

The Fifth Encounter with the Purushottam

I have forgotten how the fish looked,
Or the turtle, or the bear, or the lion-man.
I don't remember how the generous, upright Bali
Was destroyed by deceit.

The face that I remember
Was that of Parashuram, your sixth incarnation.
I remember it, because then I was called Renuka,
I had created that face—out of my flesh, blook and pain;
Milk flowed from my breast for that mouth.
And then, one day
I saw an axe coming down on me.
What my stunned eyes mutely screamed out then
History, has forgotten.

The next encounter was in Treta.
I had put a garland around your neck,
And had followed you fourteen years in forests.
And then—you wanted to see—
My death, horrible fiery death.
I spoke then, but history has drowned that voice
Under the resounding praises for my chasity.

Next we met in Dwapar.
I, Rukmini, had dared to defy my father
For your sake.
You accepted me, and then
The rebel was led to your harem
Amidst a thousand other wives.
History was then busy writing down
The Gita, as you dictated it.

The next meeting was in this very Kaliyug.
In your ninth incarnation
You wanted to rid the earth of sorrow;
Only, my sorrow did not matter to you.
I wanted to follow you in the path of liberation:
But you objected, that may not be good for your male followers.

Now, in this eleventh hour of Kali,
In this eleventh hour of this creation itself
We meet for the last time:
Your face is shorn of that mask which passed you as a god,
My face does not have any covering veil!
The contempt of your eyes is turning to stunned astonishment;
Astonishment is turning to buring anger.
The fire of the two pairs of eyes
Is burning down the whole universe to shes,
And then, perhaps one day
Out of those heaps of ashes
A new universe is going to emerge
Which will be capable of living without any Purushottam.