 windows open in every direction.
 One viewpoint sees one form;
 another measures the limit of that view.
 To say 'it is' may sometimes be right,
 but the ground of context is required.
 'It is not' may also be true
 when another aspect is in question.
 The same thing is from one direction,
 and from another may be said not to be.
 As time, place, form, and relation change,
 the meaning of the statement changes too.
 Sometimes both 'is' and 'is not'
 are true under different expectations.
 Sometimes speech itself grows weary,
 and form's complexity becomes inexpressible.
 In the humble movement of these seven predications,
 a claim recognises its own boundary.
 One utterance cannot easily bind
 an infinite object in its entirety.
 Standpoint is the window of a part;
 pramana is the lamp of fuller understanding.
 When partial vision remains humble,
 truth comes nearer.
 In perception's stainless light,
 the object takes form before us.
 Through inference's thread of reason,
 a road opens toward unseen meaning.
 Knowledge is not merely an outer image;
 the knower too finds a voice.
 When understanding removes the dust of error,
 consciousness becomes clearer.
 Within the living being burns conscious light;
 particles of karma cover it.
 The clinging dust of attachment and aversion
 slows the radiance of freedom.
 Violence is first born in thought -
 the hard pride that says, 'Mine alone is truth.'
 When another viewpoint is declared nothing,
 the order of coexistence begins to break.
 Nonviolence is not merely restraining the hand;
 it reaches speech, mind, and desire.
 One in whom compassion has awakened
 does not turn truth into a weapon.
 Self-restraint checks the flood of desire;
 non-possession removes the burden.
 Truth, non-stealing, a disciplined life
 give consciousness lighter wings.
 The bondage of karma gradually thins
 through alert conduct.
 Without harmony of knowledge and character,
 the seed of liberation cannot become complete.
 Many viewpoints do not mean anarchy,
 nor are all statements equally warranted.
 Understanding context, reason, and limit,
 intelligence gains disciplined knowledge.
 When conviction is joined with compassion,
 disagreement need not become enmity.
 In the open space between ideas,
 the clear river of dialogue can flow.
 Look through the sevenfold window
 at the many lights of one world.

Upon the humble path of nonviolent intelligence,
truth becomes a shared sky.

From the Womb of Contradiction to the Journey of Wholeness

Like a silent beginning in emptiness,
 'being' stands alone.
 Yet that bright vacancy without distinction
 speaks its opposite from within.
 What is wholly indeterminate
 slips from the hand as soon as we seize it.
 The boundary of being and nothing dissolves
 into the current of becoming.
 The world is no frozen picture;
 it is form changing from within itself.
 In the breast of every definite shape
 lives its own boundary.
 The limit is not an enemy outside;
 it is a question born within the form.
 Whoever recognises inner contradiction
 opens the next movement through it.
 Negation is not mere erasure;
 it carries the substance of the old along.
 When one form breaks, its portion of truth
 remains alive within the new.
 We leave a stair behind,
 but do not cast it wholly away.
 In every step climbed upward
 the distance below is still contained.
 Truth is no cold conclusion,
 no book already closed.
 It undertakes its own journey,
 opening its account form after form.
 The eye's immediate trust declares:
 'This alone is certain, this alone true.'
 Yet when the moment changes, signs change,
 and easy certainty meets challenge.
 A thing opens within a web of qualities;
 each quality then asks for relation.
 Intelligence runs behind rules,
 and the rules reveal their limits.
 Amid this journey consciousness
 one day turns toward itself.
 Beyond 'I know' there rises
 the question, 'Who am I?'
 To find oneself only inwardly
 is not enough; another is needed.
 Before another free gaze,
 the mirror of self-awareness appears.
 Without recognition, self-respect
 can become a solitary voice.
 When two free consciousnesses meet,
 the possibility of struggle awakens.
 One bows, another rules -
 it can look like complete victory.
 Yet the throne of dependent recognition
 may remain hollow within.
 One who labours and changes the object
 sees a mark of oneself in the outer world.
 Discipline of hand and the sweat of patience
 rewrite inward consciousness.
 Through hard lessons of fear and labour,
 even the mind called slave can change.
 The master's passive dependence
 is brought before its own limit.
 This reversal does not mean
 that history moves in a simple straight line.

Every victory contains a new question;
 every order opens another boundary.
 The individual is not free alone
 if all others are merely obstacles.
 True freedom is not an immediate leap
 of desire without rule.
 Family affection, social labour,
 rules, rights, shared esteem -
 within such institutional relations
 freedom gains a concrete place.
 If law is only an alien stick,
 mind becomes estranged from its own world.
 But when a just rule gives voice
 to one's own rational discernment,
 the distance between 'I' and 'all'
 need no longer remain absolute opposition.
 Private will, within wider good,
 finds its higher meaning.
 History is not merely a saga of kings;
 it is transformation in the consciousness of freedom.
 An age recognises certain rights;
 the next asks about the bonds that remain.
 Yet to call every wound of history
 a flower of progress would be wrong.
 Suffering keeps its own truth;
 the justice of discernment must remain awake.
 If the whole swallows the individual,
 it is not wholeness but a new prison.
 Whole is that which gives different voices
 an open shore within relation.
 Art shows truth through form -
 the light of feeling, image, and sound.
 Faith seeks within symbols
 a near dwelling of limitless meaning.
 Thought, within concepts,
 then seeks to understand that truth itself.
 What shone in separated forms
 becomes one related whole.
 Wholeness is not the silent point of beginning;
 it is the fruit of the journey, a confluence of memory.
 Every stage that has been crossed
 brings its truth into a new meeting.
 Contradiction is not merely a fire of destruction
 when discernment can read its heart.
 As incompleteness speaks its own limit,
 it fashions the next, fuller form.
 Yet upon no final roof of pride
 can the wind of questioning be stopped.
 Living intelligence must bring its achievement
 back into history for examination.
 From contradiction's womb, the journey toward wholeness;
 within negation, a seed of preservation.
 Recognising oneself amid others,
 freedom receives a social home.
 World, consciousness, history, relation -
 all move in the current of dialogue.
 If truth is a living whole,
 it opens door after door by becoming.

SECTION VIII — DOUBT, EXPERIENCE, HISTORY AND JUSTICE

From the Lamp of Doubt to the Sky of Certainty

At the threshold of old belief, a lamp of questioning was lit;
 'What has been accepted must be true' - that easy trust broke apart.
 The house of knowledge may be rebuilt, but first let the foundation be tested;
 let intelligence lay a finger of light upon every brick.
 A discipline arose of opening difficult knots into smaller propositions,
 of moving from the simple toward the difficult in ordered steps.
 Clarity of calculation, measure of lines, the clean movement of sequence -
 thought sought its own road, a bright brow apart from mist.
 The eye says, 'I saw'; the ear says, 'I heard' - yet error can remain;
 distant forms alter, and in dreams life can seem as waking.
 If the senses deceive somewhere, they cannot be granted total authority;
 the mind seeking truth says, 'Your evidence is not yet sufficient.'
 Doubt widened - body, world, memory, even calculation were questioned;
 granting the possibility of falsehood shook every familiar seat of mind.
 But when all doubts were gathered together within,
 the conscious existence that doubted could not itself be denied.
 Here the self rose not as the body's shadow but as the light of thought;
 knowing, denying, affirming, desiring - all gathered as forms of consciousness.
 The outer world would return later; first stood the inward evidence,
 mind finding within itself the mark of its own presence.
 Ideas do not all arrive by one road - some are impressions from outside,
 some shapes constructed by imagination, some deep lights within mind.
 Perfection, infinity, truth - an immeasurable conception;
 limited consciousness asks, 'From what source came such a possibility?'
 How could the imperfect carry within itself the infinite seed of perfection?
 How could a finite cause bear the entire weight of an infinite sign?
 Through this line of questions intelligence moved toward proof of God,
 taking perfect being as truth's ground and narrowing the ring of doubt.
 If supreme truth is no deceiver, clear cognition need not be futile;
 what flowers in lucid intelligence need not lose its trustworthiness.
 Upon this confidence mathematics, nature, the outer world regain a place;
 reason lays new rails across certainty's broken bridge.
 Matter's primary marks are not colour and scent, but extension, shape, motion;
 within the measurable world mathematics finds a new harmony.
 Nature becomes like a clock of law, part after part moving in order;
 within causal discipline events alter their form.
 The nature of mind is thought, the nature of body extension - two distinct grounds;
 one occupies no space, the other takes shape and spread.
 Philosophy thus formed two poles - consciousness and material body;
 yet one question remained: how do two separate substances touch one another?
 If pain rises in the body, why does mind immediately grow distressed?
 If mind decides, why do hands and feet carry its command?
 This subtle knot of interaction shakes the hard wall of theory;
 alongside dualism's brilliant light, a deep shadow also appears.
 Error is not knowledge's essence, but the carelessness of human judgement;
 will runs farther than what intelligence can clearly see.
 Assent to an unclear matter opens the doorway of mistake;
 restrained assent keeps mind firm upon the path of truth.
 Free will is dignity, yet also a burden of responsibility;
 the power to choose becomes light when discernment remains beside it.
 The fierce insistence of half-knowledge can gather clouds of error;
 a judgement held back until clarity returns nearer to truth.
 This philosophy filled scientific language with line, number, and law;
 in place of inherited authority it fashioned reason's independent seat.
 It told the human being: 'Examine for yourself, demand causes, proceed in order';
 honour knowledge not merely through tradition but upon discernment's touchstone.
 Yet not all answers were final - this legacy also left questions:
 the mind-body gap, arguments for God, debate over innate ideas.
 Later thinkers wove agreement and disagreement from this light;
 some chose experience, some reason - but all inherited the courage to ask.
 The message is not merely: adopt doubt.
 Make doubt a method, but do not sink into blind scepticism.

With examined belief, disciplined intelligence, and lucid discernment,
knowledge tears through ignorance's night and gains new colour from questioning.

The Question of Cause Along the Stream of Experience

In knowledge's courtyard a question arose: 'From where does the first light come?'
 Must everything mind knows cross the threshold of experience before entering?
 Not from an abstract palace but from life's touch do seeds of thought sprout;
 from seen, heard, and felt moments the wings of consciousness slowly unfold.
 Present impressions are intense - colour, pain, pleasure, currents of heat;
 their shadows return later as ideas, but with diminished force.
 Memory and imagination preserve pictures while the first radiance fades;
 impression vivid, idea faint - this distinction settles within mind.
 Simple experiences gather to build the house of complex forms;
 mind becomes memory's craftsman, arranging many fragments together.
 It can fashion shapes never directly encountered,
 yet the material of invention ultimately comes from experience's chamber.
 Ideas move toward one another through resemblance, proximity, and sequence;
 one memory calls another, consciousness travelling toward the unseen.
 The familiar pair of cause and effect moves upon this associative road too;
 yet here grows the question: why must it necessarily be so?
 Fire appeared and warmth followed; a stone was pushed and motion appeared;
 again and again one event came together with the event that followed.
 We saw succession - but what invisible bond did the eye ever grasp?
 In what colour of experience did the knot called 'necessary connection' shine?
 Mind becomes accustomed: what happened yesterday will happen similarly today;
 upon this natural confidence of habit, expectation of the future rests.
 The sun has kept rising, so it will rise again - a human movement of belief;
 not a strict proof of logic, but a long web of repetition.
 Science moves upon calculation by assuming nature's uniformity,
 yet when its ultimate warrant is demanded, reason's ground begins to tremble.
 The leap from past to future is a practical power of mind,
 indispensable to life, but not a complete logical demonstration.
 When a tale of miracle moves far from ordinary experience,
 discernment says: weigh the evidence, do not believe at once.
 A claim contrary to established regularity requires heavier proof;
 testimony, probability, experience - reason must compare them all.
 God, self, world - experience keeps a strict watch over every question.
 Where a concept has no original impression behind it, doubt grows loud.
 Infinite substance, underlying matter, essential self - words alone do not make truth;
 trace the genealogy of the idea: what experience stands behind it?
 What is the 'I' we speak of - one unchanging lamp forever burning?
 Look inward: experience, desire, memory, pain shift from moment to moment.
 No permanent self comes into the hand; what appears is a flowing bundle,
 a changing personality woven from memory and relation.
 Across time mind itself joins a thread of identity,
 taking a flow of many scenes as one story under a single name.
 As scenes change upon a stage and actors alter form,
 so the stream of consciousness continues, and 'one self' enters questioning.
 Do not place a rigid block of opposition before freedom;
 human action is joined to causes, yet desire still has its movement.
 Where external constraint is absent, action can follow decision;
 in a causally ordered world practical freedom need not disappear.
 Morality does not become a shining wall of dry reason alone;
 human feeling gives colour to the meaning of conduct.
 Sympathy, utility, shared experience of pleasure and pain
 give ethics a living earth - a joined voice of sentiment and reflection.
 Extreme scepticism would stop the motion of life - life itself understands this.
 Food, friendship, conduct, society - nature takes mind back into its course.
 Inside the philosophical room questions burn fiercely; outside, life proceeds.
 Let doubt be a medicine, not poison swallowing every confidence.
 This philosophical view is not a song of shrinking knowledge's domain;
 it teaches us to understand the burden of proof, abandon arrogance,
 keep questioning.
 Stand where experience reaches; beyond that mark inference as inference.
 Preserve the subtle line between certainty and probability.

The path of experience says: the human is less master of knowledge than seeker;
habit, sensation, memory, language together shape the country of mind.
Cause is not an invisible chain but an expectation trained by practice;
through this humble question modern thought receives a new light.

From the Veil of Appearance to Undivided Reality

Not everything that appears is ultimate truth,
 yet it is wrong to call the appearing world mere illusion.
 Behind the veil of appearance some pulse of reality remains;
 metaphysics seeks the undivided voice of that pulse.
 Call it object, call it quality, bind it with the thread of relation;
 intelligence gives names, makes distinctions, knows a world in fragments.
 But when one quality receives meaning only in relation to another,
 each supposedly independent fragment begins to reveal its limit.
 Relation joins and separates as well - a double movement;
 binding one thing to another raises another endless net of questions.
 If relation too is a thing, what relates relation to its terms?
 Climbing thought's ladder, contradiction opens again.
 Do not therefore reject reality because contradiction appears;
 mind says: my categories are limited, final truth is wider.
 A concept that cuts itself from within cannot be complete truth;
 behind it there must be some larger wholeness.
 Non-contradiction is not merely a dry rule but one touchstone of reality,
 where different voices of experience can enter a light of harmony.
 Ultimate truth is such an undivided whole that nothing remains outside;
 difference changes its form there, but fragmentation loses final authority.
 The Absolute is therefore no empty sky or inert uniformity,
 no lifeless void, but that which contains every colour of experience.
 What becomes collision within the finite may be transformed in the whole;
 pain and pleasure, thought and feeling may gain meaning in a higher harmony.
 In the immediacy of experience, for a moment, subject and object are less divided;
 first life is a continuous current, afterward intelligence cuts it into parts.
 Thought draws boundaries for convenience and erects doorframes of names;
 but truth is greater than the frame and keeps flowing beyond every limit.
 Thought is a necessary instrument, not the final home;
 it can light the lamp of questions but cannot itself sing complete experience.
 Recognising its incompleteness, thought points beyond itself,
 quietly making a road toward what it cannot wholly state.
 Does the self mean only the 'I' confined within the body's limit?
 Or do memory, desire, and feeling together make an identity?
 Can some continuity remain even while every moment differs?
 Through such questions many inward layers of the human being open.
 The body is one form of our experience, yet the 'I' does not end with body alone;
 without feeling, memory, relation, desire, no image of self is complete.
 What we easily name a stable 'self'
 appears as an organisation of many experiences, a changing centre.
 The individual self is part of truth, but not ultimate truth itself;
 its limit, its opposition, its private perspective are not final.
 From our own centre we see the world, yet the world remains larger than us;
 experiences from many centres finally flow toward a wider whole.
 Memory threads broken pearls of time again upon one cord;
 desire makes a direction toward the future, feeling gathers the present.
 In this movement self-identity becomes a firm basis of practical life,
 yet philosophically it too is a limited form of the Absolute.
 When judgement and thought divide the world into subject and predicate,
 they make a useful map of truth, but not the whole territory.
 Word and logic point toward something greater than what can be said;
 the living wholeness of reality remains behind the signs.
 Imperfection is not exiled from reality; call it a degree within it.
 Some forms hold greater harmony, others remain more enclosed by contradiction.
 The wider the harmony a form contains, the nearer it comes to reality;
 truth is not one sudden stroke but deepens along many lines of experience.
 Before contradiction's hard cry, do not flee at once;
 neither take appearance as absolute nor discard it as nothing.
 Understand the limit of finite truth and preserve the worth of its share;
 within the fragment hear the approach of the whole,
 and keep the lamp of questioning awake.

This road finally makes the 'I' greater than itself,
placing private self within the wide ground of undivided experience.
Forms alter, relations break, thought confesses its boundary,
yet reality's whole music transforms all opposition.

From the Knot of Words to the Light of Facts

When philosophy loses its path in abstract mist,
 analysis becomes not a great knife but a fine thread untying knots.
 Word, thought, fact, experience - where does each boundary stand?
 The question rises again: what foundation lies behind the statement?
 Analysis does not mean merely cutting language into pieces,
 nor is every philosophical question rightly called a verbal game.
 Sometimes we examine the structure of fact, sometimes the form of experience,
 sometimes distinctions among concepts - and thus the shape of meaning opens.
 The atomistic dream sees the world as a meeting of many facts,
 where elementary propositions stand independently, not slaves of one another.
 Simple objects, simple relations, and upon them forms of sentences;
 complex statements are woven step by step from smaller threads.
 If a name is truly a name, it must point toward something definite;
 if what it indicates is absent, where does meaning remain?
 Under this strict condition acquaintance receives a special dignity:
 the life of a name is tied to what is directly given to consciousness.
 Yet not everything is directly present; much is known through description:
 distant persons, unseen objects come to mind by paths of relation.
 Name and description are not the same - this subtle distinction
 removes language's surface and reveals its inward logical construction.
 A description says: there is something satisfying all these conditions;
 without a proper name the statement can still bear meaning and truth or falsity.
 Thus absent kings, imagined characters, burdens of dispute
 can be tested within logical structure rather than left in confusion.
 But language lives in life, larger than the laboratory of books;
 names, gestures, contexts of ordinary speech move in many ways.
 A critical question arises: can a theory made too rigid
 contain the many-coloured uses of everyday language?
 What is 'simple' - the name of a property, the structure of a thing,
 the end of analysis?
 A subject called simple today may tomorrow open an inner book.
 So simplicity is hard to stamp permanently upon objects;
 analysis is powerful, yet its final boundary stays uncertain.
 Colours of sensation, touch, sound - the closest acquaintance of mind -
 sometimes become a basis from which the outer world is reconstructed.
 At the boundary of mental and physical, questions arise again:
 how can an order of matter be built from portions of experience?
 The hope of neutral elements seeks to narrow the gap between mind and matter,
 letting experience and outward world take different roads from one material.
 Yet relation, sequence, identity do not thereby die;
 as order is built, philosophy asks which principle holds everything together.
 Reflection on truth changes its form repeatedly:
 sometimes correspondence of proposition and fact,
 sometimes untying relation's knot.
 If a proposition is true, some condition in the world must stand behind it;
 yet proposition and fact are not one thing - there lies the question.
 When the truth of a negative statement stands before us,
 must there also be an independent 'negative fact' in the world?
 False statement, alternative, negation - small words carry a great burden;
 analysis shows deep structure behind language's simple face.
 Truth is not only within words, nor merely mind's wish;
 it requires some relation to the world - thought's journey moves upon this axis.
 Yet mirror-like exact sameness need not be required;
 understanding the relation of fact and proposition is precisely the difficulty.
 The old conception of causality is struck again:
 leave the invisible cord called 'cause' and attend to lawlike relation.
 Science often says more than a simple tale of cause and effect;
 changes of quantity and equations reveal a deeper mutual movement of events.
 Criticism replies: wholly expelling cause is not so simple either;
 questions remain in explanation of events, memory, personal conduct.

Law and correlation are useful, yet they do not end the thirst for 'why';
analysis succeeds when it acknowledges its boundary rather than claiming infinity.
Intrinsic qualities and relational forms both help identify things;
some properties are of the thing, some gain meaning in relation to another.
Through this distinction one seeks a measure of the 'real';
philosophy does not manufacture things, but examines the basis of what we say.
The heritage of analysis is not one theory's closed room;
it is discipline in asking: 'Is the statement clear? Where is its ground?'
Metaphysics, language, science, truth - all receive a new gaze;
analysis's lamp opens many modern philosophical roads.
Untie the knot of words, but do not take words themselves for the world;
seek facts, but do not call every construction ultimate truth.
Acquaintance, description, proposition, cause - understand each boundary;
make clarity an instrument, and keep questioning's free fire burning.

From the Proof of the Hands to the Limits of Analysis

In the history of analysis a clear lamp of questioning burned;
criticism tests logic again - where firm, where only an incomplete outline.
Clearing idealism's mist, preserving the earth of common sense,
abstract objects and analysis's limits open four roads of inquiry.
Within the formula, 'What is experienced is in consciousness,' lies a knot:
are experience and its object one thing, or two distinct modes?
In experiencing blue, 'blue' and 'knowing' are not identical;
the object toward which consciousness opens may remain distinct from consciousness.
When an idealist formula binds existence completely to being experienced,
logic examines the leap hidden behind that supposed identity.
If the difference between consciousness and object is erased under 'sensation,'
where do perceived thing and perceiving consciousness retain distinct meaning?
The aim is not to defeat every scepticism in a single blow,
but to reveal unproved necessity inside an idealist claim.
What is an object of experience need not be identical with consciousness;
the visible world as mind's mere representation is not self-evident.
A sharp question rises against the doctrine of internal relations too:
is every property so bound to every other that separate thought becomes impossible?
If one quality changes, the whole thing need not thereby be destroyed;
relations matter, yet every distinction is not therefore unreal.
A particular thing is recognised through qualities,
yet a list of qualities is not the thing;
a book's colour, shape, place may all alter; 'book' is not merely a list.
We must understand description's boundary - words cannot wholly enclose what is;
analysis draws a map of the thing, but the thing cannot be contained in the map.
Then at the threshold of common sense stands ordinary confidence in the world:
there are many physical things, minds, conscious processes - this is the common appearance.
Human beings, bodies, animals, mountains, water have solid places in practical life;
if philosophy denies them all, let it first prove the price of that denial.
Common sense is not blind tradition, but ground tested by long life,
upon which language, memory, work, and trust in other minds have built their house.
Doubt is possible, but drowning every settled belief at once
is itself a move criticism must examine, with courage and difficulty together.
Two hands rise: 'Here is one hand, and here is another' - proof of the external world.
There were hands in the past too; therefore at least two external objects have existed.
In this simple gesture a philosophical battle is compressed - the world is not merely mind's dream;
yet what counts as proof, and how far the dream-possibility is removed,
remain questions.
The force of proof and certainty of knowledge do not lie upon one identical line.
Are we awake, or dreaming? Even this possibility demands an account.
The strength of common sense is evident, but logic does not reach an absolute end;
practical certainty and philosophical demonstration are not always the same.
Still the insistence is deep: understand philosophical questions as questions about something 'outside';
weigh the truth-value of the world's existence upon experiential ground before theory.
Philosophy is not merely the work of opening words,
nor a decree assigning truth-values;
it clarifies relations among concepts, and there preserves the discipline of reasoning.
Views about abstract objects change over time.
At one point concepts and propositions may be taken as independently existing.
Later thought becomes more cautious: 'existence' is not an ordinary property;
to say 'existence exists' is not simple at the logical level.
Class, universal, relation - abstract names open new doors of questioning.
There are many red things, but what kind of being is 'redness'? What grounds a class?
If a sentence says, 'This class exists,' does the class thereby stand like an object?
Doubt rises at the leap from grammar to ontological decision.
What single common element makes all white things one?
Resemblance, standard, membership - each answer awakens another question.
The use of general words is clear enough; mapping abstract beings is difficult.
The power of analysis shines here, yet final solution remains uncertain.
The relation of proposition is not simple either:
what cord lies between statement and fact?

The same sentence in different times and contexts may carry different propositions.
 As context, time, and index change, the subject matter of truth changes;
 sentence-shape alone does not prove an independently existing proposition.
 Toward the end a fivefold test for the 'fruit of analysis' may be proposed:
 the analysed term must be proper, the statement true,
 equivalence of meaning maintained.
 Meaning-structure should be clear, component concepts brought before us;
 yet the question remains: on what ground are these criteria themselves measured?
 If analysis is successful, why was it needed if the meaning was already known?
 And if it was not known, how can synonymy be decided? The contradiction wakes.
 A paradox shakes any easy doctrine of analysis:
 if it means 'the same,' how can analysis produce new knowledge?
 Verbal analysis alone is not enough - this boundary appears before us.
 Concept, proposition, fact open terrains larger than language.
 Yet information finally arrives through words - the tension remains.
 Philosophy seeks clarity, while the instruments of clarity declare their own limits.
 This journey is no tale of one doctrine's universal victory,
 nor did criticism give the final answer to every question.
 In this light test common confidence, demand evidence from abstract theory as well;
 keep analysis as a tool, not a god - let truth awaken beside logic's limits.
 From the solid presence of hands to the mist of abstract classes runs the journey;
 experience, world, statement, universal all receive measured questioning.
 Analysis becomes clearest when it recognises its own limits;
 dialogue says: seek clarity, but do not make complexity falsely simple.

Along the Road of Use to the City of Meaning

At first language seemed a picture of the world - chains of names, lines of facts; simple sentences showed states of affairs, logic joined many accounts. A firm tie between word and world seemed the atomic measure; then ordinary speech asked: is language only this much? Later thought replied: language is no uniform machine; it is like an old city where new roads join while ancient lanes remain. Many houses, squares, turns, markets - each moves differently; so language grows, changes, stays alert with many human activities. Saying, asking, commanding, counting, describing, storytelling, joking, drawing a picture, calculating, thanking, praying, mourning. Each use in its own context is a living game of meaning; the language-game says: word is not alone, it belongs with life. Language is action, not merely sound or a row of written marks; it cannot be cut away from shared human forms of life and remain complete. Rules live not only in books - their movement is understood in practice; as a tool is known through its work, so a word receives meaning in use. Tools of one shape can do different work; different shapes can do one task; therefore, when seeking a word's meaning, look at the ground of its use. No secret object sits silently inside the word; 'meaning' itself is no substance - its movement lies in ways of using. One word has many uses, yet they are not utterly scattered; some features appear in this game, others in that - no one essence is in all. As among family faces eyes, gait, or laughter may overlap, family resemblance joins diverse linguistic forms in a net. Under the word 'game' stand chess, racing, ball-play - what one feature belongs to all? If we seize at one essence, the many-coloured order slips from the hand. Threads of likeness overlap from one case to another; the power of a general word needs no single formula binding all cases. If a name were merely a tag hung upon an object, things would be simple; but in ordinary language the use of a name shifts with context. Even pointing and saying 'this' depends upon rules already learned; the act of showing does not create meaning without the ground of a language-game. A private image rising in mind when a word is heard is not the whole of meaning; the criterion of meaning is not far from shared use and public conduct. Sign, object, mental image - their mere conjunction is insufficient; upon the social road of regular use a word finds its place. A question rises against equating meaning with the object meant: sometimes a name's meaning is not an object; when an object changes, meaning need not vanish. General terms inhabit complex systems of class, kind, and form; a word's life is in its use - hard to seize some invisible 'meaning-object'. Whether Plato's separate ideal object or a private image in mind, later thought asks both: what practical criterion gives meaning its form? When signs move by rules and people understand their use, meaning lives; a mental shadow alone cannot become meaning's complete foundation. A subtle distinction between 'use' and 'employment' too finds a place: acting through an instrument is one thing, established practice another. Some rules are explicitly written, others silently embedded in conduct; learning language means taking on the movement of a form of life with its rules. Surface grammar shows the shape of words - many sentences may look alike; deep grammar opens differences of work, rule, and context. Two sentences can wear the same mould yet perform distant tasks; philosophical confusion begins when form alone is taken as meaning. Grammar is not merely a school for writing correct sentences; it marks boundaries of concepts, rules of use, forms of relation. Some statements test the world and become true or false; some act as rules showing a path; if their difference is missed, a factual question gets trapped in the house of rules. Philosophical problems do not always vanish merely by dismissing language; yet confusion in linguistic form often makes needless knots.

The task is not to erect a new palace of theory but to see practice clearly;
 where a word has left its track, show again its natural use.
 Philosophy describes how words actually move in life,
 how rule, context, conduct, shared agreement give meaning a body.
 One example may show a path, yet examples have no final end;
 living language changes daily - no fixed formula maps it all.
 So the linguistic turn is not merely a defence of silent simplicity;
 it places difficulty back within life's complex uses, and questions deepen.
 Some problems are verbal confusions; others touch edges of existence beyond them;
 language, being, knowledge move along paths joined to one another.
 Close examination shows earlier and later thought are not a total rupture;
 the journey runs from the demand for pictures toward language-games,
 yet questioning does not die.
 Some seeds of old logic germinate again in new forms;
 description, structure, use, and life open meaning at their boundaries.
 The lesson is this: when asking meaning, do not sever the word from life;
 follow its use, rule, context, family resemblance together.
 Language is neither merely a mirror nor mind's shadow - it is a vast world of human action;
 meaning is the moving road through that world, where use opens every door.

From Solitary Signs to Shared Criteria

A feeling rises within the mind - a subtle wave of pain, anger, taste;
 can there be for it a city of words that belongs to me alone?
 A sign only I can understand, a rule locked within my memory -
 here the question of a private language opens philosophy's difficult knot.
 An older view says: the mind is inward and free, the body an outer covering;
 mental states have their own realm, bodily acts another kind of description.
 But if experience and conduct were wholly severed from each other,
 on what ground could the word 'pain' ever find a criterion for its meaning?
 Anger may flash across the face, or burn in silence within;
 no rule says every experience must appear exactly in an outward sign.
 Yet words for the mind are learned amid the practices of life:
 a child cries, people say 'pain' - language rests upon this shared ground.
 With names of outward things we can examine together:
 colour, shape, object, place can be checked again through another's eyes.
 But if a sign stands only upon one private sensation,
 what public criterion could decide whether its use is right or wrong?
 Suppose one day a strange sensation comes and I write down 'S';
 when something seems the same again, I enter 'S' once more in my diary.
 But is my memory of how that first sensation felt itself correct?
 With no other path of checking, what remains between 'seems right' and 'is right'?
 If I make the rule myself, interpret it myself, and sit as its only judge,
 how can the possibility of error stand when there is no witness beyond me?
 If whatever seems correct to me must therefore count as correct,
 the discipline of rule collapses - language becomes a private shadow.
 Language is not a mere list of signs, but a disciplined movement of use;
 a word's meaning lives in its form of life, in the web of what we do.
 To follow a rule, the distinction between right and wrong must endure;
 within the closed circle of private memory that distinction slowly fades.
 So another question rises: how do we ever understand another mind?
 Do we merely watch the body's gestures and construct an inference?
 The argument says mental words have traditions of public use;
 to grasp another's pain is not bare inference, but part of a shared human grammar.
 'I know' is not merely the name of some private gleam within;
 the use of knowing too is rule-governed, contextual, never identical everywhere.
 At times its ground is evidence, at times acknowledgment,
 at times direct acquaintance;
 to understand a word's meaning we must see the whole conduct of its use.
 Personal experience is surely one's own - you cannot undergo my pain;
 but that alone does not prove a private language - keep this distinction clear.
 The privacy of experience and a privately ruled word are two different claims;
 the truth of one does not by itself bestow the possibility of the other.
 A person may write down a rule for a sign and later test it alone;
 but if the criterion for remembering the rule's meaning is memory itself,
 then recognising a mistake once again depends upon that very memory:
 a mirror testing itself in the same mirror - the criterion vanishes in the circle.
 Shared language does not erase experience; it gives experience a name:
 pain, fear, taste, memory - personal though they are - enter public words.
 Nor is it right to claim that words make every experience the same;
 but shared practices are needed if different experiences are ever to be discussed.
 An objection remains: has the impossibility of a private language truly been proved,
 or only shown that a wholly private criterion would be deeply doubtful?
 If outward expression does not always match experience one for one,
 where exactly should the boundary lie between public rule and private sensation?
 A counter-question opens private possibility once again:
 a word learned from common language may be reshaped in a person's private use.
 If no one else understands that use, must every such use be meaningless?
 Here the debate does not sleep on one road of argument,
 but on many opposing paths.
 Even names of external things are first learned with the help of context,
 and later the word can work successfully though the object is no longer before us.

Memory, then, is not worthless – but the first training must be public;
 behind private use there remains the old ground of a language shared with others.
 When I say 'I am sad', do I inspect some object inside myself?
 Do I identify a private thing called 'sadness' and write a report upon it?
 The argument warns that such a picture leads us in a misleading direction:
 the grammar of sadness is in life, not merely in an inventory of introspection.
 We say 'blood' on seeing its colour, and 'sadness' for a mode of experience;
 the grammar of these two words is not the same – the difference opens here.
 Blood is an object for outward examination; sadness spreads through human conduct;
 their names may look alike, yet the words do different work on different ground.
 Still, the word 'sadness' is not useless in a first-person sentence:
 'I am sad' carries the first-person voice of experience.
 Yet the possibility of private use is no enemy of a public word;
 an individual voice can live within the grammar of a shared language.
 The question of private language finally makes us look again at mind and speech:
 meaning is neither only an inward picture nor merely an outward gesture.
 Rule, memory, conduct, expression together shape the field of meaning;
 between person and society, language builds its intricate bridge.
 Honour the dignity of inward experience, but do not lose it behind solitary glass;
 the roots of what is 'private' are in the soil of shared language – do not forget.
 Right and wrong, rule, memory, sign – think through the criteria of them all;
 from the lone mind's silence to the threshold of shared meaning,
 keep the lamp of questioning lit.

From the Ground of Experience to the Criterion of Law

Science is not a bundle of facts, nor a silent row of formulas;
 it asks why an event occurred, under what law its disorder finds repose.
 Philosophy asks science: where are your foundations, limits, method, proof?
 These two currents of knowledge meet to seek the meaning of the world we see.
 Experience is the first ground, but experience alone does not complete science;
 observed fact needs explanation – a passage from 'what happened' to 'why'.
 Theory gives events an order, law binds many contexts together;
 with experience and explanation as two wings, science touches its sky.
 Philosophy calls science to account for the assumptions hidden within it;
 cause, law, truth, probability – familiar words wake again to meaning.
 Which questions are scientific, which lie beyond the boundary,
 is never always clear;
 philosophy of science is therefore no gatekeeper of verdicts,
 but a continuing road of inquiry.
 Can outward events alone suffice to understand the meaning of human action?
 Will intention, purpose, kinds of cause all submit to one scientific mould?
 Science keeps its method apart from claims of supernatural intervention,
 building explanations from relations available within nature itself.
 The house of mathematics is not the house of experience – here signs,
 rules, conclusions play;
 within logical discipline, results unfold from accepted starting points.
 Is mathematical truth born of experience, or of definition, axiom, logical form?
 In this question philosophy of science opens many shapes of certainty.
 'Subtract one from three hundred and sixty-five' – calculation gives a clear reply;
 yet mathematical truth is not tested like a fact about the world.
 Formal language, definitions, axioms together build a structure;
 logic examines how a conclusion follows, not merely what it imagines.
 Consistency is required – a statement and its negation cannot both be true in one system;
 completeness is desired – whatever is provable should have a path within the method.
 Yet the reach of mathematics reveals a limit:
 not every truth is bound within one system;
 the palace of certainty stands firm, but philosophical questions do not stop at its walls.
 Mathematics becomes the language of science, but science is not mathematics alone;
 number, measure, equation give form, yet without evidence from experience they cannot suffice.
 A model simplifies the world but cannot swallow reality entire;
 a formula gives light, yet every colour of nature will not fit inside it.
 Explanation means an ordered understanding of events,
 not mere description repeated;

causal, nomological, functional - explanation appears in many forms.
 Planetary motion, change of temperature,
 the structure of water - the question changes its shape;
 one mould does not serve everywhere; the subject itself opens the road of explanation.
 The nomological discipline says: place the law beside the preceding conditions;
 then understand the event as a conclusion, seeing the whole logical road.
 Explanation is no longer merely a story, but a structure of warranted relations,
 where an answer to 'why' gains logical sequence through its link with law.
 The language of cause is familiar - 'this is why the event occurred';
 but cause is not merely the nearest touch: wider relations stand behind the law.
 Sometimes probability governs; the conclusion is not certain, only more likely;
 science accepts such cases too - disciplined experience within uncertainty.
 Functional explanation asks: what is this feature for, what role does it perform?
 In a living system, what does an organ do, how does its effect arise within the whole?
 But use the language of purpose carefully - do not lend nature a human will;
 describe the function without granting an unseen intention a place by default.
 Reductionist explanation opens a complex thing into its parts:
 water through molecules, properties of matter through subtler components.
 Yet adding properties of parts alone may not yield every form of the whole;
 as levels change, new relations arise - science must remain alert to that complexity.
 Confirmation asks: how does evidence speak on behalf of a theory?
 How much strength does one example give, how much trust can a contrary fact undo?
 It is easy to call a law universal, harder to bear an infinite claim from finite tests;
 scientific acceptance is therefore no final seal,
 but a probable judgement strengthened by evidence.
 Favourable instances matter, yet their number alone does not decide;
 what counts as a test, which prediction truly risks failure - these are not simple questions.
 Awkward paradoxes reveal the subtle play of language and logic in confirmation;
 the same evidence may sometimes form unexpected alliances with different claims.
 The problem of induction rises again: how can the past warrant trust in the future?
 How can experience itself prove the assumption that nature will remain uniform?
 Still, science in practice cannot abandon induction;
 the sequence of testing goes on;
 when new evidence arrives, theory is revised - knowledge keeps its humble gait.
 To accept a theory is not to stamp it once and forever with the word 'true';
 consistency, simplicity, fertility, scope do not all weigh alike as criteria.
 Two theories may be compared, yet no final measure runs in a single straight line;
 scientific choice stands on the joined ground of reason, evidence, and use.
 Even asking whether a law of nature is true or false contains another question;
 some laws describe, some provide forms of arrangement - their characters are not all the same.
 Within theory, laws organise relations among events;
 they are not objects, yet in the structure of knowledge they carry prediction and explanation.
 Seeking a definition of science brings hard questions of boundary into view;
 one voice says explanation is built from law together with antecedent conditions.
 But can every event fit wholly within such a mould?
 Human action, probability, function - different contexts escape the simplicity of one definition.
 Determinism says: if laws are complete, the future is bound by causes;
 but where then do human intention, inner reasons,
 and social context find their form?
 Causal explanation may be possible, yet the question of freedom does not thereby end;
 scientific description and moral responsibility do not occupy the same level.
 Reduction says an event at one level may be contained within another:
 heat in mechanics, biology in physics - but how far can this road be travelled?
 Higher properties are not merely sums of lower parts - the question of emergence appears;
 before the dream of total reduction, level-specific new laws stand their ground.
 Nor is the boundary between description and explanation always hard;
 in choosing certain features, the explainer necessarily leaves much aside.
 A complete description of any thing is impossible - endless qualities,
 endless relations;
 scientific explanation is therefore selective by nature,
 purpose-relative, finitely bound.
 This limit is not a weakness - it is a mark of science's self-understanding;
 knowledge grows wiser when it knows the reach of its own claims.
 Philosophy of science teaches: ask for evidence, test the law,

make language clear,
 yet stay far from the arrogance of enclosing the world within a single formula.
 From the ground of experience to the sky of mathematics,
 from explanation to confirmation,
 from accepting theories to drawing boundaries - the questions flow in one current.
 Science is not a book of final answers, but a discipline of revisable search;
 philosophy is its mirror, where knowledge sees its power, its limits,
 and its proof.

From the Appearance of Things to the Interval of Consciousness

A thing is not exhausted by however much of it appears;
 without the direction of the beholder's consciousness,
 its experience is incomplete.
 Phenomenology says: begin again in speaking of the world;
 place prior assumptions in brackets for a while, and attend to what appears.
 The call arises: 'Return to the things themselves' - yet the road passes through within,
 for whatever we receive comes to appearance within the horizon of consciousness.
 Colour, shape, memory, desire, meaning - all are forms of experience;
 consciousness is always directed toward something - its nature lies in this intentionality.
 This directedness is not only the seeing of the eyes, but every movement of mind:
 desiring, fearing, remembering, judging - each is woven around some object.
 Consciousness is no empty vessel, no isolated inert light;
 it is always 'consciousness of something' - without this relation it cannot be defined.
 In the natural attitude the world is simply taken for granted - 'this is',
 'that is';
 daily life moves upon this trust, without a flood of questions at every step.
 But for philosophical inquiry, hold this easy assumption in suspension:
 do not deny the world, only postpone the immediate seal of judgement.
 This suspension is called 'bracketing', the discipline of epoché;
 the world has not vanished - only our philosophical stance toward it has changed.
 Before the dispute 'does it exist or not?' comes another question:
 'How does it appear in my experience?' - and consciousness opens anew from there.
 Within an appearance, accidental colour and essential structure can differ;
 view one house from many angles - the appearances change,
 yet its 'houseness' does not disappear.
 Where some structural identity endures through variation,
 phenomenological inquiry slowly takes the path toward that essence.
 Vary the form in imagination - remove the colour, alter the shape,
 change the setting;
 learn what lies deepest by asking which loss would change the very kind of thing.
 Through this free variation, the sign of 'essence' comes into view;
 beyond the particular case, a general structure may disclose itself to consciousness.
 Yet essence is no heavenly object dwelling far from experience;
 it abides like a stable structural mark across experience's possible forms.
 Intuiting essence is a subtle work of discernment, not merely a net of words;
 among many forms of experienced appearance,
 light falls upon what proves indispensable.
 Every act of consciousness has two directions - the experiencing act and the experienced meaning:
 like noesis and noema, two poles born within one living relation.
 The act of seeing differs from the meaningful form of what is seen;
 through this distinction, the consciousness-object relation becomes subtler,
 more alert.
 The same tree appears differently at morning, evening, from afar, in memory,
 yet consciousness holds it together as 'the same tree' along an unbroken path.
 Every appearance is incomplete, while the horizon keeps further possibilities alive;
 from the visible to unseen sides, a continual expectation of meaning flows through consciousness.
 Time too is not merely the hand of a clock - it is an inward current of experience:
 the echo of the note just past, the touch of the present,
 the rim of what is expected.
 When we hear a melody, no single note remains alone;
 the trace of what has gone and the intimation of what is coming flow with the present.
 Memory is not a dead picture, but the past re-arising in present consciousness;
 imagination is not mere falsehood, but a free field of possible forms.

Together these varieties of experience make consciousness a continuous life;
 phenomenology seeks within this flow the patterns by which meaning is constituted.
 The 'I' is not confined to the name of a psychological individual;
 deeper analysis finds a transcendental centre of experience - not a simple object.
 It works behind each experience as a condition of its unity;
 the question of this transcendental self carries phenomenology farther along its road.
 But if all meaning is constituted in consciousness, a grave doubt rises:
 is the world only a construction of my mind? do other consciousnesses become useless shadows?
 Here awaken the questions of the Other, empathy, and a shared world;
 from one's own body toward another body,
 a road of understanding leads to another consciousness.
 Another mind is not directly inside my own, yet the other's body becomes a sign;
 gesture, action, dialogue, a shared world let other consciousness enter experience.
 Without this intersubjectivity, the foundation of an objective world remains incomplete;
 many perspectives together make 'our world' - larger and fuller than privacy alone.
 The body too is not merely outward matter, but a living centre of experience;
 raising a hand, walking, touching - the body becomes a bridge between will and place.
 The world around me is not merely a set of measured distances;
 for embodied consciousness it is a living geography of near and far,
 possible and impossible.
 Before all theories lies the world of everyday life - the place where science too is born;
 before measure, theory, formula, the lifeworld is the ground of experience.
 If abstract science forgets its roots, meaning can wither;
 phenomenology turns back toward the lifeworld to see the ground from which knowledge grows.
 Psychology, logic, mathematics, science - all make claims to objectivity;
 in the constitution of meaning by consciousness,
 where are their hidden preconditions?
 Philosophy's task is not merely to add further outward facts;
 it must read the experiential structure of the basic question:
 how is knowledge possible?
 This method is analysis, but not lifeless dissection;
 it is description, but not a shallow tale, nor merely introspection.
 It patiently explores the forms of experience after setting prejudice aside,
 as an inner pattern of meaning slowly appears through mist.
 Still, no final answer sits clenched in a fist - phenomenology itself is a journey;
 later currents of thought will shift its centre toward language,
 body, power, being.
 Yet its first summons remains: look attentively at what comes to appearance;
 before making claims, understand the structure of meaning in experience,
 the living ground of consciousness.
 The road from the appearance of things to the interval of consciousness
 brought human experience once more into contact with its deeper structure.
 Instead of the hard wall - world outside,
 consciousness within - a bridge of relation appears;
 phenomenology says meaning is born in encounter,
 where gaze and world become conditions for one another.

From Intentional Consciousness to Free Existence

No mental act is empty - its gaze goes out toward something;
 thought, desire, memory, judgement all incline toward an object.
 Intentionality says consciousness is always consciousness 'of something';
 from this seed of relation a new philosophy of experience unfolds.
 But must an object always stand outside us as a real thing?
 Think of a unicorn - where is the actual horse to be found?
 What the mind is directed toward need not possess physical existence;
 within this difficult knot, intentionality cannot be reduced to a single straight meaning.
 Many forms of relation open among word, object, and thought;
 what a statement signifies is not always found in the world as a thing.
 The direction of meaning and the question of existence occupy different grounds;
 phenomenology marks the structure of consciousness within this distinction.
 A voice insists: free experience from prior assumptions and look again;
 trace with care what is necessary in the relation between object and meaning.

Every act of consciousness is directed toward its meaningful object;
 meaning is not itself a thing, yet it does not lose its role in constituting the experience of things.
 The same object appears in different forms from different points of view,
 yet experience inwardly composes a sense of its unity.
 Appearances change while the relation of meaning endures - this middle field becomes the search:
 not to split experience and world in two, but to understand them through relation.
 This question does not stand outside history - the old quest for certainty of self,
 the dualism of world and mind, the authority of experience,
 all leave doubts behind.
 In the effort to purify subjectivity, consciousness became the central place,
 yet not by total severance from things - intentionality remained its living breath.
 Along this path the question of 'being' rises again:
 not merely things, but the disclosure of existence in the human-world relation.
 Truth is not only agreement between statements,
 but the light of what becomes unconcealed;
 in the experience of art, the being of things opens as a dwelling of deeper meaning.
 A painting is not merely a copy of colours, nor a poem merely description;
 the world opened within art is no repetition of imitation.
 Earth, labour, body, world enter new relations in artistic form;
 the ontological experience of truth touches human existence from within.
 Poet and thinker are not two separate islands - language is a path shared by both;
 one opens the density of experience, the other questions the chariot of being and meaning.
 In this view language does not fall silent after delivering information;
 it moves with us like a dwelling in which human beings inhabit the disclosure of being.
 One view sees language in the field of human practice;
 another traces ideal meaning and the intentional direction of consciousness.
 Different methods, different roads - yet the question travels toward the same place:
 how does a word gain meaning, how does experience enter relation with the world?
 Consciousness is not a filled vessel - it leans beyond its own limits;
 by holding distance from what it knows, a space of 'not' opens within.
 The experience of absence, an absent friend, the sign of an empty chair -
 consciousness relates even to what is not there and opens a gate toward freedom.
 Consciousness is not merely 'this' - it moves beyond its present;
 through the power of negation it makes a distance within the grip of what is given.
 In this interval freedom is not only an idea, but the possibility of action;
 human beings fashion meaning through deeds - the future becomes their project.
 Life is no map written beforehand; decisions are the moving pen.
 Today's choice shapes tomorrow's form, and responsibility walks beside it.
 The past gives us shape but does not decide us completely;
 the human being stands open toward the future, remaking the self through action.
 The light of questioning falls upon the hidden chamber of the unconscious;
 no secret room can simply free a person from responsibility for decision.
 Freedom is not knowledge alone - it is accepting one's choices in practice,
 bearing the weight of a self-chosen project between fault and innocence.
 Embodied experience says perception is not a fragment of sensation alone;
 thing, body, situation, relation together make the living depth of experience.
 The body is not inert matter, but a centre of experience open toward the world;
 another mind too is not mere inference - body, conduct, empathy form a bridge.
 Perception of a thing is not a still photograph of one instant;
 a sequence of experience, prior indications,
 future expectations all shape its meaning.
 A 'thing' is not one view, but a synthesis of many possible appearances;
 from this perspective perception becomes a living organisation of time,
 body, and world.
 Phenomenology is not merely psychology's rival;
 through description of experience it lets psychology see its own ground more clearly.
 Where ordinary language grows thin around conduct, feeling,
 consciousness, meaning,
 philosophy joins psychology's questions by describing the structures of experience.
 It is easy to imagine a human being as a machine of rules,
 but life is not so simple;
 psychology remains incomplete without the meaning of action,
 situation, body, relation.

Phenomenology says: first make the form of the experiential field clear;
 then build causes, classes, theories - without losing the voice of living fact.
 In the history of alienation, human beings can grow distant from their own world;
 labour, society, institution, relation - their own creations can return as alien powers.
 This distance appears deeply within social structures,
 when human labour becomes a mere instrument and the person forgets a human meaning.
 Between community and society, a loss of belonging can be seen;
 as shared relations loosen, modern life takes on the shadow of alienation.
 In the division between self and object, history gives another voice:
 alienation has no single meaning - it finds different homes in different philosophies.
 Alienation also appears in the failed movement of individual freedom:
 self-deception, retreat from responsibility,
 treating one's own choice as another's command.
 When a person names personal action as an external fate in order to escape it,
 freedom does not disappear - it returns in distorted form as alienation.
 The 'Other' too belongs to the human world;
 without shared life, the meaning of existence remains incomplete and colourless.
 Yet when the anonymous norm of the crowd weighs heavier than one's own possibility,
 the human being grows distant from existence - and a new shadow of alienation falls.
 Amid crisis, finitude, insecurity, the human being hears the question of the self;
 when solitude seems to be everything, the direction of world and transcendence is sought.
 Alienation is neither only a social fact nor merely a sickness of mind;
 it is a difficult sign for understanding the human condition,
 where relation and meaning meet.
 Phenomenology and existentialism are not two names for one philosophy;
 one opens the structure of experience, the other presses upon human choice and situation.
 Yet they meet at the boundaries of consciousness, world, body, meaning;
 in the question of how a human being lives in the world,
 their voices sound together.
 The journey from intentional consciousness to free existence tells us this:
 the human being is not merely an object, yet neither a soul cut away from the world.
 Meaning is born in relation, freedom gains its value in action;
 through deep description of experience, we recognise our situation,
 distance, and possibility.

From the Meaning of a Sentence to Logical Truth

In the house of logic the first question rises: where does meaning dwell?
 Does some abstract proposition stand independently behind the sentence?
 Logical doubt says: do not easily admit unseen entities in the name of meaning;
 first weigh actual linguistic use, sentence, truth, and reference.
 When we say 'Snow is white', the truth of the statement joins the world;
 but treating its meaning as a separate abstract object only multiplies questions.
 Belief, disbelief, knowledge - all clearly make use of sentences;
 perhaps we can work without an entity called a 'proposition' - such is logic's austere caution.
 We often assume that two sentences say the same thing,
 but ask how synonymy is measured and the ground begins to move.
 Subject-matter, context, indication - meaning has many sources;
 a simple pair in a dictionary cannot unlock the whole code of sameness.
 The lamp of doubt burns over the abstract realm of propositions,
 bringing the sentence forward to lighten the burden of ontology.
 If meaning can be grasped in use, philosophy gains firmer ground:
 reduce unnecessary entities - this is the thrift of logical discipline.
 Language becomes unavoidable in the matter of truth as well;
 even saying 'this sentence is true' receives meaning within language.
 Truth is no mysterious substance, but a relation between saying and world,
 where manner of statement, generalisation, and evidence together shape thought.
 'All human beings are mortal' - one general sentence reaches far;
 without naming each person, the language of quantification opens an endless net.
 We can speak of a class without possessing a name for every member;
 with 'all', 'some', 'none', logic measures a wide terrain.
 Here grammar is not merely a cabinet in linguistics;
 from logic's viewpoint it reveals structure - which term serves as subject,
 which movement is valid.

Beneath the sound-chain of ordinary speech lie many layers of form;
 artificial language lays open the logical architecture of a sentence.
 Language-relative signs, variables, predicates each play different roles;
 what one language says may take another form in another.
 If the boundary between object-language and metalanguage is not kept clear,
 a definition of truth can trap itself in its own sentence and suffer paradox.
 Definition too is not merely giving a synonym - often it is reconstruction,
 fixing the use of an old term and building it logically in a new language.
 Satisfaction, relation, values of variables - through these a formula of truth is made;
 from open sentence to closed sentence, logic's basic pattern grows progressively clear.
 One formula depends upon a variable's value, another is true under every value;
 some are true by circumstance, some gain necessity from structure alone.
 Within this distinction the form of logical truth slowly appears:
 not a special fact of the world, but a possible arrangement carried by structure.
 Logical truth says: change the subject-matter - if the structure remains,
 the force of truth lies not in a particular object but in logical relations.
 Negation, conjunction, disjunction, quantification - the disciplined motion of signs:
 to see the form of truth within them is philosophy's difficult craft.
 At the threshold of set theory, class, membership, emptiness raise questions;
 as mathematics joins logic, ontology awakens again.
 What do we say 'exists'? - whatever the quantified variable must range over;
 through that commitment the accepted furniture of a philosophical world is bounded.
 One clue: the burden of existence is carried not by names but by quantification;
 where we must say 'there is some x', there an ontological commitment appears.
 Names may vanish, descriptions may change,
 but the domain of variables cannot be feigned away;
 the language of logic quietly tells ontology where its boundaries lie.
 Set theory is useful, yet no single formulation need be the final truth;
 alternative constructions show that history has not travelled only one road.
 One outlook prefers minimal change and the preservation of familiar assumptions,
 because altering one strand in the web of knowledge can send tremors far away.
 Then comes another question: must traditional logic govern every circumstance?
 Doubt about the law of excluded middle arose with intuitionist thought.
 'Either this, or not this' - must that door stand open everywhere?
 Discernment says: we may change the rule, but the change has a price.
 If we build an alternative logic, re-examine the meanings of old words as well;
 do not merely alter the sign of negation and stop with the label 'new logic'.
 Translation, use, structure together reveal which rule has truly changed;
 otherwise the name is new while the old meaning moves silently underneath.
 In the web of knowledge, experience strikes first at the edge while logic lies nearer the centre;
 when contrary experience comes, many possible revisions begin to flow.
 Preserve one rule, alter another, or rebuild an entire theory;
 practical economy asks for greater coherence with fewer changes.
 For this reason logical truth is not an immovable stone in a separate heaven;
 its place within the body of belief is central, yet revision is not unthinkable.
 Scientific laws, mathematics, logic are parts of one wider web;
 they differ in distance, firmness, and use - not as offspring of two separate worlds.
 The hard boundary between analytic and synthetic also grows blurred;
 before saying 'true by meaning alone', the criterion of 'meaning' itself becomes troubled.
 Synonymy, definition, necessity circle around one another for support;
 what independent criterion can carry us beyond this circle?
 Empiricism survives, but not as the lonely testing of atomic sentences;
 one experience does not by itself make one isolated sentence true or false.
 Our beliefs face experience as a body;
 when resistance comes, possibilities of revision spread across the entire web.
 So philosophy of logic is not merely calculation with signs, nor merely language;
 it holds together the knots of meaning, truth, grammar, existence, mathematics.
 As a tiny line in a formula can awaken a question of being,
 so an ordinary sentence can reveal the deep foundations of a philosophical world.
 The logical lesson is this: admit fewer entities,
 but do not diminish the value of reason;
 clear the fog of meaning, but do not forget the real complexity of language.
 Bind truth to the world, recognise structure with precision;
 the web of knowledge can change - keep logic's lamp alight with that humility.

From the Question of Faith to the Darkness of Evil

At the threshold of religion a question rises:
where lies the world's ultimate ground?

Is God only a name for faith, or can reason seek the truth of the divine?

Philosophy says: call neither faith darkness nor reason the sole sovereign;
on the subtle ground between them, examine experience, meaning, and society.

Philosophy of religion is not preaching, nor a code for modes of worship;

it asks about the meaning, evidence, limits, and knowledge of religious claims.

What does it mean to say 'God exists'? What does the word 'soul' signify?

Behind these words, what deep lines of experience, thought, and life are drawn?

The first question is methodological: by what road shall truth be tested?

Perception, inference, experience, tradition - how much weight should each receive?

It is no justice of reason to force one criterion upon every field;

religious experience may differ in kind,

yet it is not therefore exempt from examination.

When inward experience says, 'There is something greater than I',

reason immediately asks, 'Is this objective, or only a construction of mind?'

Intuition may matter deeply, yet the question of evidence remains;

the bridge between personal certainty and universal truth is still incomplete.

As soon as we speak of God's nature, questions about attributes wake one by one:

infinite, omniscient, omnipotent - each word asks where meaning reaches its limit.

If the attributes come from human language, why should God resemble humanity?

If every analogy is removed, how can anything be said at all? - the question returns in many senses.

It may seem easy to enlarge human qualities into a supreme being,

but how can finite experience ever fully conceive the meaning of the infinite?

What we call 'knowledge', 'power', 'goodness' takes form in human contexts;

when applied to the divine, are these words univocal, analogical,

or wholly transformed?

The question of universals and particulars turns within religious language too;

one quality appears in many persons, yet every experience has its own difference.

If God is perfect goodness, how is that goodness related to human goodness?

Does the same word carry the same meaning,

or does only the sign remain while sense shifts?

Religious speech sometimes describes, sometimes promises,

sometimes prays, sometimes wonders, sometimes opens into moral resolve.

It is not right to measure every sentence by the fact-tests of science,

yet neither is it right to dismiss them as meaningless - their use in life carries meaning.

The side of experience says: a human being is not a machine of reason alone;

fear, hope, guilt, compassion also belong to religion's ground.

In a difficult hour the experience of ultimate refuge may transform the mind;

philosophy asks: is transformation evidence of truth,

or only a psychological effect?

Inference says: the world exists, order exists, a chain of causes runs;

does this order require some ultimate cause behind it?

Yet the language of cause and effect itself arose within the world;

applying it to the whole world becomes a question for argument.

Order, harmony, law - these signs are visible in the universe;

some see in them a designing intelligence, others the natural rhythm of nature itself.

Shall we leap from beauty to God, or pause and call beauty only a sign?

Philosophy says: weigh probability, explanation, and alternatives together.

Moral consciousness too says from within: some duties lay a claim upon us -

truth, justice, compassion, responsibility; do they rest upon an ultimate value?

If moral rules are made by human societies, whence comes their dignity?

If they come from divine command, is goodness good because commanded,

or commanded because good?

Questions of soul and personhood are not far from the idea of God;

if a human being is only a momentary body, how steady can religious hope remain?

Memory, consciousness, moral responsibility give continuity to the person,

but the claim of an immortal soul asks for its own evidence and argument.

Faith need not mean blind assent - sometimes it is an existential act of trust

that gives a direction to life even where complete proof is absent.

But faith must be distinguished from obstinacy - the door to criticism must stay open;

otherwise belief abandons the search for truth and becomes merely self-defence.

The world of ordinary experience and the world of religious experience are not wholly apart;
 the same person eats, loves, prays - life is not split into two pieces.
 To understand religious meaning, therefore, we must see conduct,
 language, history, community;
 private experience alone cannot render the whole judgement.
 But the hardest question stands before us like a wall of darkness:
 if ultimate reality is good and omnipotent, why this mountain of suffering?
 Disease, death, injustice, violence - why do even the innocent endure pain?
 The problem of evil remains a thorn driven deep into the heart of philosophy of religion.
 Some say moral life has no meaning without freedom;
 if human beings are free, the possibility of wrong choice cannot disappear.
 But natural disaster, congenital suffering lie beyond human choosing;
 free will explains much, yet does not provide a full answer to every form of pain.
 Some say suffering forms character and awakens courage and compassion;
 without difficulty, moral maturity may be impossible - life is refined through trial.
 But when excessive suffering breaks a life, the question returns:
 where is the limit of suffering as a means? human judgement finds no easy reply.
 Evil is not only an outward event; moral darkness also lives within:
 greed, cruelty, deceit, oppression - the shadows of human choice run deep.
 If religion only defends God while failing to hear the sufferer's voice,
 philosophical justice remains incomplete;
 the fact of suffering must be taken with full seriousness.
 Philosophy of religion is therefore not a closed door of conclusions,
 but an open place of dialogue,
 where faith gives its reasons, doubt its questions, experience its testimony.
 God's nature, attributes, soul, morality, suffering all belong to one web;
 an answer to one question opens another, and thought remains alive.
 If faith seeks truth, why should it fear criticism?
 If reason is humble, why should it laugh experience away?
 The first lesson of philosophy of religion:
 neither rush to judgement nor dishonour a question;
 even in the darkness of evil, keep searching for truth - there lies human intellectual dignity.

From the Current of Time to Religious Truth

From the belief that the world moves toward value, another question arose:
 is time only a measure on the clock, or living water flowing within reality?
 Past, present, future - are they truly three separate regions,
 or names formed in the sequence of consciousness,
 along which experience draws its line?
 One voice says a thing may bear different qualities at different times,
 yet preserve self-identity while change alters its form.
 Another question rises: if 'before' and 'after' are only marks of relation,
 how shall we understand the movement of the present,
 where shall the experience of change be placed?
 The moment we grasp the present it becomes past; the future arrives as present;
 every instant of time changes its name and ceaselessly moves ahead.
 If each moment receives all three forms, the question of contradiction wakes;
 thus philosophical doubt casts a deep shadow over the reality of time.
 Another view says the past continuously emerges from the fleeting present,
 the future stands as possibility before us,
 consciousness moves upon the boundary of now.
 Time is not merely a line of measurement, but a condition of historical experience;
 thing, event, memory, hope are bound by its meaning into one thread.
 The question of human destiny then joins time with ease:
 what is life's ultimate goal? does every story end with death?
 Religions offer many answers - liberation, peace, bliss, nearness to God;
 philosophy asks: on what ground shall we accept the attainment of such final value?
 If the self is not merely a momentary event, the question of continuity rises;
 judgements of value, disvalue, and worthlessness gather meaning within the life of the self.
 Action, desire, knowledge, love become signs pointing toward an ultimate direction;
 human destiny is not accident alone - it is also shaped by choices of value.
 Between time and eternity another door opens:
 if the final state lies beyond time, where does the sequence of change come to rest?

In one philosophy of value, eternity does not mean a timeless emptiness,
 but a state of spiritual fulfilment in which the journey reaches its end without lack.
 The final state is imagined in the form of love - far greater than private self-interest:
 continual dedication, compassion, liberated consciousness,
 clouds of life's highest flowering.
 Freedom then is not caprice, but the light of self-realisation;
 the truth of value awakens in experience and becomes the dwelling of consummate life.
 Then the question of God returns: is God necessary for religion?
 Some say yes; others say religion is possible even without a perfect being.
 The centre of religious life may be sought in the self's consciousness of value;
 the idea of God remains important, yet the whole meaning of religion need not be confined within it.
 When religious experience says, 'I was touched by the Ultimate',
 philosophy asks: how does the truth of that experience become public evidence?
 Mystical experience may be profound, yet it bears the weight of privacy;
 for the one who undergoes it, it is powerful,
 but it compels no necessary assent from others.
 Like the experience of beauty, religion may lift the mind beyond its limits,
 yet beauty does not by itself prove an invisible being.
 Meaning may remain, transformation may occur, a life's direction may change;
 but experience alone cannot yield a strict conclusion that God exists.
 An ontological argument for God says: conceive the greatest possible being,
 where supreme perfection itself appears to require existence,
 not merely mental presence.
 But why should existence admitted in thought establish a being outside thought?
 That leap from perfection in conception to real presence awakens questions on every side.
 The causal argument moves from the chain of the world toward a first cause;
 if every event requires a ground, it seeks at last a cause dependent on nothing else.
 But the claim that the world as a whole needs a cause itself demands proof;
 why must the first cause be God, and why could the world not itself be ultimate? - the question returns.
 The teleological view sees order, organisation, harmony,
 and reads within the fine structure of the world the trace of an intelligent designer.
 Yet order may emerge from many possibilities,
 or from the nature of laws themselves;
 the logical bridge from design to designer therefore need not remain unbroken.
 From testing these arguments, one conclusion slowly appears:
 traditional proofs of God need not be religion's sole foundation.
 The word 'God' carries much personal imagery,
 while perfect reality is a wider thought;
 within religion, experience of ultimate value may sometimes offer a more inclusive ground.
 Religion itself is difficult to define - is it faith, ritual, community, feeling?
 In some religions God is central, in others self, in others moral discipline.
 No single definition can easily gather every example;
 religion is a family of many forms whose ground reaches into human inward life.
 One voice calls religious response an emotional orientation toward value;
 another adds that belief, feeling, and conduct together make the fuller form.
 Feeling alone is not religion, nor action alone, nor doctrine by itself;
 knowledge, emotion, action - the three together make religious life whole.
 Religious rites became foundations of organisation through history,
 but when the means becomes the end, religion's moral awareness begins to dim.
 Ritual preserves collective memory, yet independent judgement too needs room;
 religion stays alive only while consciousness of value remains awake beyond rules.
 Mythic tales, legends, symbols are old languages in religion's history;
 not all survive a literal test of logic, yet they still carry human hope.
 Imagination, fear, wonder, nature together shaped forms of religion;
 as reason grew through time, symbols changed meaning and new interpretations arose.
 There are many theories of religion's origin - animism, ancestor worship,
 social bond;
 no single formula can bind the entire history of religions.
 Dreams, death, and the ancient sense of consciousness apart from body
 gave soul, spirit, deity and many imaginings their cultural form.
 Society too helps shape religion - shared fear, festival, rule;
 through sacred signs of community, the individual receives a deep sense of identity.
 Yet religion is not only group pressure; it includes inward personal response:
 faith makes community, community shapes faith - a bridge runs in both directions.

Without tradition, religion's memory would break; but if tradition turns rigid,
 the door may close on new experience, fresh judgement, moral progress.
 A living religion draws sap from old roots yet unfolds new leaves of questioning;
 it honours the past while speaking meaning anew in the consciousness of the present.
 Religion always travels between opposing tendencies - bondage and release,
 custom and renewal,
 the discipline of community and the individual's conscience,
 emotion and intellectual clarity.
 Within this tension religion lives; if one side wholly wins, balance breaks.
 Progress is not tradition's destruction,
 but the sprouting of new meaning from within it.
 Religion and philosophy are not enemies in the end - both look toward truth;
 philosophy makes factual judgements, religion shows a path of value in life.
 Yet if values are held objective, their fields meet at certain points;
 rational examination of faith keeps religion from blindness and philosophy from lifelessness.
 Revelation, tradition, experience - none deserves acceptance by name alone;
 where a claim is made to truth, the door of critical inquiry should not be shut.
 Intellect is not faith's enemy; if faith can endure the question of evidence,
 religion may become deeper, more human, more turned toward truth.
 From the current of time to human destiny, from destiny to eternity,
 from eternity to the Ultimate,
 from the Ultimate through the history of religion runs an unbroken sequence of questions.
 In the final line, true religion is not rigid belief but faith joined with awakened judgement;
 value, experience, reason, conduct together give human life the colour of meaning.

From the Sky of the Sacred to Secular Life

As history's wheel turned, the forms of belief changed again;
 reform, renaissance, and the light of science shook old centres.
 Questions once enclosed in temples came to stand in the street;
 religion asked: what is my meaning in the new age, where is my ground?
 Secularism is not merely a hard proclamation denying God;
 sometimes it is a new trust in human capacity itself.
 In illness, the physician beside prayer; in crisis, planning and labour:
 life begins to be shaped through worldly means, and action changes with it.
 Atheism and secularity are not always the same thing;
 one may deny a being, the other may shift the centre of life.
 As cultural, social, scientific consciousness becomes autonomous,
 human judgement gains force where transcendent command once stood.
 Cities grew, industries grew, people moved continually from place to place;
 within anonymous crowds, old identities slowly began to dissolve.
 Mobility and anonymity altered the forms of relation;
 the inheritance of belief no longer stayed still,
 and the modern mind stirred from within.
 Practical reason said: where there is a problem, seek a remedy;
 through work, project, technology, trace a road toward results.
 Secularity spread beyond the bounded province of the sacred,
 and ordinary moments of life themselves entered the centre of thought.
 The old hierarchy between sacred and secular
 met the questioning lamp of a new consciousness at its boundary.
 If God seems distant and the world moves on its own,
 worship, rite, command take new shape within a changed social context.
 Yet secularity can arrive together with tolerance and plurality;
 one need not abandon one's own view in order to make room for another.
 Religious vision may ask for single-hearted loyalty, civic life is often diverse;
 within that tension modern society seeks a balanced practice of respect.
 Some said the source of change lay within social structure;
 others saw a deeper revolution in the new intellectual power of science.
 Industrialisation, urbanisation, differentiation altered conduct,
 while the scientific language of cause and effect changed our description of the world.
 When natural events are explained through laws of nature,
 the need for invisible intervention within explanation diminishes.
 Science neither proves God by this nor wholly denies God;
 it changes the manner in which the world is understood - there lies the historical shift.

The criterion of verification came forward:
 what meaning has what cannot be tested?
 How does a claim about God descend onto the ground of experience,
 what form can evidence take?
 Some declared such statements meaningless, beyond the range of fact;
 others replied that religious language is not simply the language of science.
 Some understood religious statements as the language of moral commitment,
 finding guidance for life in story, parable, and memory.
 Whether a tale is historical truth or an imaginative symbol,
 if it changes conduct, religious speech takes on a practical form.
 But an objection arose: why reduce God to a moral story?
 Why diminish the believer's claim that God is a real being?
 If religious language is only inspiration, where does its truth-claim remain?
 Upon this question a deep struggle rises among many positions.
 Religious meaning is sought again in the language of a new age,
 behind transcendent words, people search for truths rooted in human life.
 Jesus as a vision of liberated life, a summons to love the neighbour -
 if religion lives, let its human evidence be visible in practice.
 Salvation then is no longer only a far country called heaven;
 it may mean leaving self-interest behind and living for another.
 Yet questions remain about resurrection, miracle, the reality of God;
 the boundary opens again between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith.
 Some thinkers said the 'death of God' was a sign of modernity:
 no old sovereign enclosed within the temple, no command descending from the sky.
 Human beings now turn toward responsibility for world, neighbour, history;
 if religion survives, it survives in new form, beyond its old images.
 Some more radical voices carried this crisis to its furthest edge,
 giving the absence of God a language of public experience.
 Some saw not despair in this death but a new responsibility;
 others, as old transcendence broke, traced a new ground for secular love.
 In one comparative vision, believer and unbeliever see the same world,
 yet arrange the total pattern of events into different meanings.
 As two advocates may draw different conclusions from the same evidence,
 so the same facts of the world may yield different maps of significance.
 One voice says: do not sever religious language from its form of life;
 do not impose one culture's criterion upon another and call the result meaning.
 Science, art, religion have different uses, rules, contexts;
 reason is needed, but forgetting context and forcing one measure upon all is deception.
 The Christian message may speak in new language in every age,
 while its essential truth is held eternal and expression changes with time.
 But the hard question remains: how can eternal essence be known apart from historical form?
 Without tradition essence is invisible;
 without essence tradition turns rigid - how far can the distinction go?
 Some newer efforts join religion to the whole of life;
 religion is not one corner of existence, but seeks meaning through the human whole.
 If the 'kingdom of heaven' appears in justice and love upon this earth,
 religion can preserve the sacred without fleeing secular responsibility.
 Then another question rises: can life be meaningful without a transcendent being?
 One answer says a religious depth of commitment can awaken within human life.
 Moral devotion, wonder, mystery, compassion, attention to life as a whole -
 these can carry a depth akin to religion even without a transcendent decree.
 Criticism warns: do not stretch the definition of religion so wide
 that every high form of morality becomes religion and distinctions disappear.
 In traditions such as Jainism and Buddhism, God is not always indispensable;
 the relation between religiosity and theism has taken many forms through history.
 Upon what does life's meaningfulness rest - divine plan or human work?
 If there is no final goal beyond the world, must life therefore lose purpose?
 Philosophy says a person can find meaning in wider relations with society:
 knowledge, friendship, art, compassion, nature can be valuable in themselves.
 Sisyphus keeps pushing the stone - if it is only repetition, meaning thins;
 but if action is filled with values one has embraced, life may become new.
 Meaning lies not only in the final result of work,
 but also in value within the deed;
 human dignity may live more in choice and commitment than in outcome.

The current of history is not merely a tale of religion's decline,
but of religion, science, language, society continually changing one another.
The journey from the sky of the sacred to secular life is no simple straight line;
at every turn the question returns: what endured, what changed,
what gained new meaning?
If religion lives in history, it must enter dialogue with history;
it cannot turn its eyes from science's questions, language's changes,
society's justice.
And if secularity is to remain humane, it must not make light of the depth of value;
together they keep bringing the lamp of questions to humanity's search for meaning.

Seeking One Truth at the Confluence of Many Paths

Religions move through the world like many paths, each bearing its own direction,
 one kindles the lamp of love, another walks the road of knowledge.
 Yet the human questions are shared - the meaning of suffering,
 truth, liberation, compassion;
 in this common thirst religions meet upon one another's ground.
 If every tradition says, "Truth dwells only in my house,"
 the door of dialogue closes, and human beings turn against one another.
 Interdependence says: do not erase difference; learn to understand it;
 by another's light of experience, understand your own faith more deeply again.
 Religion is not merely a list of doctrines, but a world of lived experience,
 ritual, symbol, story, prayer, austerity, love in countless forms.
 One tradition's words do not pass unchanged into another tongue,
 yet human longing, fear and hope meet one another in many places.
 Within the Upanishads the silent question of Atman and Brahman descends deep,
 the Gita crosses life's conflict through action, knowledge and devotion.
 The Buddhist path opens the root of suffering and the discipline of compassion,
 Christian love and sacrifice turn the human face toward the neighbour.
 Islamic surrender, Jewish law, the Jain discipline of nonviolence,
 each tradition bears a different pulse in the search for truth.
 Different names, different symbols, different colours of history,
 yet moral awakening in many places becomes a bond of shared life.
 Comparison does not mean that all religions say the same thing,
 nor that differences are only outward while everything within is identical.
 Resemblance matters, and difference is equally grave;
 dialogue about truth becomes possible only when both are held in respect.
 One speaks of the formless Absolute, another of love for a personal God,
 one seeks the peace of nirvana, another the divine home of salvation.
 If one conception is forcibly laid upon another,
 the native voice of a tradition is muted and dialogue loses its meaning.
 Religious experience too is not uniform - devotion, meditation, mystical silence,
 sometimes an upsurge of love, sometimes the clear stillness of emptiness.
 Comparative vision asks: how far do kinds of experience differ?
 Should the language of union be one, or does each hold many different inward tones?
 Advaita's oneness says an undivided ground lies behind difference,
 in Christian union the relation of love between person and God takes form.
 Buddhist experience turns toward no-self, impermanence and nirvana;
 it is not just to bind them all everywhere with the single word "mystery."
 So the first discipline of comparative philosophy is:
 read a tradition from within,
 enter its primary texts, practices, symbols and historical experience.
 To judge at once by an external measure is not intellectual justice;
 without learning another's language, its truth is not easily grasped.
 Yet understanding from within does not mean abandoning criticism;
 when faith makes a truth-claim, the light of questioning must touch it.
 Compassion says: preserve respect; reason says: argument too is necessary;
 the bridge of dialogue is built from both, not from agreement alone.
 One religion may learn from another not only ideas but ways of living,
 roads of social justice, service, nonviolence and self-restraint.
 Through contact in history, symbols, language,
 worship and philosophy have changed;
 through mutual influence many religious forms have taken on new meanings.
 At times there was conflict, the darkness of violence in religion's name;
 at times empire, politics and caste together raised difficult walls.
 To cover this history with talk of harmony is an insult to truth;
 interdependence means: acknowledge the wounds and make a new ethical covenant.
 If religion speaks of human liberation, why stand far from human suffering?
 Why claim holiness while silent before hunger, injustice,
 oppression and humiliation?
 Dialogue among traditions must finally descend into life upon the earth;
 the measure of truth must join compassion, justice and dignity.

Personal liberation and social responsibility are not always separate;
 if self-purification cannot understand a neighbour's pain,
 practice remains incomplete.
 Religions can learn more from one another upon this question:
 how inward transformation may join outward justice - let them show that road.
 Scripture in every tradition is a lamp of memory,
 yet interpretation changes with time;
 old words meet the questions of a new age and take on new meanings.
 Questions from another religion make us read our own scripture in a new way;
 thus tradition stays alive and escapes the rigidity of mere repetition.
 If religious truth is infinite, admit that human language is limited;
 do not take your own definition for the whole and final truth.
 This humility is not the enemy of confidence, but its deeper mode;
 what is greater cannot be wholly contained in one vessel - there is love in knowing this.
 Plurality says there are many paths; but then the question rises:
 are all paths equal? Can falsehood, violence and injustice escape by calling themselves religion?
 Tolerance is not thoughtless equality - an ethical measure is necessary;
 where human dignity is broken, criticism becomes a responsibility of religion.
 In dialogue religion does not lose its identity; rather,
 it makes that identity clearer;
 another's questions open knots hidden within one's own belief.
 What a tradition once accepted without question, comparison asks to justify;
 through such self-examination faith becomes not blind, but more awake.
 A confluence does not mean rivers surrender their names and vanish into the sea;
 each stream is not diminished of its history, flavour and geography.
 A confluence is where waters meet while the memory of currents remains;
 religions coexist beautifully only when their different voices remain open.
 Seeking one truth at the confluence of many paths may be no final formula,
 but a journey - where questions live, humility wakes,
 and the mind does not narrow.
 Love your own religion, and keep the courage to learn from another's;
 take humanity as common ground and share the lamp of truth with one another.

From the Meaning of the Good to the Measure of Duty

At ethics' threshold the question rises: what do we mean when we say "good"?
 Are we merely describing a thing, or also giving life a direction?
 "This is right," "this is wrong," "this is duty" - these are not lifeless words;
 within each judgement is joined a summons to conduct.
 Science says, "This happened"; history says, "Such was the event";
 ethics asks, "What ought to happen?" - and here the voice changes.
 Fact and value may meet upon the same ground, yet they are not the same;
 from what is to what ought to be, the leap is never automatically easy.
 Be cautious of binding the Good too simply to some natural property;
 pleasure, desire and usefulness may relate to it,
 yet its meaning does not end there.
 What is good may be pleasant, but "good" is not merely "pleasant";
 if definition swallows the quality whole,
 the freedom of moral questioning will not survive.
 The warning against the naturalistic fallacy says:
 do not rename a fact and call it a conclusion;
 do not stamp value upon description without an argument.
 Human desire, social approval and pleasure may all offer evidence,
 yet the question "Why is it good?" can still rise independently.
 The intuitionist voice says that some moral truths are directly apprehended,
 as colour is recognised, so good and evil may awaken within awareness.
 But if two attentive minds reach opposite judgements, where is the measure?
 How far can "It seems clear to me" carry us toward universal justice?
 The emotivist voice says moral statements also express feeling:
 in "This is good" there is approval, in "This is bad" the force of rejection.
 But if ethics is only delight and anger, how can disagreement be resolved?
 What role remains for argument, reason and evidence - or does all become mere emotion?
 Moral language is not only feeling - it also moves a person to act;
 it carries direction for conduct, pressure upon choice,

and the weight of shared rules.

On hearing a judgement the question rises: "Would you apply this rule to everyone?"

In this universalisability lies one deep measure of moral language.

If I say, "An exception for me, but a strict rule for others,"

justice itself asks: why this difference, and upon what reason does it stand?

If circumstances truly differ, a different judgement may be justified;

but in equal circumstances morality may demand an equal measure.

Within the language of duty, "ought" bears a pressure of its own,

not merely the fear of punishment, nor the attraction of reward.

At times against our own desire we say, "This must be done";

here moral commitment becomes deeper than personal preference.

Yet duties are many - truth, promise, justice, compassion, nonviolence;

they may collide in a single moment, and judgement is put to a harder test.

To declare one rule blindly supreme is an easy solution,

but life's complex situation asks: which duty is to receive justice here?

One duty-centred view says that duties make several *prima facie* claims:

promise-keeping, beneficence, justice - each bears its own moral force.

In a particular situation they must be weighed; no perfect arithmetic decides;

moral intelligence feels the burden of context and chooses the duty that is actual.

Utilitarianism says: weigh consequences, seek the greatest welfare;

test an action by how much happiness and suffering it brings into lives.

Not one person's advantage, but the account of everyone affected;

moral judgement rises above private interest to seek a wider answer.

But how is happiness measured? Do all pleasures enter one and the same scale?

Can knowledge, friendship, justice and dignity be reduced to enjoyment alone?

If the suffering of an innocent increases the happiness of the many,

is the act right?

This objection sharply questions the limits of consequentialism.

Rule-utilitarianism says: do not look only at one act;

examine the fruits of a rule,

and consider the long-term consequences if society were to follow it.

Rules that preserve trust, security and justice carry greater worth;

above immediate advantage, they can make moral order steadier and more fitting.

Yet when a rule gives a harsh result, the question of exception rises:

preserve the rule, or reduce the particular suffering - ethics again seeks a road.

Life is neither only a page of formulas nor only momentary calculation;

in moral decision judgement, character and consequence all require cultivation.

The Good and the Right are not one - some goods become ends,

and right action draws a proper line of means toward those ends.

But if the means themselves are immoral, the brightness of the end grows dim;

a "good result" cannot make every action morally clean.

The question of character also rises - not only what act,

but what person should one become?

Truthful, just, generous - virtues take birth within conduct.

Behind a single decision stand habit, disposition and long practice through life;

so ethics seeks moral light in character as well as in rules.

Virtue is not merely inborn - it grows through practice, education and society;

yet whatever society approves does not thereby become moral truth.

Tradition may give direction, criticism must test its limits;

while character is formed, reason weighs anew the meaning of inherited values.

Moral judgement requires reasons - "It feels so to me" is not enough;

context, consequence, equality and rule must all be examined.

A reason valid for me should count also for another in the same situation;

this demand of impartiality is itself a basic duty of moral thought.

Without feeling ethics is dry; without reason ethics is blind;

compassion says, "See the suffering"; judgement says, "Examine the reasons."

Together they give conduct a human form;

cold calculation alone and impulse alone each reveal their limits.

Moral disagreement therefore is not merely a quarrel over words;

differences of value, fact, goal and rule may lie concealed within it.

Sometimes clarity about facts itself reduces the dispute;

sometimes first commitments differ - even then dialogue requires discipline.

Philosophy is no final book of commandments;

it clarifies the language of decision,

removing confused definitions and uncovering the real weight of alternatives.
 The act is ours to perform, the responsibility ours to accept;
 ethics, like a mirror, shows what grounds stand behind our choice.
 The journey from the meaning of the Good to the measure of duty does not end here;
 every new situation will again ask, "What is just?", "What is right?",
 "What is good?"
 Keep the lamp of reason lit, honour equality, see the suffering consequences;
 rise above self-interest and write your decision beside human dignity.

From the Sequence of Events to Historical Understanding

History is not merely the dust of vanished days, nor a row upon a calendar;
 it seeks the meaning of human action within the living confusion of changing time.
 The question rises: is it enough to understand an event,
 or must we know its sequence too?
 Within the past, recognise the voices of human aims, choices, hopes and fears.
 Speculative philosophy of history and the analytical path are distinct:
 one seeks the direction of an age as a whole,
 the other asks about the logic of inquiry.
 Grand historical schemes desire to give history an overarching meaning,
 but analysis asks: how much is supported, and how much travels the road of conjecture?
 History moves like narrative - beginning, sequence, turning point and result;
 one event becomes linked with another and takes a place in the reader's consciousness.
 Here conclusions do not follow inevitably from laws as in science;
 in history a later event can change the meaning through which earlier events are understood.
 If the ending of a story were fully known beforehand, where would suspense remain?
 Even while understanding the past, the historian knows that its actors could not see the future.
 Their decisions must be understood from the possibilities open at that moment;
 to impose hindsight upon people of the past is not historical justice.
 A sequence of events becomes intelligible when the thread of purpose is joined to it;
 intention, means, failure and contingency all turn within the narrative.
 The outcome is not merely the final line - it casts new light upon what came before;
 what finally happened can alter the meaning we give to the beginning.
 Scientific explanation seeks causes beneath the shade of general laws;
 history seeks meaning upon the ground of human action, intention and institutions.
 An experiment may be repeated; a war cannot be repeated exactly;
 therefore the logic of historical understanding is not a copy of science.
 The individual alone is not history, and the institution alone is not history;
 time's real movement lies in the interaction between them.
 State, policy, reform, constitution - institutional facts carry weight,
 yet within them individual thought, decision and struggle also have their claim.
 Extreme nominalism says that only individuals are real,
 that general terms are shadows of language and institutions have no independent reality.
 Questioning light falls upon this solitary view:
 without institutional change, many links in historical explanation remain incomplete.
 Conversely, if a universalising view makes the individual only a particle in a current,
 where will private intention, choice and responsibility find a voice?
 Historical justice must keep its distance from both extremes;
 human action and social structure are genuinely interwoven.
 At times, in the birth of an institution, a few individuals play a striking role;
 amid resistance there rises a new purpose, a new practice, a new voice.
 But once an institution becomes established, collective action gradually grows,
 and a current larger than one person's life moves history onward.
 The historian selects facts - not every event receives equal importance;
 what enters the narrative line and what remains background are themselves decisions.
 Selection involves perspective, but need not become arbitrariness;
 evidence, context and coherence can make interpretation more trustworthy.
 Objectivity is not the indifference of stone, but disciplined fairness;
 one must recognise one's assumptions and accept evidence that speaks against them.
 The historian has a standpoint, yet facts retain the power to resist;
 if the sources speak otherwise, intellectual courage must revise the theory.
 Contingency is not unwanted noise in history, but a real force;
 illness, accident and opportunity may change outcomes despite every plan.

Human beings seek one direction, events may bend them toward another;
 historical understanding keeps this uncertainty within the story itself.
 Counterfactual questions too can be useful: "What if this event had not occurred?"
 What possibilities might then have opened, what direction might never have emerged?
 Such imagination does not replace historical fact;
 it is an instrument of analysis,
 helping weigh the actual importance of a cause against alternative possibilities.
 Cause here is not merely a push, nor the mechanical snare of law;
 human purpose, circumstance and institution together make its form.
 Many levels of cause may coexist behind a single event;
 the historian's task is to discern their weight and the subtlety of their relations.
 There need not be only one possible explanation of the same history;
 political, economic, social and psychological perspectives are not all empty.
 The question we ask can reveal new relations among the facts,
 yet explanations are not all equal - evidence must weigh them again.
 Do not imprison people of the past at once in the language of the present;
 enter the language, institutions and horizon of possibility of their own time.
 Then their decisions become more human than labels of foolishness or greatness;
 history becomes not mere sympathy but a discipline of contextual understanding.
 The history of philosophy changes by the same rule;
 it is not a list of dead doctrines,
 but answer to question, objection to answer - a living current of thought.
 Logic, epistemology and ethics changed as their questions changed;
 when old limits broke, new problems arose in new forms and colours.
 A philosophical doctrine is not an eternal statue of glass - criticism wears and reshapes it;
 one age's solution is tested again by another age's questions.
 From this history philosophy learns both its humility and its strength:
 as knowledge grows, definitions change, and questions themselves take new forms.
 Even at the height of analytical thought, history leaves its mark;
 what is accepted today as a clear method may tomorrow receive a new measure.
 No method is final - the growth of knowledge will challenge it again;
 philosophy remains alive only when it brings even its own foundations before questioning.
 To keep the past only in a museum is not historical understanding;
 its shadow helps us understand the present,
 its lessons enter decisions about the future.
 In politics, science and society, historical vision gives warning:
 one who understands sequence can better recognise the opportunities and limits of change.
 The journey from the sequence of events to historical understanding says this much:
 human beings live in time, yet through their actions they also give time meaning.
 Not law alone, not will alone - but institutions,
 contingency and purpose together;
 historical truth becomes many-layered, reflective and continually unfolding.

From the Letter of Law to the Inner Voice of Justice

Justice is one word, yet its meanings flow in many currents:
 to speak truth, repay a debt, give each person what is due.
 To obey law, practise self-restraint - the definitions differ,
 yet through them somewhere runs a shared sound of society, approval and duty.
 Justice is not only a private virtue, but a measure between human beings;
 our actions fall upon others - here the knowledge of right and wrong arises.
 Deeper than etiquette, at times greater even than law,
 an inward obligation says: be impartial, do not live only in fear of punishment.
 One view says: where there is law, there lies the line between justice and injustice;
 the state's enacted rule becomes the measure,
 and outside it there is no moral account.
 In a law-centred vision, where would rights have a clear place without an ordered system?
 Once law is made, the boundaries of "mine" and "yours" take social form.
 But then the question rises: can the law itself be unjust?
 If legislation discriminates, does its mere enforcement make it just?
 Legal validity is one thing, moral judgement of law another;
 within that gap justice stands as a question beyond the letter of the statute.
 Law may become a means to peace, security and social welfare,
 yet even a successful means can sometimes crush human dignity.

Courts apply law, legislators make it - their roles differ;
 so where does the measure of justice dwell? From this question a new path opens.
 Another path says that some human rights come before enacted law;
 power should protect them, not create them - their mark lies in human dignity.
 The voice of liberty and rights gives honour to the human person;
 against an unjust law, natural rights may raise a song of resistance.
 "Give each what is due" - the ancient formula sounds simple,
 but how is the "due" decided - by right, desert, claim, and from what source?
 Many voices and arguments run through older traditions of justice;
 within the same formula the grounds of entitlement have changed across history.
 Some call liberty the primary right, some give equality first place;
 some regard rights as self-evident, others see them as constructions of history.
 The list of human rights has not always been the same - its form changes with the age;
 yet a deep moral demand against human degradation remains.
 A third view turns toward social welfare - justice as society's organised breath;
 people make mutual arrangements, joining self-interest with the hope of common good.
 Experience says resources are limited and desires are many, so rules are needed;
 without reciprocal expectations, the boat of cooperation cannot cross society's river.
 Justice then is not law alone; it tests conduct even where law is silent:
 if a father shows favouritism, if an official makes an unfair distinction,
 judgement weighs it.
 In private and public life alike the question of impartiality rises;
 even when law says nothing, the sense of justice watches human conduct.
 If social welfare grows, the act may appear just; if it shrinks,
 the question sharpens;
 but "welfare" is not merely majority advantage,
 nor a city built on the weak one's crushed rights.
 Distribution, duty, opportunity and punishment all demand thought about equality:
 sometimes equal treatment, sometimes a justified ground for relevant difference.
 Impartiality asks: why should the rule change for another when it seems right for me?
 Equal cases call for equal judgement; if there is a difference,
 give a clear reason.
 In making law, applying it, and in the judge's decision, the same demand remains:
 remove arbitrariness, show reasons - through this justice receives moral colour.
 Do not lose tomorrow's greater good for today's small advantage;
 do not give one person's pleasure more weight than everyone's suffering.
 In every moral reckoning of interests, respect must have its proper place;
 crossing the boundary of self-interest, social welfare becomes a breath of justice.
 In one utilitarian view, rules and the feeling of approval travel together;
 not calculation alone - inward response too gives moral colour.
 A just act may increase social utility, but a question stands here:
 do we approve it because it is useful, or call it useful because we first judged it just?
 Moral intuition says the mind directly recognises some rules:
 arbitrary distinction is wrong, impartiality right - reason sees their force at once.
 But intuition alone is not enough; we need a shared language of reasons,
 so that a judgement meant for all can show its justification in public.
 Justice and generosity are not the same - generosity may give beyond what is owed;
 justice first asks: whose right, whose duty, what share is due?
 Giving is praiseworthy, but the question of fair distribution belongs to another order;
 keep distinct the burden of duty and the grace of additional kindness.
 Is justice one special virtue, or a wider inner voice of morality?
 Forgiveness, courage, temperance are virtues, but not all are social justice.
 When two people receive different punishments for the same fault,
 compassion itself can oppose justice if equality is broken without reason.
 At the human-centred boundary another question rises:
 does justice extend only to human beings, or also toward the animal world?
 Wherever there is pain, life and dependence, moral concern can reach;
 a broad Indian vision draws the field of justice and ethics toward living beings as well.
 Society changes and the sense of justice changes - this does not make truth empty;
 rather, experience refines our measures, and old blindness need not remain forever.
 What was once accepted may later be recognised as injustice;
 new awareness reaches the threshold of law and lights the lamp of reform.
 Law and justice are neither enemies nor the same thing;
 one is the form of institutional rule, the other its deeper evaluation.

Society's idea of justice shapes law, while experience of law reshapes justice;
 they move together, revealing one another's limits, powers and errors.
 If power moves too far from society's sense of justice,
 political consciousness can rise beyond existing law and make a road toward change.
 At times law itself plants a new sense of justice within society;
 through this two-way relation, historical institutions slowly alter form.
 No final formula of justice can therefore be shut inside one fist;
 law, rights, social welfare and impartiality together shape its form.
 No single doctrine is complete by itself; each carries some share of truth;
 through comparison and criticism the sense of justice may grow clearer.
 The journey from the letter of law to the inner voice of justice says:
 "Give what is due, give reasons for difference, give the weak equal moral weight."
 Let society change and rights expand, but keep the door of arbitrariness closed;
 justice lives only where power can be questioned and the lamp of judgement burns bright.

The Light Beyond the Letter

The lines written upon paper
 when they descend to the threshold of life,
 are no longer ink alone -
 they save someone's roof,
 block someone's road,
 give voice to someone's silence.
 Let the house of rules stand high,
 but let its windows remain open;
 let air come inside,
 let the breath of human beings be heard,
 and let the letter understand -
 life does not always dwell in one shape.
 To place the same scale in every hand
 is not equality;
 one person's palm is empty,
 another's fist already full -
 justice awakens only then
 when the reasons for difference too are brought to light.
 Rights are not flowers
 that bloom only in one's own courtyard;
 their fragrance reaches another's duties,
 one hand says, "My right,"
 another hears, "My responsibility,"
 and then the body of society becomes whole.
 In a difficult hour rules may fall silent,
 but decision does not remain silent;
 within that silence judgement
 slowly kindles a lamp,
 studying earlier footprints,
 yet also feeling the hardness of new ground.
 Precedent shows a road,
 it does not bind itself into the road;
 today's feet learn from yesterday's footprints,
 yet at every turning
 the earth carries a new scent,
 and sometimes the burden too is different.
 At the threshold of the court
 compassion alone is not enough,
 anger alone is not just;
 we need the clear water of reasons,
 in which the face of judgement
 can be seen by everyone.
 If law is only power,
 fear becomes its language;
 if justice is only a dream,
 the earth will not bear its feet.
 Only when the two meet
 does order become worthy of human beings.

Sometimes the letter is correct,
 yet the consequence is dark;
 sometimes the system is lawful,
 yet the spirit within resists.
 At that moment the question rises -
 shall we obey, or dare to change it?
 Conscience
 is not king above every rule,
 but neither is it a slave;
 it is a quiet bell of questioning
 that amid the crowd of injustice
 sounds its note again and again.
 Freedom is not merely
 a door standing open;
 there must also be a road to step outside,
 strength in the feet,
 and an opportunity to move forward -
 otherwise even an open door becomes a mockery.
 Equality
 does not paint every face one colour,
 but sees the worth of every face
 within the same light;
 let difference remain,
 but not the shadow of humiliation.
 When punishment is given,
 listen to intention along with the act;
 a wound knowingly inflicted
 and an error made unknowingly,
 if measured by the very same mark,
 make the scale itself unjust.
 Duty does not always
 take birth from fear of punishment;
 many times an inward assent,
 even without a watchman's eye,
 holds a person back,
 or pushes them toward the difficult right road.
 The welfare of society is a large phrase,
 but the crowd is not the whole of humanity;
 one solitary voice
 may be small in number,
 yet its dignity
 holds a value beyond calculation.
 Rules are made
 on the day people resolve to live together;
 but time changes,
 wounds change,
 and justice again upon the wood of rules
 writes new questions.
 Sometimes law reforms society,
 sometimes society reforms law;
 the two are mirrors for one another,
 when a stain appears in one,
 the other stretches out a hand
 and tries to wipe it clean.
 Disobedience too
 is not the name of every protest;
 when silence becomes the companion of wrongdoing,
 when a rule wounds humanity,
 public courage
 accepts even its punishment and stands as a question.
 Let justice be blind
 so that it does not judge faces,
 but let it not be deaf -
 the voices of oppressor and oppressed,

history's uneven ground,
it must have the capacity to hear them all.
The true dignity of law
is not when everyone is afraid,
but when
even the weak believe:
my voice will be heard,
my worth is no less.
The light that lies beyond the letter
may perhaps be called justice;
where rules, though firm, remain humane,
freedom, though wide, remains responsible,
and power, within its own limits,
bows its head before judgement.

ANNEX — TRANSLATION SECTION

Annex 1 — You and I (Song Cycle)

[A very abridged Maithili translation of the eighteen parvas of Vedavyasa's Sanskrit Mahabharata]

You and I

Adi Parva

This Bharata, the book whose song is victory—
 since when did the people here become so,
 actionless, narrow, defeated in military strength
 and in philosophy too?
 Who kept proclaiming the lesson of inequality within it?
 Who began this You and I?
 Filled with the valour of the Gandharvas and Ekalavya,
 on the ground of hatred and love, truth and untruth,
 ah, son of Parashara, divine Vyasa—salutations, a hundred salutations.
 He asked the gracious-faced one to write,
 “Let your speech never stop”—
 Ganesha's condition;
 what a summit of the poet's imagination,
 yet why did you make it seem a book of religion?
 Vyasa, though the author, is himself a character here—
 what a new rasa, what a new play of argument!
 Ganesha's pace was exceedingly swift;
 seeing it, Vyasa made the verses difficult.
 While he quickly grasped the commentary of each verse,
 the remover of obstacles would write it down.
 Such the argument for the verses' difficulty!
 Son Shukadeva, Narada the sage, gods, Gandharvas, Rakshasas, Yakshas—
 and Vyasa's disciple Vaishampayana, and Janamejaya, son of Parikshit,
 find their deliverance.
 The legendary Suta too was there among them.
 An assembly of sages at Naimisharanya, with Maharshi Shaunaka presiding.
 Suta began the hundred-thousand-verse Samhita.
 Today this mind says: let me look at this truth,
 what lay within the poet's imagination,
 let me learn and test it.
 What interpolators made nonsense of meaning—
 with delight and labour, let me show a little and see.
 Shantanu, emperor of Hastinapura,
 was wandering along the bank of the Ganga.
 The goddess Ganga, in the form of a young woman,
 stood motionless upon that bank!
 Perhaps that is why her name arose,
 the stream named after Mother Ganga.
 Overwhelmed, he said, “O beautiful one,
 accept my love.
 Become my wife and reign,
 over kingdom, wealth, and life.
 Everything is surrendered to you,
 but I have certain conditions of my own.”
 “No one shall ask who I am,
 nor hinder anything I do.”
 Shantanu, overcome with love,
 accepted every condition.
 He brought the human Ganga to the palace,
 and time went on passing.
 Then came this strange thing:
 Shantanu had seven sons.
 The young woman cast each into the current of the Ganga;
 the king could ask nothing.
 Was this the poet's imagination—

who is this young woman,
 who seems tender one moment,
 and the cruellest of the cruel the next,
 eager for the life of an innocent child!
 King Shantanu questioned her;
 at the eighth time he could no longer restrain himself.
 The young woman revealed everything:
 “I am Ganga, and these were the eight Vasus.
 Maharshi Vasishtha had cursed them
 to be born in the mortal world.
 I shall keep the eighth son with me for some time,
 then give you Devavrata as a servant-son.”
 Seeing Maharshi Vasishtha’s cow Nandini,
 the wife of the Vasu Prabhasa,
 for the sake of a mortal-world friend,
 attempted to steal Nandini.
 The sage searched for the divine cow
 with the eye of knowledge.
 Fierce with anger, he cursed the Vasus;
 the cursed Vasus pleaded with him.
 “My curse cannot be withdrawn, however;
 seven Vasus will be freed at once.
 Prabhasa must remain there,
 for some time under the shelter of the mortal world;
 he will become exceedingly renowned.”
 The Vasus then returned to Ganga.
 “O goddess, become mother to us all;
 our hope of release rests in you.”
 See the thread of the poet’s imagination!
 To justify Ganga in human form!
 Shantanu became detached,
 deprived of Ganga’s companionship.
 After time had passed, one day he went again
 to the bank, before the river.
 There he saw a divine boy
 playing upon the shore,
 checking with his arrows
 the current of the Ganga itself.
 Then Ganga appeared
 and handed Devavrata to him, saying:
 “He has received instruction from Maharshi Vasishtha,
 in all the Vedas and Vedangas;
 in scriptural knowledge he is like Shukracharya,
 in weapons, like Parashurama.”
 Shantanu regained his radiant son and returned;
 he made Devavrata the crown prince.
 Is this possible today—
 that a son raised elsewhere
 would be accepted by this narrow society!
 Why then should he not still be renowned like Devavrata?
 Several years passed thus; then one day,
 Shantanu sensed a wondrous fragrance by the Yamuna bank.
 A young woman approached—Satyavati, the fisherman’s daughter.
 Today, when lineage, clan, and money bind us,
 even then, for marriage with a king,
 the fisher-chief set down a condition:
 “My daughter’s son alone shall become king of Hastinapura;
 only then will this marriage take place.”
 How could Shantanu give such a promise?
 So he returned to his own city.
 Worry, like a worm, began to gnaw the brightness from his body.
 Devavrata asked his father,
 “What has happened, Father?”

“O son, what shall I say?
 There is one anxiety:
 what will become of the kingdom
 if someday
 something happens to you in war?
 On whom shall hope rest,
 who will carry forward
 the lineage of Hastinapura?”
 Sharp-minded Devavrata
 understood that there was something more.
 He learned the whole matter from the charioteer, went to the fisher-king,
 and returned after renouncing his claim to the throne.
 Yet the fisher-king raised one doubt:
 “What if your
 own son should one day take
 my grandson’s kingdom from him?”
 To the unexpected question
 came an answer equally unexpected.
 This vow would make history:
 “I shall never marry in all my life;
 I renounce the householder’s stage.
 I shall remain celibate all my life;
 I renounce even the forest-dweller’s stage.
 The throne of Hastinapura alone
 shall I guard for life.
 I renounce even the stage of renunciation;
 I shall regard the throne of Hastinapura as my offspring.
 No one shall touch it
 while I am alive.”
 “Blessed! Blessed!” rang across the horizon;
 the gods showered flowers—
 a statement of poet Vyasa
 perfectly suited to the staging of a drama here.
 “Bhishma! Bhishma! Blessed, blessed!”
 cried all the people.
 The fisher-king then gladly sent
 Satyawati away.
 In time she bore two sons,
 Vichitravirya and Chitrangada.
 Both boys were still young
 when Shantanu passed away.
 Bhishma then
 crowned Chitrangada king.
 So proud was he
 that neither god nor demon,
 neither Gandharva nor human, mattered to him.
 And he lost his life fighting a Gandharva.
 Then the kingdom came to Vichitravirya;
 Bhishma had to manage it,
 bearing the entire burden because Vichitravirya was still young.
 Later, when he came of marriageable age,
 at the svayamvara of the king of Kashi’s daughters,
 Bhishma set out for Kashi,
 where King Shalva too had arrived.
 The eldest daughter of the king of Kashi,
 Amba, was in love with him.
 Amba, Ambika and Ambalika
 turned their eyes toward Bhishma.
 Then they moved forward,
 and Bhishma, angered in every direction,
 challenged them and declared:
 “O assembled kings, hear this—
 if you can defeat me,

then claim your right to this svayamvara.”
 After defeating them all,
 Bhishma departed with the daughters of Kashi.
 Shalva pursued his chariot
 and challenged him to battle.
 The princesses of Kashi pleaded
 with Bhishma, master of archery;
 Bhishma spared Shalva’s life.
 But in private Amba said to Bhishma,
 “O son of Ganga, knower of dharma,
 there is one doubt in my heart.
 I have already accepted the king of Saubha
 as my husband within my heart.”
 The righteous, great-souled Bhishma decided:
 “Let Amba go to Shalva.”
 He arranged Vichitravirya’s marriage
 with Ambika and Ambalika.
 Shalva was a warrior,
 yet Bhishma had defeated him before everyone
 and carried you away by force;
 after such humiliation,
 can I accept this marriage now?
 Vichitravirya too said
 that marriage with Amba would not accord with Kshatriya custom.
 Amba then said to Bhishma,
 “You must marry me.
 You carried me away.”
 Six years passed between Hastinapura and Saubha,
 yet Bhishma’s vow
 stood between them.
 She went to Kartikeya, god of war.
 Amba was filled with revenge.
 He gave her a garland of ever-fresh lotuses:
 “O Amba,
 take this weapon;
 whoever wears this garland around his neck
 will destroy Bhishma.”
 But so great was the fear of Bhishma
 that no one was willing to wear the garland.
 She heard of Drupada, the warrior of Panchala;
 he too would not agree to wear it.
 At last Amba returned defeated,
 despairing and exhausted, and hung the garland
 at the gate of Drupada’s palace.
 Then she sought refuge among ascetics.
 After deliberation, the ascetics told her,
 “Go to Parashurama’s hermitage.
 He is the scourge of Kshatriyas;
 he will punish Bhishma
 for the suffering inflicted on you without cause.”
 She reached Parashurama and pleaded,
 laying her petition before him.
 Parashurama said, “Shalva is dear to me;
 he will not refuse my word—
 Are you willing to marry Shalva?”
 Amba said, “I no longer wish to marry.
 Now I have only one desire:
 you must fight Bhishma.”
 Parashurama accepted her plea
 and challenged Bhishma.
 Both were self-controlled, both lifelong celibates;
 let the war-cry rise between those warrior-archers.
 There was hardly a question of defeat or victory;

the battle remained undecided.
 Defeated in hope, Amba journeyed toward Kailasha
 and sought refuge in Shambhu.
 Receiving a boon,
 she was told: "After rebirth, Bhishma's death will come through your hand."
 Amba's patience too had its limit;
 longing for rebirth, she leapt into the funeral fire.
 After death she was born again,
 a daughter in Drupada's palace.
 In play she put on the garland she herself had hung there.
 Drupada thought: once again
 this feud with Bhishma will bring trouble.
 He expelled the girl from the royal palace,
 but she went into the forest and practised austerities.
 She obtained a male form and bore the name Shikhandi;
 she remembered everything.
 Vichitravirya's reign too lasted only a very short time.
 He suffered from consumption and died young, before his time.
 Dhritarashtra and Pandu had not yet been born.
 Dhritarashtra was Ambika's son,
 Pandu the son of Ambalika.
 Such was destiny's decree:
 the elder son was born blind—
 Dhritarashtra, son of Ambika;
 time took away his eyes,
 and time fashioned a line fit for proverb.
 Pandu, son of Ambalika,
 was afflicted with a pale disease, and so Vyasa gave him this name—
 or perhaps the disease itself took its name from him.
 The affairs of the kingdom were given to the stricken Pandu.
 Vidura was born to Ambika's maid.
 Under Bhishma's guardianship, all began their education.
 Bhishma then worried how marriages would be arranged
 and sought a bride for Dhritarashtra.
 Gandhari had Shiva's boon of a hundred sons;
 thinking the lineage would grow, he began this effort.
 When Subala, king of Gandhara, agreed to the proposal,
 Dhritarashtra married Gandhari, sister of Shakuni.
 On hearing of her husband's blindness, she bound her eyes
 and lived the life of the sightless though she herself could see.
 She became mother of a hundred sons and one daughter, Duhshala,
 whose husband was Jayadratha, king of Sindhu.
 Pritha was the sister of Vasudeva, Krishna's father;
 she had been born a daughter of Shurasena,
 but her father's childless cousin Kuntibhoja
 raised her with affection, and Pritha became Kunti.
 She was elder sister to Krishna of the Sudarshana and to Balarama,
 and devoted herself to serving honoured Brahmins.
 Once, in this way, Durvasa gave her a mantra:
 recite it with your whole mind, and whatever god you call will come.
 Vyasa's poetry here speaks the mind's own secret,
 probing the elements of boon, mantra and rebirth.
 Kunti was still child-minded; she summoned the Sun.
 A son was born, but fear of society stood in the way;
 she set the child afloat in the current of the Ganga.
 Adhiratha, charioteer of the Kauravas, found him.
 Karna became Radheya, fostered by mother Radha—
 a mighty charioteer's son, born armoured,
 his ears adorned with earrings.
 Pandu then married Kunti,
 and Madri, daughter of the king of Madra, became his second wife.
 Pandu devoted himself chiefly to war, winning kingdoms;
 keeping away from governance, he enjoyed its pleasures alone!

With Kunti and Madri he delighted in wandering the forest.
 While hunting there,
 a sage cursed him to remain without offspring.
 Seeing Pandu's desire for children, Kunti
 revealed the secret of the mantra Durvasa had given her.
 From Yama came Dharmaraja, from Vayu Bhimasena,
 and from Indra came Arjuna—Kunti's three sons.
 Through Kunti's mantra, Madri too gained hope of sons.
 From the twin Ashvins came Nakula and Sahadeva.
 After the five Pandavas were born, Pandu died;
 Madri became sati with her husband there in the forest.
 The sages of the forest brought the Pandavas and Kunti
 from the woods to Hastinapura.
 Kunti entered the city with the five Pandavas.
 Men and women gathered everywhere.
 The boys had been shaped by the company of sages, ascetics and forest creatures;
 people gazed their fill upon the gentle Pandavas, enchanted by their qualities.
 Under Kripacharya's tutelage,
 Duryodhana and the Kauravas were already receiving instruction;
 the Pandavas too, living with him,
 could receive the same education.
 Dhritarashtra thought this over
 and made such arrangements:
 the five Pandava brothers
 would live with Duryodhana and the Kauravas.
 Bhima was strongest of them all,
 and Duryodhana's jealousy was deep.
 Duryodhana began to devise
 Bhima's death upon the bank of the Ganga!
 He took the Pandavas with him
 for water-sport by the riverbank.
 He mixed poison into the food
 and fed it to Bhima.
 All went to bathe in the Ganga;
 drowsiness overcame Bhima,
 and as he came ashore he collapsed heavily there.
 Duryodhana bound him with creepers in a bower
 and calmly threw him into the current;
 freed of fear, the Kauravas returned.
 In the midst of the Ganga a serpent bit Bhima;
 poison countered poison!
 See then—who can cut away the Pandavas' fate?
 The poison's effect was gone.
 Bhima set out for home,
 rising, swaying, still dazed,
 to tell his brothers the story.
 At home Yudhishtira thought
 Bhima must already have arrived.
 When Bhima was not found at home,
 a slight crease came to Yudhishtira's brow.
 Just then Bhima came staggering in
 and told the story of the conspiracy.
 Kunti, worried, asked Vidura,
 "Was this right?"
 Vidura reassured her: "The Pandavas are strong indeed;
 Duryodhana will not be able to do them any harm."
 Seeing Bhima alive, Duryodhana and his brothers
 could only grind their hearts in frustration, those wicked souls.
 The Kauravas and Pandavas were absorbed in playing ball.
 The ball fell into a well and could not be brought out.
 Just then a teacher happened to be passing that way,
 his radiance itself proclaiming his greatness.
 He sent arrow after arrow down from above

and drew the ball out by the skill of archery.
 The children told Bhishma of his feat;
 his name was Drona, husband of Kripacharya's sister.
 His son was Ashvatthama; Drupada had once been his fellow student.
 Drupada had given a promise: "I shall give you half my kingdom."
 After becoming king, he forgot the promise he had made.
 The insult opened a breach—
 the proud king had humiliated him.
 Drona, now his rival, watched for the road of revenge.
 He wandered through a life of poverty,
 seeking a livelihood with Ashvatthama.
 He could not refuse Hastinapura's request.
 Bound by gratitude, Drona and Ashvatthama became Hastinapura's.
 He began teaching archery to Kauravas and Pandavas.
 After instruction came the time to strike the target,
 a test of cleverness together with martial skill.
 High upon a tall tree
 a wooden bird was placed, its eye the target.
 Drona asked each one, "Tell me, what do you see?"
 Everyone saw the tree, its branches and the bird together.
 He asked Partha, "What do you see?"
 "Nothing but the bird's head."
 Arjuna's arrow severed the bird's head.
 Arjuna became especially dear to Drona's heart.
 Time passed; the day of the weapons display arrived.
 The appointed time for displaying arms had come.
 Bhishma asked Drona what all he had taught them:
 warcraft, battle formations, and mastery of weapons.
 A public exhibition was arranged,
 and all were tested one by one before the people.
 Bhima and Duryodhana displayed their mace-fighting.
 Affection stirred in the hearts of Bhishma and Dhritarashtra
 when, amid the contests, Arjuna's turn arrived.
 The arena resounded with manifold feats of archery;
 amid the acclaim for Arjuna, Karna entered.
 Karna, disciple of Parashurama, respectfully said,
 "I too can display all
 those arts Arjuna knows."
 With Duryodhana's support he issued a challenge:
 "First, let Arjuna fight a duel with me."
 Kripacharya said, "You are a charioteer's son;
 where is your right to duel with a prince?"
 "If he cannot duel with you, then what talk is there of a duel at all?
 How did this question of single combat arise in the first place?"
 Ha! Ha! Ha!—a cry from the heart;
 only Duryodhana heard the cry within Karna's heart.
 Hearing this, Duryodhana made a proclamation:
 "If that is the issue, then let everyone hear—
 I make Karna king of Anga.
 A warrior is tested by his arm,
 this arm!" he said, grasping Karna's arm.
 "I make Karna ruler of the land of Anga."
 Saying so, he crowned him there in the assembly.
 Karna, grateful, embraced him.
 Then Arjuna rose and spoke:
 "O Karna, whoever you may be, hear this.
 I, Arjuna, disciple of Drona, tell you:
 do not imagine that the boon of valour
 has been granted wholly to you alone.
 My teacher did not teach me to admit defeat;
 I shall meet a rival whenever he asks for combat."
 The hall again rang with applause;
 Bhishma rose and announced the coming of evening.

Arjuna's proud words pierced Karna's heart,
 and brooding, the new king of Anga returned home.
 The Pandavas were praised for their courtesy.
 This made Duryodhana's mind uneasy.
 Shakuni and Duhshasana were devoted to him;
 after meeting Karna he felt reassured,
 and by constant whispering they tormented Dhritarashtra.
 "Father, you were the rightful heir to the throne;
 blindness from birth kept you from kingship.
 I have no such disability.
 Why then has everyone begun to regard Yudhishtira
 as the rightful heir to the throne?
 Did your own longing turn into fear,
 and how has even this come to pass?
 Yudhishtira is older than I,
 but he is only the son of your younger brother."
 They urged that the Pandavas be sent to the fair at Varanavata:
 "Ask them to go to the Varanavata festival.
 Meanwhile we shall improve arrangements here through public works;
 then all the people of Hastinapura will forget Kunti's sons."
 Dhritarashtra accepted the whole plan
 and ordered them to go to Varanavata:
 "Go, Kunti, see the fair and festivities."
 Vidura became suspicious—what secret lay here?
 He warned Yudhishtira to remain alert.
 Vidura's policy was one of vigilance,
 always cutting through Duryodhana's schemes.
 In league with minister Purochana, Duryodhana
 had caused a palace of lac to be built.
 Vidura discovered the plan
 and sent word as well.
 The messenger was a craftsman
 who constructed a tunnel.
 Inside the palace of lac
 the passage was completed in no time.
 The Pandavas had been instructed: "Sleep inside the tunnel;
 if fire is suspected, come out through it at once."
 It was the day of Krishna Chaturdashi; Purochana was unusually restless,
 planning to set the fire that very day, and Yudhishtira understood it all.
 Warning his mother and brothers, he held a sacrificial feast that day
 and fed the townspeople; among them was a Bhil woman with her five sons.
 Ah, poor woman! Struck down by fate—or by those who struck her—
 when two are locked in conflict, what becomes of the third?
 Who has ever prevailed before time? That night they all slept there.
 Purochana too slept there, in a chamber toward the outside.
 At midnight, seeing his chance, Bhima set the fire.
 The house was built of lac—as though made for the fire-god himself.
 How could such a house take even a moment to blaze?
 Without delay, mother and brothers bowed to Agni
 and Kunti escaped the jaws of death, saved from Duryodhana's plot.
 Purochana burning in the fire may have seemed fitting; but the poor Bhil woman,
 asleep there with her sons, knew nothing of what had happened.
 The townspeople believed Kunti had burned with all five of her sons.
 The city sank into grief when the news reached Hastinapura.
 Duryodhana was exceedingly pleased, and Dhritarashtra pleased within his heart.
 But Vidura was happiest of all, for he knew the truth.
 He told Bhishma everything,
 going to him with the secret.
 He removed Bhishma's anxiety
 by explaining the whole matter.
 Suffering greatly, the Pandavas
 made their way through the trackless forest.
 A boatman waited with his boat,

restless and afraid.
 "Vidura has sent me," he said,
 "to serve you here on the bank of the Ganga."
 The Pandavas crossed the Ganga;
 behind them they left so much deceit—
 Dhritarashtra's, Duryodhana's and Shakuni's,
 and Duhshasana's, Karna's, everyone's.
 Yet revenge followed with them;
 this was Hastinapura's misfortune.
 Who knew where this road would lead?
 There was scarcely even a path in that forest.
 They stepped southward,
 knowing nothing of their destination.
 Step after step they moved forward,
 hungry, thirsty, exhausted, stumbling—
 ah, see their misery!
 Seeing Kunti in such a state,
 Bhima could bear it no longer.
 He seated them beneath a banyan tree
 and climbed up, alert, to look around.
 Some birds were visible in the distance;
 Bhima went that way and found a pool.
 He drank, brought water back,
 and gave it to them; all slept there, withered by fatigue.
 Bhima alone remained awake,
 not knowing
 what he should do, his mind restless.
 Above the pool's trees lived a Rakshasa named Hidimba.
 He was there with his sister Hidimba, searching for food.
 Catching the scent of human beings,
 he set out in search of human flesh.
 "Hidimba, go—there is the smell of men;
 hurry there and bring them."
 Seeing Kunti asleep beside her sons,
 Hidimba looked on with sorrow.
 At the sight of Bhima's strong, full body,
 she stood gazing, unable to move her eyes away.
 Taking on the form of a beautiful woman,
 she said to Bhima, "Go, awaken
 your mother and brothers;
 take them far away to safety.
 I am captivated by you; I desire marriage.
 By my magic I shall save you—kill my mighty, cruel brother Hidimba."
 Bhima said, "Why should I wake my sleeping kin?
 If Hidimba is so strong, let him come and see my strength."
 Hidimba arrived; Hidimba stood there in the shape of a beautiful woman,
 talking with Bhima, and the Rakshasa flared in rage.
 He rushed at Hidimba to kill her,
 but Bhima caught him in between.
 Wrestling spread across the ground;
 the roar of their terrible duel resounded.
 Forest creatures fled, and Kunti and the Pandavas awoke;
 they ran to the place where a battlefield had formed.
 By then Bhima had slain him; Hidimba lay a corpse.
 Hidimba rejoiced at Bhima's valour,
 and with skilful speech won Kunti's favour.
 Yudhishthira too consented after learning mother Kunti's mind;
 Bhima married Hidimba and began to live with her.
 Ghatotkacha was born, mighty in prowess like his father.
 After some days the Pandavas prepared to leave the forest and move on.
 "I shall go toward the Himalaya with my son," said Hidimba.
 Ghatotkacha said, "I shall always remain with my mother;
 whenever you need me, do not hesitate to call."

As they travelled, Vyasa met them; Kunti wept aloud,
 and the author of the Bharata entered as a character in his own poem!
 Vyasa said, "Do not weep; days are sometimes short, sometimes long.
 Whether in sorrow or joy, one must not surrender self-command;
 one who walks the path of dharma—only that one I call truly human.
 Let not happiness make one proud, nor grief strip away patience;
 Kunti, your sons are such men as human beings ought to be."
 Vyasa showed his characters the straight road,
 yet did not force even a grain of his own desire into their character.
 Blessed, therefore, that poet and his creation!
 Strengthened by his words, the Pandavas put on deerskin and bark-cloth,
 took the appearance of celibate students, and reached the town of Ekachakra.
 They stayed as guests in a Brahmin's house and received his hospitality.
 The brothers went out to beg and placed whatever they brought before their mother.
 Kunti gave half to Bhima; the others shared the remaining half,
 yet even then Bhima's hunger was not satisfied, and he remained hungry.
 One day hungry Bhima did not go out begging.
 He heard terrible weeping in the house; asking the cause, he learned the story.
 Outside the town lived the Rakshasa Bakasura.
 The king was powerless, and the Rakshasa committed great atrocities.
 A settlement had been made: each household in turn, every day,
 must send a cart piled with grain, liquor and meat, together with the driver.
 Baka devoured all the food and the driver as well;
 that day the Brahmin household was filled with lamentation.
 It was their family's turn, and all of them were grief-stricken.
 Kunti said, "I have five sons," and told them of Bhima's strength.
 Hearing of Bhima's might, the Brahmin agreed,
 gratefully sending Bhima with the cart toward the demon's cave.
 Bhima found the cave and began eating; he himself was hungry.
 He ate to satisfaction; Baka arrived late, still ravenous.
 Furious, the demon attacked, but with kicks and blows
 Bhima killed him, dragged his body away, and brought it to the town gate.
 The people rejoiced and held worship and festivities.
 After staying some more days in that town, Kunti moved on.
 They heard of the svayamvara in Panchala, the story of Drupada's daughter,
 and crowds of Brahmins were setting out from Ekachakra for that place.
 The Pandavas were asking mother Kunti's permission to go,
 when Vyasa arrived and said, "Go—see the svayamvara there!"
 On the road they met the learned sage Dhaumya;
 resolved together, all moved onward.
 They heard the praise of Yajnaseni, born from the sacrificial fire:
 whoever pierced the fish would win Draupadi's hand.
 Reaching Panchala, they found the road to the svayamvara
 and, following Kunti's counsel, lodged in a potter's house.
 Karna had come arrayed with Duhshasana and Duryodhana;
 kings from many lands filled the arena with warriors.
 Then Draupadi entered, adorned, beside her brother Dhrishtadyumna,
 carrying a flower-garland and drawing every eye.
 Above the centre of the svayamvara ground a fish hung suspended;
 beneath it a wheel spun at great speed.
 Looking only at the fish's reflection in the water below,
 through a narrow opening in the wheel,
 whoever could strike its eye would receive the garland around his neck.
 All the kings had tried and failed, exhausted and disheartened.
 Seeing Karna, people murmured: "Why has a charioteer's son come here?"
 Draupadi said, "Even if Karna pierces the fish's eye,
 I shall not place the wedding garland on him; I shall not choose him."
 Karna sat down helpless; then Arjuna came in the guise of a sage.
 With a single arrow he pierced the fish and won renown.
 The circle of Brahmins, thinking him a Brahmin, raised cries of victory;
 the Kshatriya kings protested, and Arjuna again readied his bow.
 The pierced fish fell to the earth; Balarama and Krishna stepped forward.
 They reasoned with the kings and gently moved them away from the place.

In private Krishna said, "Brother, listen to this:
 I had heard a rumour—
 the Pandavas survived the fire at Varanavata, and sister Kunti survived as well."
 Bhima had already uprooted a tree and stood beside Arjuna;
 Krishna said, "Brother, the wheel of time has brought Bhima and Arjuna here."
 Disheartened by their prowess, the kings departed.
 The Pandavas led Draupadi away; the tumult had left her anxious.
 Arjuna revealed his identity and story, stirring Draupadi deeply;
 Dhrishtadyumna, listening unseen, returned and told his father everything.
 At the potter's house the Pandavas called, "Mother, see what we have brought."
 Kunti answered, "Whatever you have brought, divide it among the five Pandavas!"
 Arjuna said, "Mother, your word shall not prove false;
 Draupadi shall marry all five Pandavas."
 Drupada sent his priest with Dhrishtadyumna to them,
 invited Kunti, and brought them all to his own house.
 When Drupada heard that all five Pandavas would marry Draupadi,
 Vyasa arrived at once and told a story of her previous birth!
 "She received a boon from Shiva that she would have five husbands."
 Hearing this, all accepted, and Drupada married Draupadi by Vedic rites.
 They stayed peacefully for some days in Drupada's palace.
 The news spread everywhere and reached the palace at Hastinapura.
 For the sake of public opinion Dhritarashtra displayed outward joy;
 accepting the counsel of Bhishma and Drona, he sent a respectful summons.
 "Bring my younger brother's wife, my daughters-in-law,
 and my brother's sons with honour."
 Though Duryodhana and Karna opposed it, he consulted Vidura,
 who advised, according to scripture, that half the kingdom be given to them.
 Dhritarashtra sent Vidura himself to Drupada's palace to bring them back.
 He returned with them all, while the people stood to welcome them.
 Dhritarashtra said, "Yudhishtira, this will be better than quarrel within the house:
 go to Khandavaprastha, build a new city there, and take half the kingdom."
 Khandavaprastha was then a forest, though once it had been a royal city.
 Yudhishtira agreed, went there, and built new homes and gateways.
 It came to be called Indraprastha, and for thirteen years he ruled there;
 its people prospered greatly, and good governance brought renown.
 So the days were passing when one day Narada arrived.
 He was warmly welcomed and remained there pleased.
 Seeing the Pandavas' character and virtues, he nevertheless said to Draupadi:
 "You are wife to the Pandavas; why have you made no rule for living with them?"
 Narada's counsel was sound, and the five brothers established a rule:
 Draupadi would live with each in turn for one month; the rule must not be broken.
 Whoever violated it would have to leave the household for twelve years.
 For some time the rule was observed.
 One day a Brahmin came weeping; Arjuna asked what had happened.
 Thieves had stolen his cows, and he cried in anguish.
 The weapons were in the chamber where Yudhishtira was staying with Draupadi.
 Thinking a Brahmin's curse worse, Arjuna lowered his head and entered.
 He took the weapons, recovered the cows, and returned home.
 Then he asked Yudhishtira, "Give me permission to leave the household;
 I have committed the offence of breaking our rule." "What are you saying?"
 "How can this be an offence when the elder is present?
 A younger brother may surely enter an elder brother's chamber."
 But Arjuna left nevertheless, taking leave of mother and brothers.
 Travelling through many lands, he reached Haridwar on the bank of the Ganga.
 While he bathed, a Naga maiden set her eyes upon him;
 how could he escape? He was drawn down toward the netherworld.
 Arjuna accepted her proposal of marriage and received this boon:
 "Water will make a path for you; you will move through it without obstruction."
 He reached Manipur, where the king's daughter Chitrangada was beautiful.
 The king accepted Arjuna's marriage proposal on one condition:
 "Your son through her must continue my lineage." Only then was the marriage made.
 Chitrangada bore a son named Babhravahana,
 who, we hear, later became a supremely valiant and powerful warrior.

From there Arjuna travelled on to Prabhasa, near Dvaraka.
 Krishna arranged a display of arms near Mount Raivataka.
 Seeing Arjuna's love for Subhadra, Krishna suggested a new plan:
 "Abduct her; defeat the Yadavas if battle comes—only then will the matter be settled."
 Brave Subhadra herself became the charioteer when conflict broke out.
 Krishna then reasoned with everyone and brought about reconciliation.
 After the marriage, Arjuna and Subhadra went to Pushkara.
 When the term of exile ended, they reached Indraprastha with Krishna.
 Kunti rejoiced to see the new bride; her happiness could not be contained.
 Draupadi had five sons, and Subhadra bore Abhimanyu.
 The days were passing when Agni appeared in an emaciated form.
 The cure for his illness, he said, lay in burning Khandava forest,
 where the serpent Takshaka lived.
 "Takshaka is Indra's friend; whenever I try to burn the forest,
 Indra will not let it burn. Help me, O incarnation of Indra."
 "I am ready," said Arjuna, "but I do not have enough weapons;
 to fight Indra I need arms in proper measure."
 Agni gave him the Gandiva bow, inexhaustible quivers,
 and Varuna's chariot Nandighosha.
 Satisfied, Arjuna stood ready as Agni advanced to burn the forest.
 Indra sent the clouds; Krishna warned Arjuna.
 Arjuna used the Vayavya weapon, and the clouds dispersed.
 After Takshaka's death, Indra appeared there.
 Seeing his chance, Arjuna asked him for divine weapons.
 "Go worship Shiva; he can grant you that boon."
 Maya had come to Arjuna for refuge, saved from Agni's wrath.
 Grateful, he longed to render service.
 "Build a peerless assembly hall, the like of which has never been made anywhere."

Sabha Parva

Maya the Danava was raising a wondrous new creation,
labouring day and night to bring the assembly hall to life.
Crystal gleamed there with the craft of a palace of glass,
and there Yudhishtira at last took his seat upon the throne.
Sage Narada came there one day,
and counselled him to perform the sacrifice called Rajasuya.
A message of honour was sent, inviting Krishna from Dvaraka;
when Krishna entered the assembly hall, he said:
So long as Jarasandha, king of Magadha, remains alive,
your Rajasuya can never be brought to fulfilment.
He has defeated kings and cast them into captivity,
and upon Mathura he launched assault after assault;
unable to withstand him, we made Dvaraka our capital and withdrew there.
Hearing this, Yudhishtira sank into despondency,
but Bhima and Arjuna gave their brother courage: listen,
it is the duty of a Kshatriya to bring an enemy under control;
shall Krishna, Arjuna and Bhima go together to Rajagriha?
Dressed as wandering sages, they crossed the walls of Rajgir,
and made their way straight into the royal hall, bold and alert.
Jarasandha, taking them for Brahmins, wished to honour them,
but Bhima at once challenged him to single combat.
Day followed day, yet the struggle showed no sign of ending;
at Krishna's signal Bhima tore his body apart at the joining seam,
wrenched the two halves free with a sudden reverse twist,
and flung them in opposite directions, one this way, one that.
Then he released from prison all the captive kings.
They placed Jarasandha's son Sahadeva upon the throne of Magadha,
and the three companions returned again to Indraprastha.
Bhima set out eastward, Arjuna northward, Nakula southward,
and Sahadeva toward the west, each on a campaign of conquest.
No one could halt the progress of their victorious chariots;
wealth and grain poured in, and all was made ready,
while kings from every quarter were invited to Indraprastha for the Rajasuya.
Each ruler was entrusted with a fitting task,
and Bhishma and Drona were charged with overseeing the sacrifice.
Krishna himself took up the service of washing the Brahmins' feet.
From Hastinapura came Bhishma and Drona,
with Dhritarashtra, Vidura, Kripa, Ashvatthama, Duryodhana and Dushasana.
In the midst of the sacrifice arose the question of who should receive the first worship;
Yudhishtira asked Bhishma for his judgement,
and Bhishma said: among all these kings, Krishna is supreme.
Hearing this, Sahadeva began to wash Krishna's feet.
The king of Chedi, Shishupala, could not endure the sight;
he began to heap abuse upon Krishna and Bhishma,
and Duryodhana and his brothers were secretly pleased.
Bhima's anger blazed; he sprang forward,
but Bhishma restrained him and restored his calm.
Krishna remained serene even while Shishupala hurled insult after insult,
for Shishupala was Krishna's own cousin,
and long ago Krishna had given his sister a promise:
I shall forgive one hundred offences committed by him.
Until the hundredth insult Krishna stayed silent;
after that, the Sudarshana discus moved.
The wheel severed the king of Chedi's head,
and silence spread through the assembly hall.
Shishupala's son was then seated upon the throne of Chedi.
The rites of the sacrifice were completed without obstruction,
and every king was sent away with honour.
The marvels of the assembly hall became the talk of all,
and Duryodhana and Shakuni wandered through it in astonishment.
Seeing what seemed to be water below, Duryodhana gathered up his robe,

though there was no water; Draupadi laughed when she saw.
 Elsewhere he failed to see a transparent barrier before him,
 struck it, and reeled while Bhima's loud laughter rang out.
 Then he mistook a crystal floor for dry ground,
 stepped into water, was drenched, and everyone laughed again.
 Humiliated, he took leave of Yudhishtira,
 and quickly set out for Hastinapura with his brothers.
 Duryodhana's heart burned with envy and rage;
 he consulted Shakuni, and together they conceived a plan.
 To defeat the Pandavas in open battle would be difficult,
 so the wicked Shakuni devised another formation.
 We shall build a magnificent assembly hall of our own,
 and invite the Pandavas to come and see it;
 I, a man of Gandhara, am a master of dice,
 and through Dhritarashtra we shall have them summoned.
 The hall was raised and made ready almost in a single breath.
 Dhritarashtra considered the invitation to a game of dice.
 Vidura warned him: O King, this game will destroy everyone;
 but blind in his love for Duryodhana, Dhritarashtra would not listen.
 Vidura himself went to Indraprastha to deliver the invitation,
 and when the Pandavas arrived, there was a warm meeting of kin.
 But how long could the poison hidden in the heart remain concealed?
 Duryodhana soon led Yudhishtira into the assembly hall.
 Talk of the dice game spread everywhere,
 and Shakuni cast the dice upon the board and challenged Yudhishtira to play.
 I hesitate, Yudhishtira said; as a Kshatriya I know this is wrong.
 The moment Yudhishtira agreed, Dushasana declared:
 The contest will be between Yudhishtira and Duryodhana,
 but Uncle Shakuni will cast the dice on Duryodhana's behalf,
 and his victory or defeat will be counted as Duryodhana's own.
 The next day the game began in the great hall of Bharata - ah!
 The chamber was packed with onlookers;
 Bhishma, Drona, Kripacharya, Vidura and Dhritarashtra were all there.
 First jewels were staked, then silver and gold,
 then horses and chariots were cast upon the gaming board.
 When Yudhishtira had lost all three stakes,
 the unfortunate king wagered the whole army.
 Then came the kingdom, and then his four brothers;
 Yudhishtira said: nothing remains with me now.
 Shakuni replied: Draupadi still remains among you.
 This time, if you win, we shall give everything back -
 your brothers, kingdom, army, horses, chariots, jewels, silver and gold.
 The moment Yudhishtira prepared to accept,
 Ah! Shame!
 What act of sin is unfolding here?
 A cry rose through the entire assembly.
 Yudhishtira himself exclaimed: what have I done?
 The Kauravas were lost in delight, but one among them grieved -
 Yuyutsu, Duryodhana's own brother, stood alone in sorrow.
 Amid all this Shakuni cast the dice once more;
 This throw is mine! he roared - Yudhishtira has lost!
 Draupadi had been lost, and the cheated king stood stunned in the hall.
 Drunk on power, Duryodhana said: Vidura,
 go and carry this news to Draupadi.
 She is our slave now; let her sweep and clean,
 bring her here to the palace and deliver my command.
 Vidura answered: Duryodhana, cast aside your arrogance;
 do not take me for a gambler who wagers women.
 Seeing Vidura take this stand, Duryodhana sent Vikarna instead:
 go, bring the slave Draupadi here.
 Vikarna went and repeated the command before Draupadi.
 Astonished, Draupadi asked: once he had lost himself,
 what right remained to Yudhishtira?

After losing his own freedom, how could any man
 stake another person at dice?
 When Vikarna carried this question back into the assembly,
 Duryodhana ordered Dushasana: go, seize her and bring her here.
 Draupadi tried to reason with Dushasana, but when he would not listen,
 she fled toward Gandhari's chambers; Dushasana ran after her,
 caught her by the hair and dragged her into the hall.
 Ah, Bharata! Yet Vyasa, you concealed none of this truth.
 You gave strength to generous feeling, and perhaps found fulfilment there.
 There was no shortage of great men in that assembly:
 Bhishma, Vidura, Drona and Kripa sat sunk in shame,
 heads bowed as they watched Draupadi's tears fall.
 Then Bhima's lion-roar filled the hall:
 Let the Sun and all the gods bear witness, all of you hear me -
 these two hands of Dushasana that have seized Draupadi's hair,
 I shall wrench them from his body and fling them away.
 The Kauravas trembled at the thunder of Bhima's vow,
 but Duryodhana, seeing it, answered with another outrage:
 slapping his thigh, he made an obscene gesture,
 and told Draupadi to come and sit upon it.
 Bhima roared at the vile Duryodhana:
 I shall shatter that thigh beneath the blow of my terrible mace.
 Enraged, Duryodhana gave yet another command:
 Dushasana, strip Draupadi, for she is our slave.
 Draupadi appealed to the elders: O noblest of men,
 I beg you, preserve my honour - this is my plea.
 Every head in the assembly bent downward.
 Krishnaa abandoned hope from every direction;
 Only in you, protector of devotees, does any hope remain,
 somehow preserve my honour - this alone I ask.
 With a voice wet with tears Draupadi kept calling out,
 then collapsed in the midst of the hall, unconscious.
 Dushasana began pulling at Draupadi's garment,
 and the assembled men watched a wonder unfold moment by moment:
 the more Dushasana pulled upon the cloth,
 the more Draupadi's garment continued to lengthen.
 At last Dushasana sank down, exhausted and gasping.
 Then Bhima said: let everyone in this hall hear -
 until I tear open Dushasana's chest and drink his warm blood,
 my thirst will not be quenched, nor will death satisfy me.
 At this vow the whole assembly began to shake with fear.
 Dhritarashtra, seeing the calamity, called Draupadi near,
 consoled her, and then said to Yudhishtira:
 Forget what has happened; return to Indraprastha and live in peace,
 whatever you lost, consider it restored to you here and now.
 The Pandavas found some relief in these words,
 and after hearing Dhritarashtra, they returned to Indraprastha.
 Duryodhana, miserable, again consulted Shakuni,
 with Dushasana and Karna beside him, plotting another game of dice;
 it was a dark hour for the ruin of Hastinapura.
 This time the rule was fixed: whoever loses must endure
 twelve years in the forest and one further year in concealment.
 Dhritarashtra again sent a messenger to Hastinapura's guests.
 Yudhishtira returned once more with his brothers,
 and the conditions were read aloud,
 though for a moment the game of dice was halted.
 But before King Fate, whose will has ever prevailed?
 Yudhishtira would not turn away; he submitted again to the game of destiny.
 The dice rolled once more for Duryodhana, the same crooked throw;
 Shakuni cast the pieces and made him win.
 The kingdom was lost again, and exile was won instead;
 Yudhishtira's fate was defeated by cunning play,
 a kingdom's destiny decided by the music of gaming dice,

while the empty sky knew not what would come.

Vana Parva

Dharmaraja, having lost everything,
 set out once more upon that same road -
 the road of dharma and peace,
 leaving all else behind.
 Mother Kunti, grown old, said to him:
 Dharmaraja, I cannot go with you;
 I shall stay in Uncle Vidura's house,
 while you all go to endure the fruit of your deeds.
 Draupadi's five sons and young Abhimanyu,
 with Subhadra, would go to her parental home in Dvaraka.
 With the priest Dhaumya, Draupadi and the four brothers,
 we shall together pass these thirteen years of exile.
 When the citizens heard the news of their departure,
 they cursed Duryodhana's cruelty again and again.
 We too shall go with you today, Dharmaraja!
 But Dharmaraja reasoned with them and persuaded them to return.
 All went back except the Brahmins,
 and at that moment the priest worshipped the Sun.
 From him come grain and fruit to sustain the whole Arya world;
 after the worship, Surya himself appeared.
 He gave them an inexhaustible vessel from which food would never diminish.
 Draupadi would feed all the Brahmins and the Pandavas,
 and then eat herself; everyone would be satisfied, yet the food would not end,
 until at last she herself had eaten from the vessel.
 Yudhishtira reached the bank of the Sarasvati
 and made his dwelling in the Kamyaka forest.
 Meanwhile, hearing Vidura praise the Pandavas,
 Dhritarashtra drove Vidura from the royal court.
 Vidura too came and stayed with them in Kamyaka,
 until Dhritarashtra sent Sanjaya there after him.
 After counselling the Pandavas, Vidura
 returned once more to Dhritarashtra's court.
 Through the company of sages and seers they received teaching and discipline,
 hearing the stories of Agastya, Rishyashringa, Ashtavakra and Lopamudra,
 and the flowing tale of Nala and Damayanti.
 Krishna came to console them; Vyasa too arrived.
 Vyasa said: prepare yourselves for war;
 without Indra's unfailing weapons and Shiva's Pashupata,
 how will you contend with warriors like Bhishma and Drona?
 With Yudhishtira's permission Arjuna set out,
 crossing Gandhamadana on the road to Mount Kailasa.
 His quiver and bow travelled with him.
 A matted-haired ascetic met Arjuna and asked:
 This is a land of penance; what use have you for weapons here?
 Arjuna answered: how can I abandon the duty of a Kshatriya?
 For that very reason my weapons remain at the gate beside me.
 Pleased, Indra then revealed his true form.
 Ask a boon, my son; I am pleased with you.
 May I receive celestial weapons along with the knowledge to use them.
 Arjuna, your desire shall be fulfilled, but first
 go and please Shiva, and obtain the Pashupata from him.
 Then the gods themselves will grant you celestial weapons,
 but their use against human beings is forbidden.
 Tell me, what will you do after gaining such weapons?
 Only to gather strength is my purpose, O Lord;
 the Kauravas have stolen our kingdom through deceit,
 yet I shall never misuse these weapons.
 After Indra vanished from sight, Arjuna
 began a severe penance to Shiva.
 Then Shiva, with Parvati, came toward the place of austerity.
 Arjuna was gathering flowers when suddenly

a wild boar burst from the forest and came straight toward him.
 The moment Arjuna set an arrow to his bow,
 he saw a Kirata hunter already taking aim at the boar.
 Both released their arrows, and the boar fell dead;
 then the two quarrelled over whose shot had slain it.
 When the Kirata laughed aloud at Arjuna's words,
 Arjuna loosed an arrow at him,
 yet saw that it made no wound at all;
 then Arjuna swung his sword against the hunter.
 But the moment the blade struck the Kirata's body,
 Arjuna's sword shattered into fragments at the touch.
 They grappled in wrestling, and Arjuna fell unconscious;
 when he rose, he began worshipping his family deity.
 The flower-garland he had raised to place upon Shiva
 was hanging around the Kirata's neck; seeing it, Arjuna prostrated himself.
 Shiva, still in the guise of the hunter, said: ask your boon, Arjuna.
 Arjuna asked for the Pashupata weapon and learned how to release and recall it.
 Shiva said: remember this truth,
 never, under any circumstance, use it against a human being.
 Then Arjuna journeyed onward toward Indra's heaven,
 learned the use of celestial weapons there, and slew demons with them.
 One day Urvashi came to him, seeking love.
 Arjuna said: you are an apsara of my teacher, Indra;
 by that relationship you are to me like a mother.
 I have come here to learn the science of weapons,
 to practise discipline, dance and music, not to pursue pleasure;
 by that measure, are you not my mother and my teacher?
 Urvashi then gave him this curse:
 Hear me, lover who refuses love - you shall live without manhood.
 But because you called me mother, let the curse last only a year;
 it will become a blessing, for in that form you will be able to hide.
 The Pandavas meanwhile continued receiving instruction from sages.
 Narada brought news of Arjuna and said he would return;
 then the sage Lomasha came and would tell them more.
 A few days later Lomasha reached their dwelling
 and said: on Kailasa Arjuna has obtained Shiva's Pashupata;
 in the world of the gods he has gained celestial weapons,
 and from apsaras and gandharvas he is learning dance and music,
 receiving all this training in heaven with discipline and restraint.
 Then, O sage, lead us upon pilgrimage to the sacred places.
 Lomasha set out with the Pandavas toward Naimisharanya.
 They went through Prayaga, Gaya and Gangasagara, then crossed toward Kalinga,
 and westward to Prabhasa, where the Yadavas were staying.
 They were welcomed there, and Subhadra met Draupadi;
 consoled by Balarama and Krishna, they moved onward,
 crossing the Sarasvati toward Kashmir and Mount Gandhamadana,
 climbing through rain and storms of hail.
 At last they reached Badrikashrama and rested there
 for some time.
 Meanwhile Jayadratha, husband of Duhshala, passing through Kamyaka forest,
 saw Draupadi there alone;
 the Pandavas had gone out hunting at that hour.
 He entered the hut and proposed marriage to Draupadi.
 When Draupadi rebuked his baseness with harsh words,
 the wicked Jayadratha seized her into his chariot and abducted her.
 When Bhima returned to the hermitage and heard the news, he rushed after him;
 Arjuna too arrived and joined the pursuit of Jayadratha.
 Yudhishtira said: spare his life, for he is Duhshala's husband.
 Seeing the two brothers approaching, Jayadratha abandoned Draupadi and fled.
 Bhima threw him down, bound him, and dragged him before Draupadi;
 after humiliating him, Draupadi had him released.
 Jayadratha performed penance to Shiva and asked for a boon:
 let me defeat all five Pandavas.

Shiva answered: you shall not be defeated by any of the brothers,
 except Arjuna.
 Vyasa named such exertion penance;
 but what followed was staged, as though with eyes deliberately closed!
 Karna too was practising austerities, seeking the power to defeat Arjuna.
 Indra thought: while that armour and those earrings remain upon his body,
 this heroic giver of gifts can never be defeated by anyone.
 I shall therefore ask him for the armour and earrings.
 Seeing this, Surya warned him: Karna, be alert;
 Indra is coming disguised as a petitioner,
 and he will ask for nothing but your armour and earrings.
 Karna said: I shall never say no to a supplicant - that is my vow;
 my vow shall not break, whatever the result may be.
 Then Indra came in Brahmin guise and asked for both gifts.
 A knowing, painful smile came to Karna's lips as he lifted his blade;
 he cut the armour and earrings from his own body and offered them at once.
 Indra said: ask a boon from me, anything except my thunderbolt.
 Karna asked for the unfailing Shakti; Indra granted it, saying:
 whomever it strikes will die, but once released it will return to me.
 Slowly, slowly, the twelve years were passing in this way,
 and they began to consider the coming year of concealment.
 Yudhishtira was discussing it with his brothers and Draupadi
 when a Brahmin came to them, weeping and distressed.
 He said: the fire-drill wood was hanging outside my hut;
 a deer came and began rubbing itself against it,
 and as it left, the arani became caught in its antlers.
 Startled, the deer ran away carrying my sacred wood;
 how shall I kindle the fire for the sacrifice? I am deeply troubled.
 All five brothers chased the deer with the Brahmin,
 but the nimble creature vanished from sight.
 Exhausted and thirsty, they sat beneath a banyan tree;
 Nakula went to a lake to bring water.
 A voice spoke: this pool belongs to me;
 you shall have no water until you answer my questions.
 Tormented by thirst, Nakula ignored the warning;
 the moment he drank, he collapsed there as if dead.
 The same fate befell Sahadeva.
 When Arjuna came, he too heard the voice.
 He loosed an arrow toward the sound, but nothing came of it;
 the moment he drank the water, he too fell lifeless.
 Alarmed, Yudhishtira sent Bhima to search for them,
 but after drinking the water Bhima too failed to return.
 When Yudhishtira reached the lake in the forest,
 he saw all his brothers lying dead and stepped into the water in anguish.
 The same voice warned him: answer first, or remain thirsty;
 if you act with arrogance, the same fate will be yours.
 Thinking some Yaksha must be speaking, Yudhishtira replied:
 Ask your questions; I shall answer them properly. The Yaksha began.
 Who is the companion that always stays with a human being?
 Patience alone remains a person's unfailing companion.
 What is the one path to attaining fame?
 Without generosity, no lasting fame is gained.
 What moves more swiftly than the wind?
 Before the speed of the mind, even the wind falls behind.
 Who is the true companion of one who travels abroad?
 There is no companion like knowledge for the traveller.
 What must a person abandon to gain liberation?
 When ego is abandoned, freedom becomes possible.
 What, when lost, leaves the mind without grief?
 If anger is lost, why should anyone mourn its absence?
 The theft of what makes a person truly rich?
 The loss of greed nourishes everyone.
 On what do Brahminhood, learning and character finally depend?

Without conduct and nature, Brahminhood is nothing.
 What in the world is higher than dharma?
 The generous mind stands above every rank.
 What friendship never grows old?
 How can friendship with a good person ever come to an end?
 What is the greatest wonder in this world?
 Though death is seen every day, the longing to live remains;
 what greater wonder can there be than this?
 Delighted, the Yaksha said: Yudhishtira, tell me,
 one of your brothers I can restore to life.
 Then let Nakula be restored to life.
 The Yaksha asked: why not Bhima or Arjuna,
 whose skill in battle could protect you?
 Dharmaraja answered: without dharma there can be no protection;
 I, Yudhishtira, son of Kunti, still live,
 so let Nakula, son of mother Madri, also live - that is just.
 Hearing this, Yama, who had taken the form of the deer, said: my son,
 you are free of partiality; therefore let all your brothers live.
 Yama's heart was satisfied at seeing his son,
 and the Pandavas returned once more to Draupadi.

Virata Parva

The twelve years of forest exile were complete;
 one difficult year of concealment still remained.
 If Duryodhana discovered even a trace of them,
 another twelve years of exile would begin again.
 At dawn they all set out toward the city of Virata.
 Dharmaraja took the name Kanka and the guise of a Brahmin.
 With dice and the pieces of chaturanga he would entertain King Virata.
 Bhima became a cook named Vallabha and took charge of the kitchen.
 Arjuna, as the woman Brihannala,
 would teach music and dance to Virata's daughter.
 Nakula, under the name Granthika, would tend the horses,
 and Sahadeva, called Tantripala, would care for the cattle.
 Draupadi, under the name Sairandhri, would adorn the queen.
 Having settled this, they hid their weapons
 among the branches of a great shami tree.
 When they reached King Virata in their disguises,
 he accepted all their requests without suspicion.
 The days were passing, but Queen Sudeshna's
 brother Kichaka, a wicked man, became infatuated on seeing Sairandhri.
 He asked his sister: from what royal house is this woman?
 His sister replied: she is no princess, only a lowly maid.
 Yet Kichaka went to Draupadi and said:
 Beautiful one, make me your slave; I am mad with desire for you.
 Sairandhri replied: I am a married woman and only a servant here;
 I am under your protection - do not speak to me in this way again.
 But Kichaka appealed once more to his sister.
 On a festival day Sudeshna ordered Sairandhri
 to go to Kichaka and bring back certain provisions.
 There she saw lust burning in his eyes and fled;
 she went to Bhima and, bitterly reproaching the Pandavas, told him all.
 Bhima said: then arrange to meet him.
 Call him to the dancing hall at midnight; we shall decide there
 what must be done with that wretch.
 Kichaka was also the commander of Virata's army.
 Taking Sairandhri's invitation at face value, the doomed man arrived.
 Bhima waited there dressed as a woman,
 seized Kichaka by the hair, threw him down, and beat him with hands and feet.
 By morning the news had spread everywhere:
 Sairandhri's Gandharva husband has killed Kichaka.
 Both fear and reverence for Sairandhri spread through the city.
 Duryodhana knew the story of the year of concealment
 and was searching constantly for signs of the Pandavas;
 perhaps this Sairandhri was Draupadi in disguise.
 Perhaps the Pandavas themselves were hidden as Gandharvas.
 The king of Trigarta had been humiliated by Kichaka,
 and now, joining Duryodhana, conceived a raid upon Virata's cattle
 to take revenge upon King Virata.
 Duryodhana came with Bhishma, Drona, Kripa and Karna,
 with Ashvatthama beside them, and attacked Virata.
 Susharma, king of Trigarta, surrounded Virata's cattle
 and captured King Virata when he came against him.
 Kanka-Yudhishtira called out to Bhima:
 Vallabha-Bhima, Granthika-Nakula, Tantripala-Sahadeva!
 They freed Virata from his bonds and bound Susharma instead.
 Meanwhile Brihannala became charioteer to Virata's son Uttara.
 The prince drove toward the battlefield but lost his courage.
 Arjuna went to the shami tree, brought down his weapons,
 and revealed the Gandiva and inexhaustible quivers, declaring who he was.
 Prince Uttara became the charioteer, with Brihannala-Arjuna beside him.
 Seeing the swift chariot, Duryodhana asked: Bhishma,
 has the period of concealment truly ended, or not?

Bhishma answered: the full thirteen years have now been completed.
 Arjuna first vented his fury upon Vikarna, son of Karna,
 then moved forward and struck Karna as well.
 He cut the bows of Drona and Bhishma and stunned the whole army.
 From Drona, Kripa, Karna, Ashvatthama and Duryodhana,
 Uttara stripped crowns and garments, then drove the cattle back to the city.
 When the warriors recovered and wished to renew the battle,
 Bhishma refused: Duryodhana, turn back; enough has happened now.
 Arjuna told Uttara: do not reveal my identity yet.
 When Virata heard of Uttara's heroism, he was delighted on his return.
 Then he learned the true identities of the five Pandavas and Draupadi.
 He proposed that his daughter Uttara should marry Arjuna.
 Arjuna said: I have taught her; she has been my pupil.
 Let Uttara instead marry my son Abhimanyu - that is my proposal.
 Bravo, Vyasa, bravo - a rejection of an ill-matched child marriage,
 what cleverness, what poetic skill you have shown here!
 Krishna and Balarama came from Dvaraka with Abhimanyu's wedding party,
 and Uttara was married to Abhimanyu amid great splendour and celebration.

Udyoga Parva

Kings had gathered for Abhimanyu's wedding,
 and an assembly of rulers was held, where Krishna made his plea.
 Shakuni's game of dice, the humiliation inflicted upon Draupadi,
 and Duryodhana's unrighteous seizure of Yudhishtira's kingdom - all stood before them.
 Say then, what effort shall be made to recover the kingdom,
 or shall the Pandavas endure Duryodhana's oppression forever?
 Drupada rose and said: everyone knows the Kauravas' wickedness;
 it is our duty now to stand beside the Pandavas.
 With Virata and Drupada beside them, the Pandavas began preparing for war,
 and pitching their camp near Kurukshetra, they halted there.
 When Duryodhana heard, he too began his preparations.
 Messages went out to kings from both Kauravas and Pandavas,
 each seeking allies for the war that was now to begin.
 At Kurukshetra, the gathering of armies slowly commenced.
 To win the Yadavas to his side, Duryodhana himself went to Dvaraka.
 Arriving there, he found Krishna asleep,
 and Arjuna too came and quietly sat near Krishna's feet.
 When Krishna awoke, his eyes first fell upon Arjuna.
 "Tell me, child, what do you seek that has brought you here?"
 "In the coming war, O Narayana, I want you beside me."
 As Arjuna spoke, Duryodhana interrupted: "I came here first!"
 Krishna said, "I shall not take up arms in this war.
 Choose either my Narayani army, or choose me unarmed for your side."
 Duryodhana chose the Narayani army and was satisfied,
 while Arjuna rejoiced that Narayana himself had come to him.
 Shalya, brother of Madri and maternal uncle of the Pandavas,
 was coming to join the war when Duryodhana learned of his approach.
 Along the road such lavish arrangements had been made
 that Shalya said, "I wish to reward the one who has done this."
 Duryodhana, who had arranged it all in disguise, then appeared,
 and asked, "Grant me your aid in the war;
 it was I who made all these arrangements."
 Having given his word, Shalya reached Kurukshetra,
 and said, "Yudhishtira, hear what has happened to me on the road.
 I am bound by promise to fight on the Kaurava side;
 tell me, child, in what way I may still help you."
 Yudhishtira said, "Become Karna's charioteer,
 and dishearten him by praising the Pandavas' virtues."
 Shalya then went toward the Kaurava camp.
 Knowing war was near, Krishna too arrived,
 and there he heard that Drupada's priest had gone to Dhritarashtra.
 No one there paid heed to the proposal for peace.
 Duryodhana said, "Forget the kingdom - do you see the point of a needle?
 Not even that much earth will they receive, so let the matter end."
 The image of land no larger than a needle's point
 became the emblem of Duryodhana's obstinacy and Dhritarashtra's desire.
 Yudhishtira told Krishna, "I surrender even the claim to half the kingdom.
 Go, Krishna, and ask Duryodhana for only five villages;
 with that alone, we brothers and our mother shall sustain ourselves."
 With Satyaki beside him, Krishna set out for Hastinapura.
 Draupadi said, "Look, my hair still remains loose as before,"
 and weeping she said, "If peace comes without war,
 this braid will remain unbound."
 The poet's image is sharp: one who will not yield a needle's point
 will take even five villages to be the whole universe.
 Krishna said, "Duryodhana will never accept peace;
 war is inevitable, Draupadi, and your vow shall be fulfilled."
 When Krishna reached Hastinapura, all seemed pleased.
 Dhritarashtra, Dushasana and Duryodhana welcomed him.
 But Krishna would not stay there; he went instead to his elder sister Kunti,
 who was living in Vidura's house, and there they spoke at length.

He told Kunti, "Sister, go and reveal the truth of his birth to Karna;
 perhaps, knowing it, he will come to his Pandava brothers."
 The next day Krishna entered the royal assembly,
 though Duryodhana had already conceived the thought of binding him there.
 Bhishma, Dhritarashtra, Drona, Kripa, Karna, Shakuni and Dushasana were present.
 Krishna said, "Shakuni cast the dice on Duryodhana's behalf;
 that game was unjust, and Draupadi's humiliation was injustice too.
 The assault upon Virata was another attempt to harass the Pandavas.
 Even if you grant them half the kingdom, all can still live in peace."
 The elders welcomed these words, but Duryodhana grew furious.
 He ordered Krishna seized, and Bhishma blazed with anger.
 Seeing the radiance upon Krishna's face, the Kauravas trembled in fear.
 Duryodhana said, "My father, the eldest, was denied the throne because he was blind;
 I am his eldest son, so is not Hastinapura mine by right?
 The Pandavas took a kingdom by injustice and now prepare for war;
 Krishna stands behind them, while I am merely defending my realm."
 Krishna replied, "Then give them five villages, enough to live upon."
 But Duryodhana said, "There will now be no division of the kingdom."
 Krishna answered, "Duryodhana, pride has made you blind;
 before the strength of the Pandavas, your destruction is certain."
 Later Kunti went to Karna and said, "Durvasa gave me a mantra;
 I invoked the Sun with it, and then you were born as my son."
 Karna bowed to his mother, and she said, "Hear me:
 you are the eldest Pandava; Yudhishtira will give the kingdom to you."
 When Karna still refused, Kunti asked how he would free himself
 from the debt owed to his mother. Karna replied, "Mother, hear me then.
 Except for Arjuna, I shall not fight the other four Pandavas with my full strength.
 If I kill Arjuna, I shall remain your son;
 and if I die, you will still have five sons.
 This vow I give you." Kunti then returned.
 When Krishna came back to the Pandava camp,
 the Pandavas began the final preparations for war.
 Seven akshauhini stood with them - horses, chariots, elephants and soldiers -
 under Arjuna, Bhima, Satyaki, Dhrishtadyumna, Drupada and Virata.
 The Kauravas had eleven akshauhini, with Kripacharya, Shalya, Bhurishrava,
 Bhishma, Drona, Karna, Ashvatthama, Jayadratha, Kritavarma and Bhagadatta.
 Dhrishtadyumna became commander of the Pandavas; Bhishma led the Kauravas.
 Karna vowed that he would not take up arms
 so long as Bhishma remained upon the battlefield.
 Bhishma said, "I shall not kill even one of the Pandavas;
 but I shall destroy as much of their army as I can."
 Vyasa went to Dhritarashtra, who said, "Vyasa, hear me:
 my blindness has become a boon, for I shall not see my clan destroyed.
 Yet I greatly desire to hear the tale of these warriors."
 Through yogic power Vyasa gave divine sight to Sanjaya and said,
 "Sitting here, Sanjaya shall see and narrate the war to you."
 Having said this, Vyasa departed.

Bhishma Parva

Dawn broke; upon the battlefield Kaurava and Pandava armies stood assembled.
 At the Kaurava front was Bhishma; before the Pandavas stood Arjuna with Krishna.
 On either side of Bhishma's chariot were Dushasana and Duryodhana,
 with Ashvatthama beside his teacher Drona - ah, what destiny.
 To win a kingdom by killing brothers and beloved kin -
 the thought overwhelmed Arjuna; the Gandiva slipped from his hand:
 "Krishna, what shall I do?"
 Krishna taught him the path of action: cast away delusion and bewilderment.
 Do not let attachment to your own people turn you away from a Kshatriya's duty.
 See before you how the Kauravas are being destroyed by their own adharma.
 Arjuna beheld the cosmic form, vast within the blaze of immeasurable fire,
 where creatures entered and in an instant were consumed to ash;
 the Kauravas too seemed already burning there.
 Awakened to awareness, Arjuna at once offered praise.
 Act without anxiety for the fruit - this was the knowledge given;
 the Self is deathless, and grief for it is therefore misplaced.
 Yudhishtira descended from his chariot and walked toward Bhishma's.
 He sought the elders' blessings, keeping dharma foremost in his mind.
 Bhishma, Drona and Kripacharya, moved with feeling, blessed him for victory.
 Yuyutsu, son of Dhritarashtra, had been watching the path of righteousness;
 he left the Kauravas and immediately joined the Pandava side.
 Yudhishtira embraced him, and the conches sounded.
 Arjuna blew Devadatta and proclaimed the beginning of war.
 Chariots, elephants, cavalry and foot-soldiers surged against the Kauravas.
 On the first day, Uttara, son of Virata, was killed.
 Bhishma caused terrible destruction; at evening Arjuna's conch
 sounded the close of battle, and Bhishma too blew his own.
 The Pandavas grieved after the first day's fighting; Duryodhana rejoiced.
 When the second day's war began, Bhishma brought devastation.
 Krishna said, "At this rate our army will perish - take us toward Bhishma."
 "Yes, Dhananjaya, I shall drive the chariot straight before him."
 The battle between the two grew so fierce that all who watched trembled.
 Bhima too became a destroyer, and apart from Bhishma,
 rushed fiercely against the rest.
 Satyaki's arrow struck Bhishma's charioteer,
 who fell to the ground; Bhishma's horses then bolted at full speed.
 Evening came, the conches sounded, and the second day's war ended.
 On the third day Satyaki and Abhimanyu charged the Kauravas.
 Sahadeva, Nakula and Yudhishtira attacked Drona.
 Bhima fell upon Duryodhana and struck him unconscious with an arrow.
 His charioteer carried Duryodhana away from the battlefield,
 and the Kaurava army thought he had abandoned the fight and fled.
 Bhima attacked the retreating troops.
 Evening came like a shield; Duryodhana returned in anger.
 At night he told Bhishma, "Your heart is with the Pandavas."
 Bhishma replied, "They are unconquerable, yet I shall fight with all my strength."
 He repeated to Duryodhana that he would do all that lay within his power.
 On the fourth day Bhishma attacked with tremendous force.
 Arjuna's attempt to stop him proved futile.
 The fifth, sixth and seventh days too passed in much the same way.
 The eighth day's fighting was dreadful.
 Iravan, son of Arjuna by his second wife Ulupi,
 was killed in battle, and Arjuna was shaken with grief.
 He fought terribly, caring nothing even for Bhishma.
 Duryodhana, anxious, went to Karna,
 then returned to Bhishma and said, "You are doing us grave injustice.
 If this continues, I shall make Karna commander."
 Bhishma replied, "Have you gone mad?
 Did you not see Karna's valour in the battle of Virata?"
 The ninth day's war was fearsome.
 Bhishma covered Arjuna's chariot with a storm of arrows.

Krishna and Arjuna were wounded; the chariot itself was damaged.
 The horses stopped, and Arjuna sagged, exhausted.
 The Kauravas' enthusiasm was a sight to behold.
 Krishna, enraged, leapt down with a chariot wheel in his hand:
 "I shall kill Bhishma and end this war!"
 Arjuna seized his feet and cried, "Krishna,
 you vowed that you would not take up a weapon.
 Ashamed, I have leapt down from the chariot to restrain you."
 Bhishma too watched, overcome with emotion,
 as radiant Krishna advanced bearing that makeshift weapon.
 At last Krishna's anger subsided.
 The evening conch brought that day's battle to an end.
 At night Yudhishtira asked, "O son of Nanda,
 what is the secret of Bhishma's defeat?"
 Bhima said, "I do not know why Arjuna
 refuses to use his celestial weapons against Bhishma."
 Krishna said, "Come, all five brothers;
 let us go and ask Bhishma himself for the way."
 They reached him and said, "Tell us, Bhishma:
 while you stand, the Kauravas can never be defeated.
 Truth and dharma alike may disappear."
 Bhishma said, "I too watch this with anguish.
 Arjuna is not using his celestial weapons,
 yet I remain bound to the throne of Hastinapura -
 ah, what misfortune, to guard the honour of falsehood itself!
 Shikhandi, son of Drupada, stands on your side.
 In a former birth he was a woman and obtained Shiva's vow,
 forever intent upon becoming the cause of my death.
 He was born in Drupada's house in a woman's form,
 and by a demon's boon became male.
 Yet, Partha, the marks of womanhood remain in him;
 women are not targets for my arrows.
 Place Shikhandi before you and shoot from behind him;
 then, Partha, I shall be entirely helpless."
 Assured by this, the Pandavas bowed to Bhishma and returned.
 The tenth day's battle was prepared.
 Again Bhishma's arrows fell like rain,
 but Shikhandi came directly before him.
 Bhishma lowered his weapon and would not shoot at Shikhandi.
 There was no equal to the force of his arrows otherwise,
 but Krishna said, "Take shelter behind Shikhandi, Arjuna;
 pierce Bhishma's body and do not hesitate."
 Hearing Arjuna's doubt, Krishna said,
 "No one can defeat Bhishma while he fights with weapons.
 He himself has revealed this one way;
 shoot without delay."
 Then Arjuna's arrows began to rain.
 Bhishma fell toward the earth, but a bed of arrows received him.
 The instant he lay upon that bed of shafts,
 the fighting ceased for that day.
 Kauravas and Pandavas gathered together before him.
 Bhishma said, "Give me a proper support beneath my head - ah."
 Duryodhana at once brought a costly cushion,
 but Bhishma looked toward Arjuna; Arjuna understood.
 Three arrows flew, and became the support beneath Bhishma's head.
 Thirsting, Bhishma asked for water.
 Duryodhana brought it in a golden vessel,
 but Bhishma again looked toward Arjuna; Partha loosed an arrow.
 From the earth a spring burst upward,
 and water fell into Bhishma's mouth; his thirst was eased.
 "The Sun is still in its southern course. Go, all of you.
 I shall relinquish life when the Sun turns northward." Karna too had arrived.
 With folded hands he bowed and stood there to receive Bhishma's blessing.

Bhishma said, "Karna, stop this war. You are Kunti's son.
You cannot defeat Arjuna; this desire of yours is vain.
In what battle have you ever proved yourself stronger than Arjuna?
You may reason with Duryodhana - I know he respects you."
Karna said, "I was taken for a charioteer's son; Duryodhana gave me honour.
He made me a king and raised me high.
The Pandavas are your grandsons - why then did you take up arms?
Why did you not persuade the Kauravas to stop?
The war has gone too far now; how can I abandon Duryodhana in midstream?"

Drona Parva

After ten days of war,
 Drona now became commander.
 Duryodhana said, "Do one thing:
 capture Yudhishtira, and bring this war to an end."
 "But Arjuna is always beside him;
 devise some plan to draw him far away."
 Duryodhana summoned the king of Trigarta.
 King Susharma would go with the Samsaptaka force
 and lead Arjuna away from Yudhishtira.
 The Pandavas, meanwhile, arranged Yudhishtira's protection:
 Arjuna and Bhima would guard him, one on either side.
 If for some reason either had to move away,
 Nakula, Sahadeva and Satyaki would fill the vacant place.
 With Drona stood Karna and Ashvatthama,
 Jayadratha, Kripa, Kritavarma and the king of Kalinga.
 Susharma of Trigarta issued his challenge.
 Arjuna saw the danger and warned Satyaki to remain alert.
 Now war between teacher and pupil was about to begin.
 Arjuna opened by releasing two arrows;
 both fell at Drona's feet in salutation.
 Ah, Vyasa - homage to you!
 Today Arjuna bowed first and took his teacher's blessing;
 where was their strangely woven love ever truly hidden?
 Drona attacked the Pandavas from the front, Karna from the flank.
 Arjuna went after Susharma; Shalya came forward to fight Bhima.
 Karna attacked Satyaki, who was swiftly there to meet him.
 Shakuni engaged Sahadeva; Nakula alone remained free.
 Drona advanced; a cry arose - Drona had seized Yudhishtira!
 But Arjuna abandoned the Trigarta king and returned.
 Seeing him, Drona gave up the hope of capturing Yudhishtira.
 Evening came, and the conches sounded the close of battle.
 On the twelfth day the Trigartas again challenged Arjuna,
 but he struck with such speed that he destroyed them.
 Returning, he saw Bhagadatta advancing upon an elephant.
 Bhagadatta hurled the elephant-goad as a weapon at Arjuna.
 Krishna intercepted it; Arjuna took Bhagadatta's life
 with a crescent-headed arrow.
 Drona moved toward Yudhishtira; Satyajit was guarding him that day.
 Satyajit killed Drona's horses and cut the wheel of his chariot.
 Drona's crescent arrow swept Satyajit's neck away.
 Seeing Satyajit die, Yudhishtira withdrew at once.
 Unable to reach Yudhishtira, Arjuna became wild and slew countless warriors.
 Watching Arjuna in that form, Drona grew despondent and waited for evening's conch.
 The day ended. Duryodhana said, "Teacher Drona,
 your affection for the Pandavas is the cause of this failure."
 Drona, stung, replied, "I shall form a Chakravyuha,
 which no one near Yudhishtira knows how to break except Arjuna."
 So the thirteenth day's battle began.
 The Samsaptakas and Trigartas drew Arjuna far away.
 Then Yudhishtira learned that the Chakravyuha had been formed.
 Seeing his uncle troubled, Abhimanyu said,
 "While I was in the womb, I heard my father explaining it to my mother.
 I remember how to break through all six gates of the Chakravyuha;
 none of that method of battle has left my memory.
 But I never heard the account of the seventh gate:
 my mother fell asleep when only that last part remained."
 Vyasa's image of learning within the womb
 is not literal statement but the poet's emblem of a warrior.
 Abhimanyu advanced before anyone could fully understand.
 "Where is the gate, where the entrance? Jayadratha guards it there.
 Come, Uncle Bhima - this is the opening; enter here behind me."

Abhimanyu struck Jayadratha with an arrow and drove inside.
 Jayadratha stood fast and prevented Bhima and the others from following.
 At the second gate Drona stood shooting arrows.
 Abhimanyu cut Drona's bow, broke through the formation and pressed on.
 At the third gate he rained arrows upon an astonished Karna.
 He drove toward the fourth gate, where Ashvatthama stood.
 A dreadful battle raged there, yet even he could not stop the boy.
 Abhimanyu's chariot kept moving; Duryodhana grew anxious.
 "Karna, what shall we do? Defeat now seems certain."
 Karna said, "Only if all seven great warriors join together
 can we stop this boy; no one of us can do it alone."
 All the chariot-warriors gathered, along with Duryodhana's son Lakshmana,
 and by then Abhimanyu had reached the seventh gate.
 Seeing the scene, Abhimanyu's charioteer said,
 "All these men have gathered against dharma. Say the word and I shall turn the chariot back."
 "I am Arjuna's son; I shall not abandon battle in this fashion.
 Turn the chariot in a circle and behold the valour of Partha's son."
 Then Lakshmana came directly before Abhimanyu.
 An arrow severed Lakshmana's head.
 Drona said, "His armour is impenetrable;
 strike at his head,
 and bring down his charioteer - break the chariot itself."
 Abhimanyu descended and fought on with sword, wheel and mace.
 He fought a mace-duel with Dushasana's son; both fell there.
 Dushasana's son rose first and struck Abhimanyu upon the head.
 Among seven chariot-warriors fell Subhadra's son, Uttara's husband.
 Subhadra and Uttara reached the seventh gate wailing.
 Uttara said, "Mother, grant me permission to die here too."
 But Subhadra consoled her: Uttara carried a child in her womb.
 Elsewhere Arjuna finished destroying the Trigartas and Samsaptakas
 and returned, thinking Yudhishtira must surely be safe.
 When he heard of Abhimanyu's death, he reeled; Krishna said,
 "The chief cause of his death was your brother-in-law Jayadratha.
 By penance to Shiva he obtained this boon:
 except for Arjuna, no Pandava would be able to defeat him.
 Standing at the first gate, he held all four brothers back."
 The moment he heard this, Arjuna vowed: "Before tomorrow's sunset
 I shall kill Jayadratha, or here surrender myself to the fire."
 The fourteenth day's battle began.
 Drona formed a Shakata-vyuha and concealed Jayadratha within.
 Drona himself stood guard at the entrance.
 A terrible fight began; Krishna swung the chariot sideways.
 Drona challenged him: "Arjuna, are you fleeing from battle?"
 But Arjuna had only one purpose in his mind that day.
 Krishna drove the chariot deep into the formation.
 By afternoon Yudhishtira, anxious, sent Satyaki and Bhima:
 "Go to Arjuna's aid." Both advanced.
 Then Bhurishrava attacked Satyaki.
 Arjuna's arrow flew toward him and cut off both his arms.
 "What have you done, Arjuna? I was fighting Satyaki.
 You severed my arms - by what justice? Tell me plainly."
 Arjuna answered, "How did all of you kill Abhimanyu?
 You speak of justice now; I was protecting Satyaki."
 Bhurishrava fell senseless; Satyaki severed his head.
 Seeing Bhima and Satyaki there, Arjuna grew anxious,
 for his mind went back to Yudhishtira.
 Then sunset came. Arjuna lowered the Gandiva.
 Before him a funeral pyre blazed,
 and the Pandavas' eyes shimmered with grief.
 Unarmed, Arjuna walked toward the pyre.
 Krishna said, "Kshatriya Arjuna, take your weapons with you into the fire.
 Even in death do not abandon the Gandiva and the inexhaustible quiver."
 But the instant Arjuna lifted his weapons, the Sun emerged from behind the cloud.

Jayadratha stood exposed before him, and there in the open field Arjuna killed him.
 Krishna then said, "Now Duryodhana will force Karna to use his unfailing weapon.
 Call Bhima's son Ghatotkacha; in the night his Rakshasa warfare will be terrible."
 Ghatotkacha came, and through the night brought torrents,
 stones and monstrous illusion.
 Duryodhana saw his army fleeing before that terrifying form.
 "Karna, kill him, or the entire war is slipping from our hands!"
 Compelled, Karna released the unfailing weapon, and Ghatotkacha was slain.
 The Pandavas grieved; Karna too was troubled by what he had spent.
 The night assault enraged the Kauravas, and Drona came forward in fury.
 To protect Yudhishtira, Drupada stood on one side and Virata on the other.
 The moment Drona saw Drupada, his blood boiled;
 with a celestial weapon he took his life.
 Drupada's son Dhrishtadyumna came with the Panchala army beneath a rain of arrows.
 Seeing Drona's terrible form, Krishna said, "Yudhishtira, Bhima has just killed
 the elephant of the Avanti king whose name was Ashvatthama."
 "If Drona asks whether Ashvatthama is dead,
 say yes - Bhima has killed Ashvatthama just now."
 At once the cry spread across the field: "Ashvatthama is dead!"
 Distraught, Drona drove his chariot toward Yudhishtira and asked,
 "Is it true - has Ashvatthama been killed in battle?"
 Yudhishtira said, "Yes, Ashvatthama is dead - not the man; it was the elephant."
 But as Yudhishtira uttered "not the man," Krishna's conch thundered over the words.
 Broken by grief, Drona cast aside his weapons and sat meditating upon his chariot.
 Dhrishtadyumna cut off his head with a sword;
 Ashvatthama was beside himself with anguish.
 He began hurling celestial weapons at the Pandavas;
 none but Arjuna could withstand them.
 Until evening Arjuna and Ashvatthama continued that relentless battle.

Karna Parva

That night Duryodhana made a vow,
 calling for Arjuna's death.
 He appointed Karna commander,
 and the Kauravas began the sixteenth day's battle.
 With the blast of Karna's conch, the fighting opened.
 The battlefield fell still beneath the heat of Karna's assault.
 Finding Nakula before him, Karna wounded him, then spared his life -
 the gift of life he had promised Kunti.
 Krishna called to Arjuna: "Except for you,
 no one can defeat Karna."
 Arjuna surged forward, and a rain began -
 a rain of arrows from the Kauravas before him.
 Yet before Arjuna they were all beaten back,
 and then the Sun set upon the sixteenth day.
 At night Karna said, "Friend Duryodhana,
 Arjuna's chariot carries an immense store of weapons.
 There is no equal to the Gandiva or his inexhaustible quiver,
 nor any match for the speed of his horses,
 and his charioteer is Krishna himself.
 If Shalya becomes my charioteer, he may be a match for Krishna."
 But Shalya said, "There is no rein upon my tongue;
 if Karna can accept that, I have no objection."
 The seventeenth day's battle began, and Karna opened the attack.
 As Arjuna advanced, Shalya said, "You shrink before mighty Arjuna."
 Karna saw Bhima wreaking destruction and said, "Shalya, drive me there."
 Bhima was terrible that day; his arrow split Karna's armour and pierced his body.
 Shalya carried the unconscious Karna away to the edge of the field.
 Seeing this, Bhima's fury only intensified.
 Duryodhana sent the valiant Dushasana against him.
 A dreadful mace-duel raged between the two.
 A blow to the head sent Dushasana crashing down unconscious.
 Bhima tore off his arm and drank the blood from his chest.
 At the sight, the Kaurava army fled in horror.
 Now at last Arjuna and Karna faced one another directly.
 Karna cut the string of the Gandiva; while Arjuna restrung it,
 Karna pressed the attack with arrows, but somehow Arjuna set the string again.
 When Arjuna's rain of arrows began, Karna and Shalya were wounded,
 and Karna's supporting troops were destroyed; he grew deeply troubled.
 Karna released a celestial arrow at Arjuna;
 Krishna forced the horses down upon their knees.
 The weapon passed over Arjuna's life and only struck away his crown.
 Then, in the middle of battle, Karna's chariot wheel sank into the earth.
 Karna cried, "For a moment, do not shoot - this is the dharma of battle."
 Arjuna answered, "When Virata's cattle were stolen, and when Abhimanyu was killed,
 where was this lesson of dharma and righteous warfare then?
 Even now, asking alms for your life, do you feel no shame?"
 Karna descended and struggled to free the chariot wheel.
 Arjuna's arrow severed his head, and a great cry of grief swept the Kauravas.
 By then Bhima had killed all of Duryodhana's brothers.
 Of the eleven akshauhinis, very little of the Kaurava army remained.
 Kripacharya urged Duryodhana, "Even now, make peace."
 But he replied, "With you, Kritavarma, Ashvatthama and Shalya still beside me,
 why do you speak to me of peace?"
 Shalya shall become commander, and the war will continue into the eighteenth day.

Shalya Parva

Shalya sounded his war-cry; Yudhishtira moved forward to halt his advance.
 The moment Shalya cut one of his bows,
 Yudhishtira raised another and struck down Shalya's horses and charioteer.
 Then a fierce battle raged, and Yudhishtira took Shalya's life.
 Sahadeva rushed upon Shakuni and his son Uluka,
 and took the lives of father and son - the gambler's end at last.
 Taking up his mace, Duryodhana left the battlefield.
 In the midst of a lake stood a pillar; there Duryodhana hid himself.
 Some villagers saw him as they passed.
 Vyasa, by giving those villagers a place in the tale, you have made us grateful.
 Krishna arrived there with the Pandavas,
 guided to the spot by the villagers who had given them the news.
 Bhima hurled a challenge, and Duryodhana came out.
 Balarama too arrived there, returning from pilgrimage.
 Blessing his disciple Duryodhana, he watched the mace-duel begin.
 A terrible battle broke out between Bhima and Duryodhana.
 Krishna slapped his own thigh, reminding Bhima of his vow.
 Bhima shattered Duryodhana's thigh-bone and struck at his head with mace and foot.
 At this deed of Bhima's, Balarama sprang upon him in fury.
 Krishna restrained his elder brother and reminded him of Draupadi's humiliation,
 and of Bhima's vow.
 Leaving Duryodhana helpless,
 all the Pandava brothers went away.

Sauptika Parva

At evening Kritavarma, Kripacharya and Ashvatthama
 came and saw Duryodhana's misery and heard his lament.
 The blow of Bhima's foot upon Duryodhana's head -
 hearing of it, Ashvatthama vowed to kill the Pandavas.
 Duryodhana consecrated Ashvatthama as commander,
 and Kritavarma, Kripacharya and Ashvatthama moved toward the Pandava camp.
 Krishna had taken the five Pandavas somewhere else.
 Before the Pandava camp stood a tree; beneath it Kripa and Kritavarma slept.
 There was not a trace of sleep in Ashvatthama's eyes; he saw a bird arrive.
 On that tree many crows slept, and the bird devoured them one after another.
 Seeing this, Ashvatthama woke Kripacharya and Kritavarma.
 Kripa said, "To refuse to wait for dawn is not wisdom; this is adharma."
 But Ashvatthama set out toward the camp.
 At last Kripa and Kritavarma followed behind him.
 "I am going inside the camp.
 You two stand here at the gate
 and kill whoever comes out."
 All the Panchalas, including Dhrishtadyumna and Shikhandi,
 and Draupadi's five sons, whom he took to be the Pandavas, he killed.
 Ashvatthama then set the camp ablaze.
 Afterward he carried away the heads of Draupadi's five sons.
 Duryodhana had asked for Bhima's head;
 that head would have split beneath the blow of his fist.
 "No, this is not Bhima's head."
 At dawn he saw the heads of Draupadi's five sons,
 and weeping and crying aloud, Duryodhana died.
 At dawn Krishna arrived with the Pandavas and Draupadi.
 Seeing the destruction, Bhima set out in search of Ashvatthama.
 He was on the bank of the Ganga before Vyasa.
 Krishna arrived there with Yudhishtira and Arjuna.
 Resolved to destroy the Pandavas, Ashvatthama released the Brahmashira weapon.
 Arjuna released the great Pashupata weapon, a rain of fire threatening creation.
 But between the weapons came Narada and Vyasa.
 Ah, Vyasa - the writer of the Mahabharata!
 They urged both warriors to call back their respective weapons.
 Arjuna recalled his weapon, but
 Ashvatthama said, "My weapon cannot be recalled today."
 The sages declared that the Brahmashira would strike Uttara's womb,
 but Ashvatthama would have to surrender the jewel from his forehead.
 Stripped of strength, he became an ascetic
 and spent the rest of his life in Vyasa's hermitage.

Stri Parva

Duryodhana's wife Bhanumati lay unconscious; Gandhari lamented.
Dhritarashtra fainted, Vidura cried aloud,
and the Pandavas returned with Ashvatthama's jewel.
Krishna had an iron likeness of Bhima brought forth.
Dhritarashtra reached Kurukshetra with the widowed women.
He embraced the iron Bhima and crushed it, then wailed, "Bhima! Bhima!"
Krishna said, "Do not weep, Dhritarashtra; that was only an iron Bhima."
Gandhari laid a curse upon Krishna:
"As you have brought destruction upon my lineage,
so shall your own clan be destroyed."
With the cremation of the dead, one side of the story came to its close.

Shanti Parva

Yudhishtira's mind was broken; he thought of renouncing the kingdom.

Vyasa came and counselled him: "Flight is not your path."

As Dhaumya chanted Vedic mantras, Yudhishtira was crowned king.

Then he went before Bhishma and received instruction in discipline:

the knowledge of royal duty, social duty and the dharma of liberation,
and the care of subjects;

rise above narrow thoughts of region and caste, and fulfil the vow of a king.

Anushasana Parva

The time came when the sun entered its northern course.
Yudhishthira came with Gandhari, Kunti, Dhritarashtra and his brothers.
After fifty-eight days upon the bed of arrows came Bhishma's final teaching and great departure.
Yudhishthira lit Bhishma's sandalwood pyre, while all stood overcome with grief.

Ashvamedhika Parva

Happiness and prosperity came to the kingdom of Hastinapura.
Yudhishtira's skill in rule enlarged the people's hope.
Just then Uttara gave birth to a lifeless son.
Subhadra fell before Krishna in grief.
Krishna lifted the child and said, "I have never fled from my duty;
my bond with truth has remained unbroken;
after defeating an enemy I have never become wantonly violent.
If this is true, let the child rise again to life."
At these words the infant lived, and he was named Parikshit.
Then Yudhishtira performed the Ashvamedha sacrifice.
A golden plate was hung around the sacrificial horse's neck.
Whoever would not accept Yudhishtira's sovereignty
was to seize the horse and oppose him.
But the horse returned unhindered,
and the sacrifice was completed without obstruction.

Ashramavasika Parva

Fifteen years passed; then Vyasa came.

He instructed Dhritarashtra in the dharma of forest retirement.

With Gandhari, Kunti, Vidura and Sanjaya, Dhritarashtra departed for the Himalayas.

Vidura entered samadhi there in the forest.

A forest fire took the lives of all who remained.

Mausala Parva

After the war Krishna returned to Dvaraka,
honoured and revered.
But the Yadava princes
began to insult learned men.
Fighting among themselves, they slaughtered one another to extinction.
Grieved at the sight, Balarama went to the holy place of Prabhasa.
There the elder brother entered samadhi.
Krishna arrived and found that his life had ended;
he leaned wearily against a tree.
A hunter named Jara,
mistaking him for a deer, shot an arrow into the sole of his foot.
Krishna's life came to an end.
Hearing the news of Krishna-Vasudeva's death,
his father Vasudeva too brought his life to an end.

Mahaprasthanika Parva

News came of Krishna's death.
 Pandava king Yudhishtira gave the kingdom to Parikshit.
 After giving counsel to Subhadra,
 the five brothers, with Draupadi, reached Dvaraka.
 There they found the city drowned beneath the sea.
 Wandering onward, all of them set out for the Himalayas.
 A dog walked beside them on the way.
 Amid the vast Himalayas and the assault of snow,
 Draupadi fell and died, then Sahadeva;
 then Nakula, Arjuna and Bhima fell, one after another.
 Ahead stood a chariot from the world of the gods.
 Indra said, "Come alone, Yudhishtira, in this very body.
 This dog cannot come with you."
 Yudhishtira refused: "Return, Indra.
 Without him I shall not go, even if heaven itself is there."
 That dog was Yama himself.
 He revealed his true form and blessed Yudhishtira there.

Svargarohana Parva

Reaching heaven, Yudhishtira saw all the Kauravas there.
"Indra, where are my brothers?"
Then a messenger led him to the gate of hell.
Draupadi and his five brothers were there.
Yudhishtira said, "Messenger, I shall remain here.
I will not leave them and go anywhere else."
Indra and Yama then came there.
Yama said, "The first test was the questions of the Yaksha.
The second test I took in the form of the dog.
Today, in this third test too, you have passed."
"This is the world of the gods, but a king who comes here in his body
must first learn by seeing the suffering that exists here.
For that reason I gave you this pain for a little while.
Now leave this body and take on a divine form."
As Yama spoke, the transformation came.
Karna too was there among the twelve Adityas,
seated upon a jewel-studded throne.
Thus ends the poem of the war of Bharata.
You and I - the quarrel among us all -
is a plague still spreading even now.
So long as attachment to caste, religion, family and sons remains,
talent will go on being crushed - ah!
Wherever Dhritarashtra raises his cry,
You and I will erupt again.
Was Yudhishtira's fault so small?
Duryodhana will begin it once more.

Annex 2 — The Unborn Mind (Song Cycle)

[Ashvaghosha's Sanskrit Buddhacarita in 28 cantos was lost, but was later reconstituted in Sanskrit from its Tibetan translation; the name of the retranslator is unknown. That Sanskrit version was issued under Ashvaghosha's original title by this anonymous devotee of Ashvaghosha—and of the Buddha. What follows is a highly abridged Maithili translation of that remarkable Sanskrit rendering of the Buddhacarita.]

The Unborn Mind

Canto 1

This ancient land was called Bharata,
 where descendants of Ikshvaku ruled.
 In that line, Shuddhodana was king of the Shakya clan;
 Maya was his queen,
 and at that time they ruled in Kapilavastu.
 All this, as Ashvaghosha tells it,
 gives substance to the Unborn Mind.
 Maya saw a dream approaching:
 a white elephant came into Maya's body,
 entered and remained within her,
 yet Maya felt no pain at all;
 rather, she felt that someone had entered her womb.
 And indeed, she was with child.
 A longing came upon her to go to the forest;
 "I shall stay at Lumbini," she told Shuddhodana.
 Days passed there, and one day in Lumbini,
 without the pain of labour she gave birth to a son.
 From the sky descended two streams of water,
 cool and warm,
 bathing the child as red and blue lotus blossoms
 rained from heaven.
 Kings of the Yakshas and beings of the celestial worlds assembled;
 beasts abandoned violence,
 and birds spoke in sweet voices.
 The proud roar of the waters softened into a murmur;
 all the world rejoiced, save Mara,
 for Mara was angered by the coming of one destined for Buddhahood.
 Maya and Shuddhodana trembled with joy,
 until Brahmins spoke of the child's extraordinary marks;
 then the parents' fear at last fell away,
 reassured that they had received a son supreme among men.
 The great sage Asita sensed that a Shakya sage had been born;
 he came to Kapilavastu,
 having heard the prophecy that the child would attain Buddhahood.
 Through the path of the wind he reached the royal woodland of Kapilavastu,
 and Shuddhodana at once seated him upon the throne.
 "O King, I have come to see the child who shall attain Buddhahood."
 The child was brought,
 bearing the wheel-mark upon his feet.
 Seeing it, Asita said, "Alas! My death is near."

I would have learned from this child,
 but I am old and without strength;
 how shall I remain alive long enough to hear the Shakya sage's teaching?"
 After beholding the Shakya sage,
 Asita returned by the path of the air,
 and instructed his nephew to follow the Buddha when the child grew great.
 For ten days they performed the rites of birth,
 then many rites of fire-offering and sacred recitation;
 cows were given in charity,
 their horns sheathed in gold.
 Maya re-entered the city,
 riding in an ivory palanquin.

Canto 2

The kingdom filled with wealth and grain;
 enemies abandoned the road of enmity.
 Because fulfilment had been attained,
 the child was named Siddhartha.
 But Maya could not long endure the fullness of joy;
 death came, and his aunt Gautami cared for him.
 The boy underwent the rite of initiation;
 he was quick in learning.
 Within the palace Shuddhodana arranged every kind of luxury,
 for Asita's words remained in his mind:
 the boy might become an ascetic.
 So Siddhartha was married to the beautiful Yashodhara,
 and in time a son, Rahula, was born to him.

Canto 3

The days and moments passed amid celebration.
 He heard people speak of the garden and its lotus pond,
 and Siddhartha expressed a wish to go out and see it.
 The king issued orders all along the road:
 let no old, sorrowing or sick person appear by path or wayside.
 Hearing that the prince would pass,
 the townspeople grew eager to see him
 and came out upon the road for Siddhartha's sight.
 Everywhere the scene was delightful,
 but suddenly an old man appeared upon the way.
 "Charioteer, tell me—who is this man,
 his eyes half-hidden beneath his brows,
 his hair white,
 a staff in his hand,
 his body bent—what has happened to him?"
 "Prince, he is old.
 Having passed through childhood and youth,
 today he has become aged."
 "Will this happen to everyone?
 Shall I too one day grow old?
 Everyone knows this game,

and yet all around they revel and make merry?

Is this rejoicing crowd mad with delight?

Turn back now, charioteer;

how could my heart remain in the garden?"

He returned to the palace and wandered,

sunk in thought;

then, with the king's permission,

he went out once more.

This time he met a man

with swollen belly,

bent over and struggling for breath.

He was ill. Siddhartha asked,

"Charioteer, who is he? What has happened?"

"Prince, he is diseased;

this too is part of life's play,

and at any time it may seize anyone."

"Turn back, charioteer. Today I am frightened again."

He returned home and paced, thinking and thinking;

Shuddhodana grew troubled when he learned of these events.

He arranged still more amusement and pleasure,

and replaced both chariot and charioteer.

Another day he sent the prince out,

with young men and women to enjoy recreation.

But then came a procession of death.

"Charioteer, what is this sight?

Four men carry one adorned upon their shoulders,

and yet everyone is weeping—why?"

"Prince, this decorated man

will never speak again; he is like wood.

Let all these people weep and rage if they will—

death has taken him, and they must leave him."

"Turn back, charioteer. I cannot bear this.

This time it is not fear,

but after knowing this,

how can I drown myself in amusement,

and wander through a garden like one ignorant?"

Canto 4

Yet the new charioteer did not turn back at the gate;

he reached the garden called Padma-khanda.

Udayin, the priest's son,

instructed the young women:

"Draw Siddhartha into pleasure and delight."

But seeing Siddhartha's unconquered detachment,

Udayin asked, "What has happened to you?"

"My friend, life lasts but a moment;

knowing this, how can I squander it?"

Evening came and the young women returned;

with the setting sun came awareness of the world's impermanence.

Siddhartha went home again, absorbed in thought,

while Shuddhodana, shaken, sank into counsel.

Canto 5

After some days,
 he asked permission to go to the forest.
 With a few companions he went out among fields and pathways,
 and saw insects and worms killed where the plough had cut the earth.
 Saddened, Siddhartha dismounted from his horse,
 and sat beneath a jambu tree in meditation.
 There he found peace, and then met an ascetic.
 The man was absorbed in the search for liberation;
 after hearing him speak,
 Siddhartha saw him vanish from sight.
 The thought of renouncing home arose within him,
 though there was no need yet to go farther into the forest.
 They all turned back toward the palace.
 On the road he met a maiden,
 who said, "Whoever has you for a husband
 must surely be released from sorrow."
 The word "released" awakened in him the thought of nirvana.
 Delighted by that meaning,
 Siddhartha returned to the royal court,
 where Shuddhodana sat among his ministers.
 He said, "Grant me leave to renounce the world
 and seek the knowledge of liberation,
 O lord of the earth."
 "What are you saying, my son?
 First live the life of a householder.
 This is not yet the time for renunciation."
 Siddhartha replied, "Very well;
 then remove from me these four fears:
 let death, disease and old age never come,
 and let wealth never decay."
 Shuddhodana said, "That is impossible."
 "Then do not grieve over our separation."
 Saying this, Siddhartha went into the palace,
 walked restlessly within and without,
 troubled in mind.
 He woke the sleeping Chhandaka and said,
 "Bring swift white
 Kanthaka from the stable."
 All were deep in sleep when Kanthaka came;
 Siddhartha mounted,
 and the horse carried him far from the city.
 "Farewell, Kapilavastu!
 I shall return when I have discovered the secret of birth and death."

Canto 6

Ahead stood the hermitage of the sage Bhargava;
 Siddhartha dismounted,
 took his jewel-studded sword, and cut his hair.

He gave his crown, gems and ornaments to Chhandaka.
 Tears streamed from Chhandaka's eyes.
 "Go, Chhandaka, return to the city."
 "No, Siddhartha, I am no Sumantra
 who left Rama and returned to Ayodhya."
 Tears stood even in the eyes of the horse Kanthaka.
 Just then a hunter appeared,
 wearing ochre robes. Siddhartha said,
 "Take my white garments and give me those robes."
 They exchanged their clothing and dressed anew;
 Chhandaka bowed at the sight and turned back.

Canto 7

Siddhartha came to an ashram,
 and all were astonished.
 He saw many forms of severe austerity,
 but was not satisfied that suffering should be endured merely to gain heaven,
 nor by the rites of fire-sacrifice and ascetic discipline.
 After some days Siddhartha left the hermitage and went on:
 "I seek liberation, not heaven."
 "Then go to the sage Arada at Vindhya-koshtha."
 "Homage to you, sage;
 I bow. May you all return in peace."
 Siddhartha moved onward and reached the road ahead.

Canto 8

Meanwhile Chhandaka, with Kanthaka,
 stumbled and fell along the way;
 a journey of one day took him eight days.
 The road home today seemed no shorter;
 it had become endless.
 Returning, he told them Siddhartha had put on ochre robes.
 Gautami fainted; Yashodhara wept aloud:
 "Siddhartha's heart is so hard,
 though his face was tender;
 yet harder still is my heart,
 for it does not break."
 Shuddhodana said, "Dasharatha was fortunate;
 my life does not leave me even in separation from my son."
 "Priest and minister, go out and search for him;
 look and ask at the hermitage of sage Bhargava."

Canto 9

When the two reached there and asked,
 Bhargava said,
 "He has gone toward the hermitage of sage Arada,
 restless for liberation."
 They went on, and what did they see?
 The prince was sitting beneath a tree.
 The priest said, "Prince,
 hear this word from your father:
 householder-kings—Videha, Bali,
 Rama and Vajrabahu—

also attained liberation; do likewise.”

But Siddhartha would not return from the forest;
he had vowed himself to liberation and would not break that vow.

“Siddhartha, others too have returned from the forest before—
Rama of Ayodhya, Druma of the land of Shalva,
and King Ambarisha.”

“Priest, return. You are wasting your time;
Rama or any other is not the example before me.
Without austerity no one will be able to turn me aside;
I shall find a new road and gain knowledge by myself.”
The two returned, leaving secret agents behind.

Canto 10

Siddhartha went onward and crossed the Ganga;
reaching Rajagriha, he received alms.
When he reached Pandava Mountain and sat there,
King Bimbisara came and counselled him at length.
“Prince of the Solar line, return.”

Canto 11

Siddhartha said, “King Bimbisara,
descendant of the Haryanka line,
having abandoned delusion, where should I return?
A king too is sometimes afflicted by sorrow;
and does not even a servant sometimes find joy?
Protect your people,
and protect yourself as well.”
Siddhartha moved on toward the hermitage of Vaishvantara;
the king of Magadha stood amazed.

Canto 12

For knowledge the Shakya prince
went to Arada's hermitage.
The sage said, “Ignorance has five forms.
Inaction is the darkness of sloth;
anger and despondency are limbs of that darkness.
Delusion is this craving for life and also for death;
the road of welfare is the road to liberation.”
But Siddhartha said, “Revered sage!
To affirm a self is to affirm ego.”
The teaching did not satisfy him,
so he went on to Udraka's hermitage.
He entered the city where the royal sage had his retreat,
but Siddhartha found no answer there either.
Then he went to the bank of the Nairanjana,
where he met five mendicants.
For six years he practised austerity,
yet the question remained unanswered.
“The answer to the mind's question will be found in a healthy body.”
He made this resolve,
and bathed in the Nairanjana.

As he emerged, a daughter of a cowherd-chief approached,
 Nanda-bala by name,
 fair-skinned and dressed in blue.
 She came carrying a bowl of milk-rice;
 Siddhartha ate and was restored.
 Seeing this, the five companions abandoned him.
 But he grew strong for the attainment of awakening,
 and with firm resolve took his seat beneath the pipal tree.
 Kala the serpent said,
 “See this flock of blue-throated birds
 circling all around you;
 it is a sign that you shall attain Bodhisattvahood.”
 Hearing this, Siddhartha lifted a blade of grass and made his vow:
 “I shall gain knowledge,
 and only then rise from this seat.”

Canto 13

The universe was glad,
 but wicked Mara grew afraid.
 Mara, god of desire, Chitrayudha,
 wielder of flower-arrows, thought:
 “Siddhartha will gain knowledge and teach it to the world.
 What then will become of my dominion?”
 His sons were Delusion, Joy and Pride;
 his daughters were Discontent, Desire and Thirst.
 “Come, take up the shield of resolve;
 set the arrow of wisdom upon the bow of truth.
 Shall we let him conquer today without a fight?”
 “O Siddhartha, perform sacrifice, study scripture,
 win the station of Indra and enjoy delight;
 leave this seat, or I shall shoot.”
 Siddhartha paid no heed.
 Then Mara released his arrow,
 but nothing happened.
 That arrow had once been loosed even against Shiva
 and had disturbed him too;
 yet here it could not tell who this was.
 “O my dreadful and fantastic soldiers,
 whirl your tridents, lift your maces,
 roar like bulls;
 come, defeat this terrible enemy!”
 The night was dense and black—where was the moon?
 Not even the stars could be seen.
 Yet all their assaults were wasted;
 the invisible forces fell away.
 “Go, Mara. He will not be shaken.
 See his matted locks, emblem of forbearance;
 his patience is like the root of a tree,
 his character its flower, wisdom its branch,
 dharma its fruit.
 The place of this seat is the very navel of the earth;

today he shall attain knowledge with ease.”

Defeated, Mara fled from there.

Canto 14

In the first watch of the night the Shakya sage
easily recovered the memory of former births.

In the second watch, gaining divine sight,
he saw the fruit of action and the experience of suffering.

He knew womb, lake, hell and heaven alike;

he saw beings fall even from heaven,
unsatisfied seekers of pleasure bound to birth,
age and death.

The third watch passed, and in the fourth
knowledge came; becoming Buddha,
he attained peace.

His mind was still,
and the whole world seemed still.

Dharma rained in every direction though there were no clouds.

The sky announced it with the sound of celestial drums.

Every quarter shone with perfected beings,
and flowers rained from heaven upon this sage of the Ikshvaku line.

The Shakya sage remained seated in that state for seven days.

Then two deities arrived in celestial chariots:

“Deliver the world; teach the way of liberation.”

Another deity came bearing an alms bowl.

The Buddha remembered Arada and Udraka,
but both had already left this paltry world.

“Now I shall go to Varanasi,
where my five mendicant companions are,”

he said, looking lovingly toward the tree of awakening.

Canto 15

The Buddha set out alone;
on the road he met a mendicant.

“Radiant one, who are you? Who is your teacher?”

“Child, I have no teacher.

I have attained nirvana.

I have known all that is worthy of being known;
people call me Buddha.

I am going to Kashi for the welfare of those who suffer.”

From afar he saw the meeting of the Varuna and the Ganga,
and the Buddha entered the nearby Deer Park.

His five former companions were there.

Seeing him approach from afar,
they decided none would greet him;

yet what happened when he arrived?

All of them sprang into his service.

They gave him a seat, and as he prepared to teach,
one of them suddenly said,

“You do not understand the truth;

why did you abandon austerity halfway?”

The Buddha said, “I have abandoned both harsh austerity and attachment; by taking the Middle Way I attained awakening.”

Canto 16

The sun of awakening is Right View,
and along its beautiful road walks Right Intention.

It wanders in the garden of Right Conduct,
and Right Livelihood is its food.

Right Effort is its attendant;

it finds peace in the city called Right Mindfulness,
and sleeps upon the bed of Right Concentration.

Through this eightfold discipline it becomes possible
to be freed from birth, ageing, disease and death.

The Middle Way has four steadfast truths:

suffering, the cause of suffering,
the cessation of suffering,

and the means by which cessation is attained.

Kaundinya and his four companions heard this,
and all attained divine insight.

“O five, best among men,

has knowledge arisen in you?”

Kaundinya answered, “Yes, Blessed One,
it has arisen.”

Kaundinya then became the foremost knower of the Dharma.

At once the Yakshas cried out from the mountains:

“The Shakya sage has set the Wheel of Dharma in motion!”

Morality is its pin;

patience and humility its axle;

wisdom and mindfulness are its wheels,
joined with truth and nonviolence.

“Seated in this chariot, peace shall be found,
” cried all the Yakshas;

in the Deer Park the Wheel of Dharma was set in motion.

Then Ashvajit and four other mendicants

were initiated by the Buddha into the Dharma of nirvana.

After them, Yasha, a young man of good family,
attained arhatship;

Yasha and fifty-four householders

were trained by the Buddha in the true Dharma.

One may live at home and remain unattached,

and one may live in the forest and still become attached.

Eight among these disciples who had attained arhatship

were sent forth, and the Buddha moved toward the eight directions.

He reached Gaya, wishing to win over

the sage Kashyapa, endowed with many powers.

At Gaya, Kashyapa welcomed the Buddha,

but gave him the fire-house to sleep in,
where a great serpent lived.

At night the serpent bowed before the Buddha;

in the morning Kashyapa saw it resting inside the Buddha's alms bowl.
Kashyapa bowed, and he and his five hundred disciples
were joined by his brothers Gaya-Kashyapa and Nadi-Kashyapa.
They accepted the Buddha's Dharma
and on the heights of Gaya received instruction in the Dharma of nirvana.
Taking them all with him,
the Buddha reached the Bamboo Grove at Rajagriha.

Canto 17

Bimbisara heard the news and came there;
 he saw Kashyapa become a disciple of the Buddha.
 The Buddha then asked Kashyapa,
 “Venerable one, why did you abandon the worship of fire?”
 Kashyapa replied, “Delusion, which gives rise to rebirth,
 still remains
 even when one pours offerings into the fire and performs its rites.”
 With the Buddha’s permission,
 Kashyapa displayed his miraculous power,
 flying through the sky and blazing there like fire.
 Then the Buddha taught Bimbisara the doctrine of no-self:
 consciousness arises through the conjunction of object,
 mind and senses;
 body, sense-organs and consciousness are distinct,
 yet they are not wholly separate either.
 Delighted, Bimbisara gave the Bamboo Grove to the Buddha.
 The Tathagata’s disciple Ashvajit went into the city for alms.
 People of the Kapila school, struck by his radiance,
 asked, “Who is your teacher?”
 Ashvajit answered, “The Sugata Buddha,
 born in the Ikshvaku line.”
 “He is my teacher, and he teaches that nothing arises without a cause.”
 The Brahmin Upatishya gained insight and told Maudgalyayana;
 he too attained right view on hearing it.
 They heard the teaching in the Bamboo Grove,
 cast aside matted hair and staff,
 put on the ochre robe, practised,
 and attained the supreme state.
 A wealthy Brahmin of the Kashyapa lineage left wife and family;
 he came to be renowned by the name Mahakashyapa.

Canto 18

Sudatta, the wealthy householder of Shravasti in Kosala,
 came to the Bamboo Grove.
 Though still a householder,
 he attained knowledge of truth.
 Sudatta returned to Shravasti with Upatishya
 and resolved to build a monastery in Prince Jeta’s grove.
 The owner of Jetavana was greedy and demanded a great price for the land,
 but seeing Sudatta pay it,
 his heart was transformed.
 He gave the whole grove for the monastery.
 Under Upatishya’s supervision the monastery was swiftly built
 in Jetavana.

Canto 19

The Buddha then left Rajagriha and journeyed toward Kapilavastu.
 There he gave his father Shuddhodana the nectar of awakening,
 a gift no son had ever before given his father.
 Karma follows even beyond death;
 understand the mystery of its nature, its cause,
 its fruit and its support,
 and seek a path beyond birth, death,
 toil and suffering.
 Ananda, Nanda, Krimila, Anuruddha, Kundadhanya,
 Devadatta and Udayi
 left their homes and received ordination.
 Upali, son of Atri, also received ordination.
 Shuddhodana handed the affairs of state to his brother
 and thereafter lived like a royal sage.
 The Buddha entered the city once again;

reaching the Nyagrodha grove,
he began to contemplate the welfare of living beings.

Canto 20

From there he journeyed into Kosala,
the land of Prasenajit.
Jetavana at Shravasti shone with white buildings and ashoka trees.
Sudatta welcomed the Buddha with garlands of gold
and laid Jetavana at the Buddha's feet.
Prasenajit was initiated into the Dharma.
The Buddha resolved the doubts of ascetics belonging to other paths
and brought them too into the teaching.
He went to heaven to his mother
and instructed her as well.

Canto 21

From there the Buddha returned again to Rajagriha.
He instructed Jyotishka, Jivaka, Shura,
Shrona and Angada,
and admitted them all into the Sangha.
Then he went to Gandhara and initiated King Pushkara.
On Mount Vipula he instructed the two Yakshas Hemavata and Satagra,
and came to Jivaka's mango grove.
After resting there, he wandered onward
and reached the town of Apana.
There he met the bandit Angulimala
and initiated him into the Dharma of love.
In Varanasi he initiated Katyayana,
nephew of Asita.
But Devadatta grew jealous and sought to spread dissension through the Sangha.
On Vulture Peak he hurled a boulder down upon the Buddha.
On the road at Rajagriha he loosed a maddened elephant against him.
Everyone fled, but Ananda remained beside the Buddha.
When the great elephant drew near,
it became calm and bowed low;
the Buddha gave teaching even to that elephant.
Ajatashatru watched this wonder from the royal palace
and he too became a disciple of the Buddha.

Canto 22

From Rajagriha the Buddha came to Pataliputra.
Magadha's minister Varshakara was building a fort there.
The Buddha prophesied that this city would become renowned;
then the Tathagata passed through Gautama Gate toward the Ganga.
Across the river, in the village of Kuti,
he taught the Dharma.
Then he went to Nandigram,
where many deaths had occurred.
Giving consolation,
he moved on to the city of Vaishali
and stayed in Ambapali's grove.
Clad in white, she came before him.
The Buddha cautioned his disciples:
"Hold to restraint; abide in steady wisdom,
bearing the immortal medicine of awakening;
with the arrow of insight and the bow of strength,
guard yourselves."
Ambapali came and received his teaching.
Disgust arose in her for her former way of life.
She begged for the gift of Dharma.
The Buddha accepted her request:
"I shall come to your door to receive alms."

Canto 23

Hearing that the Buddha had come to Ambapali's grove,
 the Licchavis approached him.
 The Buddha counselled them to live with moral discipline.
 The Licchavis invited him to take alms at their respective homes.
 Receiving their invitations, the Buddha said,
 "But I shall go to Ambapali's door,
 for I have already given her my word."
 The Licchavis found this somewhat displeasing,
 but after receiving the Buddha's teaching,
 they returned to their own homes.
 The next morning, after receiving alms from Ambapali,
 the Buddha went to Venumati for the four months of the rains retreat.
 When those four months had passed,
 he began to stay beside the Monkey Pond.
 There Mara came
 and said, "O Buddha,
 upon the bank of the Nairanjana you resolved
 that before nirvana you would rescue others and show them the road.
 Now so many are free,
 so many follow the path to freedom;
 no reason remains
 for delaying nirvana."
 The Buddha said, "O Mara,
 do not be anxious.
 Three months from today
 I shall attain nirvana."
 Mara, satisfied and delighted,
 turned away.
 The Buddha took his seat and drew the life-breath into the mind,
 then joined mind and breath and entered samadhi through yoga.
 At the instant the life-breath was stilled,
 the earth trembled, and the sky trembled too!

Canto 24

Ananda asked, "Show grace to the Licchavis;
 why do earth and sky
 tremble through mortal and celestial realms?"
 The Buddha said, "I have now stepped outside,
 leaving my chamber behind.
 Only three months from now
 I shall relinquish this body
 and dwell forever in nirvana."
 Hearing this, Ananda began to wail aloud.
 The Licchavis too gathered at the sound of lamentation
 and joined in the grief.
 The Buddha consoled and instructed them all,
 then journeyed northward from Vaishali.

Canto 25

Reaching the city of Bhogavati,
 he taught: "Vinaya is my word;
 whatever speech is without discipline
 is not Dharma."
 Then he went to Pava, city of the Mallas,
 and ate a meal in the home of his devotee Cunda.
 After teaching him,
 the Buddha departed toward Kushinagar.
 With Cunda beside him he crossed the current of the Iravati,
 rested on the bank of a lake,
 bathed in the stream of the Hiranyavati,
 and said, "Ananda,

between those twin sal trees I shall lie down.
 In the last watch of this very night
 I shall attain nirvana.”
 With his hands he folded the ochre robe,
 placed one leg upon the other,
 lay upon his right side and said, “Ananda,
 call the people of the Mallas here,
 that they may meet me before nirvana.”
 The quarters were still;
 tiger and bear were still;
 the birds were still,
 and every creature was still.
 The Mallas came and broke into lamentation,
 but the Buddha comforted them and sent them back.

Canto 26

After that came Subhadra,
 the ascetic who bore the triple staff.
 Receiving instruction in the Eightfold Path,
 Subhadra said, “O embodiment of compassion,
 before I behold your death
 I wish to attain nirvana.”
 He sat unmoving like a mountain;
 and as a lamp
 is extinguished by a gust of wind,
 so in a moment he attained nirvana.
 “He was my final disciple!
 Perform Subhadra’s last rites.”
 Half the night had passed.
 The Buddha summoned all his disciples
 and gave them the teaching of the Pratimoksha:
 “If any doubt remains, ask it today.”
 Aniruddha said, “No one has any doubt concerning the Noble Truths.”
 The Buddha then entered meditation,
 passing from the first to the fourth stage,
 and attained peace.

Canto 27

Thus came the Great Parinirvana.
 The Mallas came and raised the Buddha upon a golden bier.
 Passing out through Nagadvāra,
 they crossed the Hiranyavati.
 They adorned the body with sandalwood,
 but when they set fire to the pyre,
 not a spark would rise.
 The disciple Kashyapa was still on the road;
 as soon as he arrived, the pyre burst into flame.
 The Mallas gathered the relics and placed them in a golden urn,
 then brought it into the city.
 Later they built a shrine for worship
 and enshrined the urn of relics there.

Canto 28

Then envoys from seven lands
 came asking for the Buddha’s relics.
 The Mallas refused,
 and war threatened to break out.
 All came and surrounded Kushinagar,
 but the Brahmin Drona reasoned with both sides.
 The relics were divided into eight shares.
 Drona himself took a ninth urn,
 the vessel in which all the relics had first been kept,
 and the Pīśalī people took a tenth urn containing the ashes of the Buddha’s body.

Then everyone returned to their own land.
 Over the urns of relics and the urn of ashes they raised ten stupas
 and went there to worship and make offerings.
 Ten stupas stood complete,
 where an undying lamp burned and bells continually rang.
 Then five hundred monks came from Rajagriha.
 Ananda was entrusted with the task:
 "Recite and recount all the Buddha's teachings,
 so that they may now be gathered whole."
 "Thus have I heard" -
 in this manner the complete account was spoken well.
 In time Ashoka took the sacred relics from the stupas
 and divided them into hundreds of portions,
 building hundreds upon hundreds of stupas,
 symbols of devotion.
 So long as there is birth, there is suffering;
 freedom from rebirth alone is happiness.
 The great sage who showed the road to that freedom -
 who else is pure like Shakyamuni?
 This strength for the Unborn Mind
 you gave us, O Buddha,
 O Buddha,
 O Buddha.



WHEN DREAMS MERGE

*Dreams do not end where waking begins.
In this collection, Gajendra Thakur moves between
the infinite and the intimate — between the light beyond
the current of time and the palmful of earth in one's hand —
gathering translated Maithili verse into a
single sky where sleep and wakefulness, the old order and
the new, the self and its many unnamed names, are all
allowed, at last, to merge.*

— Gajendra.Thakur

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