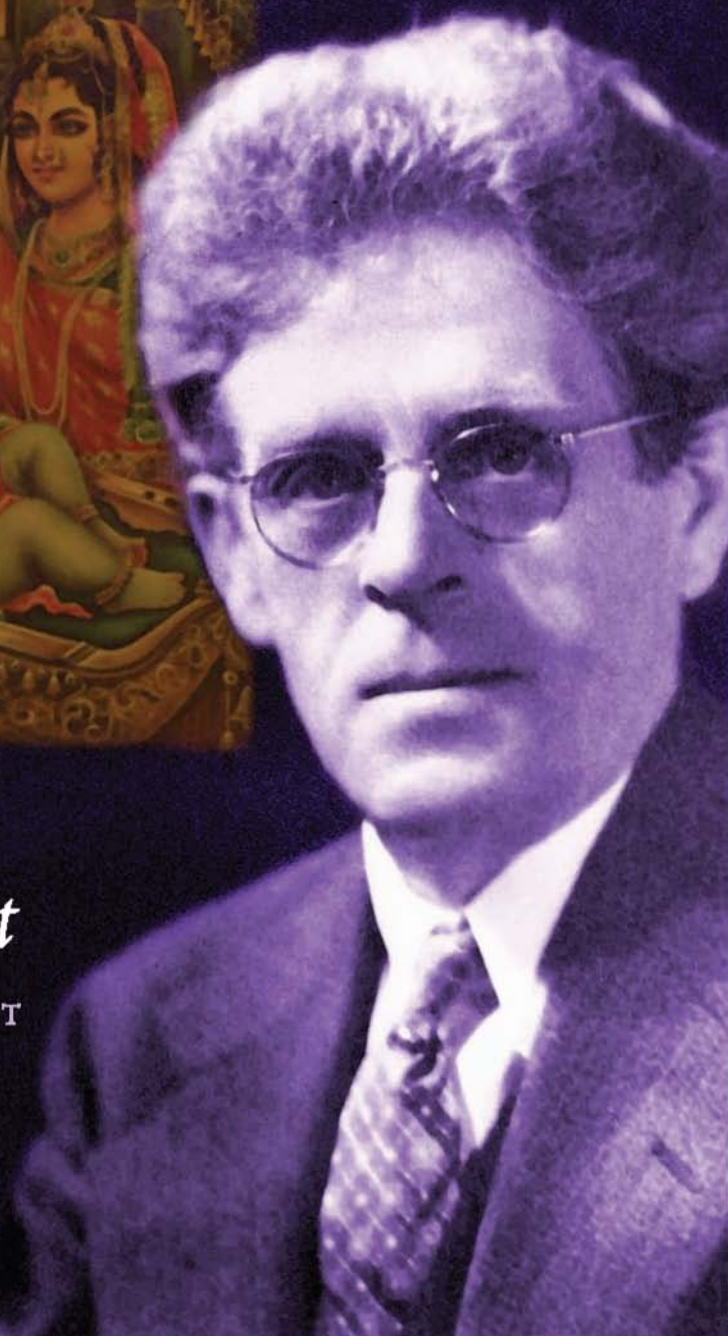


The Divine Enchantment

JOHN G. NEIHARDT



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The Divine Enchantment

A Mystical Poem

By John G. Neihardt



excelsior editions

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THE DIVINE ENCHANTMENT

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PREFATORY.

Many years before our era there reigned over the province of Madura, in India, a tyrant, Kansa. During his reign there lived in an obscure village of the realm a maiden of the race of Yadu, named Devanaguy, who, so the ancient prophets sang, should bear Christna, the incarnation of Vishnu, destined to establish temporal and spiritual empire over all the world. This prophecy wrought so much upon the king's fear and jealousy, that he ordered the virgin Devanaguy to be safely locked in his prison, and guarded most vigilantly, hoping that by cutting off in this way all possible intercourse with men, he might thwart the divine plan and the prophets. But during her incarceration the spirit of Vishnu appeared and overshadowed her, whereat the virgin conceived. During the term of her gestation Devanaguy was transported by a continual, ecstatic dream. Her spirit, freed from her body, ran through every pulse of passion, felt the dark terrors of the Void, and wantoned in the unwinged blue; thus giving to the unborn child, inherently, that for which the sages vainly sought. The following rhapsody is the dream in miniature.

J. G. NEIHARDT.

1899.

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TERMS IN THE FOLLOWING WORK.

AJAKAVA—The bow used by Siva, the destroyer, in bringing about the dissolution of Cosmos.

AMRITA—The beverage of the Hindoo gods, corresponding to the Grecian nectar.

ASSOURAS, NAGAS, &c.—Names of the apostate angels, or demons in the realms of Kala.

BRAHMA—First of the Hindoo trinity; the Creator.

CHRISTNA—An incarnation of Vishnu, and one of the saviours of the world.

CALI-YOUGA—The name of the age in which Christna was born.

INDRA—The god of the clear sky.

JESEUS—The name applied to Christna, and corresponding to Isis, Jesus, Zeus, &c.

KALA—The name of Siva in his capacity as death.

NIRVANA—Meaning "blown out," that is, the universal calm of death.

NARADA—An ancient Hindoo prophet.

OM—The mystic word, significant of infinite power.

RACKCHASOS—The Hindoo demons.

SURYA—The Hindoo sun god.

SANSARA—The world hung, as it were, upon the apostate spirits as punishment for their fall.

SIVA—The third of the Hindoo trinity, or Destroyer.

TRIMOURTI—The Hindoo trinity.

VISHNU—Second of the Hindoo trinity, Preserver.

YAMA—The Hindoo god of death.

THE DIVINE ENCHANTMENT

I.

PRELUDE.

"In Cali-Youga shall a virgin bear
The Incarnate Essence of the mighty Soul,
Who comes to bid the weak and lowly live.
Oh, He shall come like sun at dead of night,
And at His first low wail the sacred stream
Shall thrill with rapture even to its source,
And bound as does a pregnant woman's heart
At the first rapture of the springing life.
Strange sounds shall hurtle through the dark abyss,
Bidding Rackchasos tremble in their dens;
Sweet strains shall charm the holy hermit's ears,
And he shall praise the saviour in his wilds;
The wondering winds shall surfeit with perfume
And feel the rapture of his tender law."
So sang Narada in the ancient time,
And now fulfilment hovered sweetly near.

THE DIVINE ENCHANTMENT

II.

ENCHANTMENT.

O Evening, dusky daughter of the Day,
Multiloquent in silence, passionate, calm;
Thou seemest to me a lovely Yadu maid,
Whose cheek though browned, yet blushes with the pulse
Of love and summer; while a languid soul
Dreams in the dark, deep eyes, that placid, hint
Of all the tropic passion they can flash
When love hath charmed them or when hate hath stirred.
Close, close, thou creepest to the eager earth,
That fondly quivers with a conscious thrill;
Thy amorous breath is mingled with its breath;
Thy dusky breast is throbbing on its own;
Thy kiss, prolonged, clings drowsily the while
But cannot satiate, till sweetly lulled,
A hemisphere swoons to oblivion
Enwound in thy voluptuous embrace!

The drowsy maidens in the palmy groves
Forgot the song of love that slept on lip,
And there drooped fingers lay mid sitar's strings.
Yet, hidden in the leaves, the bulbul woke
In long ecstatic bursts of melody;
And when the song into an echo sank,
The deep, sonorous, moaning of the trees
Swelled like a fettered giant's hopeless sigh,
Till solaced by the ever-rising song,
It murmurous crept beneath the chanted spell.

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Over Madura's towers fell the shade
Of evening with its influence of calm;
Into a tower cell the night charm crept,
Crept o'er a maiden knelt in holy prayer;
Lowly she moaned and in her moaning prayed;
"Truth, Wisdom, endless Brahm,
Source of all bliss, immortal, shining forth,
Peaceful, benignant, secondless,
O listen to a humble maiden's prayer.
Make thou me free, though walls are round about;
Rule thou my soul, though tyrants sway my form;
Bind my soul to thee as my body's bound;
Breathe o'er me with thy breath of deathless calm,
Om, peace, peace, peace."

Soft sleep, in answer to her prayer, crept
Into her sorrowed pulses, and she slept;
Night charmed the blood in every bounding vein,
That crept with drowsy music to her brain,
And all the pleasure that her youth would feel
Dream touched with magic and it lingered real.

Meanwhile a tremor wakened in the Vast;
The worlds grew calm, nor sputtered more the suns;
The earth was shrouded in a pulseless dream,
The birds were voiceless in the silent trees;
The streams forgot their laughter 'mid the rocks
And in their depths the fishes fell asleep;
The winds stood still, and languished in the breath
Of drooping flowers; all sense expectant faltered.

But suddenly a storm of melody
Burst from the brooding mystery of silence!
All that exists took up a second life;
The worlds, the suns whirled on in rhythmic hope;
The earth, the trees, the birds, the sparkling streams

THE DIVINE ENCHANTMENT

Quivered with life; then through the music swelled
A voice more lovely than the strains it stilled,

 "O world, O wayward children, now I come;
O poor night dwellers, hope, for dawns the day,
Chaste Devanaguy bears thee life and light."

Then o'er the sleeping maiden crept a shade,
A shadow brooding with a conscious power;
Not as the darkness of the depth of night,
But radiant, a mist of starry sheen.
It kissed her breast, that swelled with double breath;
Infused a sweet hope in the sluggish veins,
That worked and sang and charmed; and 'round her form
With warm embrace, clung like celestial robe.

Love of a thousand mothers lulled her brain,
And in her blood a gentle whisper crept,
That said with soothing sweetness, "Thou art blest;
Lo! Devanaguy, at thy virgin heart
The world's high promise quickens into life;
For Vishnu, blest Preserver of the worlds,
Hath entered thee, nor boasts a prouder throne;
Tho' he may glimmer in the summer cloud,
All radiant with ineffable desires;
Tho' he may blossom in the banyan boughs,
Where sing the drowsy night-birds to their loves;
Tho' he may flash a mighty, regal thought
In mystic minds of sages in their dreams,
He boasts no prouder dwelling; and above,
When earth is once again reclaimed from night,
He'll glance a brighter glory from his eye,
A prouder voice shall well from out his mouth,
And he shall say, 'Lo, Devanaguy, she,
The spotless virgin of a sinful world
Once bore me.'

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Dream then sweetly of thy child;
The passioned heaving of thy maiden breast,
Tho' tender as the fragrant breath of flowers,
More mighty is than ocean's boundless surge."

Then crept a dream through every throbbing pulse:
Not such a dream as mortal mothers love,
When sweetly thinking how the child shall smile
And prattle when the smile is quick returned;
Not such a dream as thrills a mother's soul,
When thinking of the sweet weight at her breasts;
But infinite her dream; she felt she bore
The incarnate passion of the dashing shower,
The unconsolated longing of the sea,
The amorous spirit of the burning sun,
The murmurous music of the sacred stream!

A tinkling music wakened in her ears,
As if the rivulets of Himalay
Had struck their lotus harps in joyous song,
Fraught with the boast of harvests they had dewed
And nurtured into gold; her spirit fled,
Like eager echo in the wake of sound
Down the charmed pathway of that tinkling song,
Till it began to swell to graver note,
As when the sacred stream with hundred mouths
Cries forth its passion to the listening deep,
Then, murmurous, dreams again its natal dreams.

She felt the longing arms of Ocean old
Twine round her spirit in an amorous clasp,
And through her thrilled his passion, old as earth,
Yet pure and deep as of the blooming youth.
Then o'er the heaving bosom of the sea
A dream-fraught zephyr crept from central climes

THE DIVINE ENCHANTMENT

Where Indra girdles earth with radiant smile:
Crept lover-like, with fragrance in its breath,
And soothing tales of summer in its voice,
And if the deep bore any frown of care,
'Twas softened with a soporific touch
And all was placid, unresisting there.

Into the ocean crept the zephyr's plea,
Into the zephyr rose the sea's response,
And their souls met in sweet satiety.
Thrilled with its draught of love, the zephyr swelled
And burst into the fury of a gale;
And like a soul, when first it knows itself
Is infinite and deathless, sought the blue,
Borne on the longing of its misty wings.

Up, up she soared, the spirit of the cloud,
Fraught with the tender hope of countless lives,
The lullaby that woos the buds to bloom,
And holy chant that nerves the pregnant flower.
That it e'en gives its bloom, yea life for seed!

Then in the glances of the smiling morn
She blushed to crimson, and her humid soul
Warmed into love and quivered with desire.

Then the earth waxed faint and fainter in the covering of
haze,
And the hills and valleys wavered in a strange, uncertain
maze;
Soon a bluster and a rush broke the ill-forboding hush,
And the passions of the heavens tore the earth's dream
with their gush;

Then down, down, down, on the dry, insatiate brown
Of the hillsides and the meadows, swept the flood from
heaven's frown;

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Spirits, bright and flashing, fleet, spurned the air with
 silver feet,
With a kind of mocking laughter, yet a melody complete;
In a wild, uproarious mirth, dashed themselves upon the
 earth,
That it felt a thrill of passion quiver round its verdant
 girth:
And the erstwhile whimpering gale, slipt away without a
 wail,
Drowsy grown with draught of beauty from their heaven-
 conjured tale;
There was hope in every bud and warm resolve in every
 seed;
Rush of color to the blossom, pride triumphant in the
 weed:
Then the rivulets cried gladly with a wild, ecstatic bound,
And the ocean fondly quivered with a consciousness pro-
 found;
And the seas and earth and heavens throbbed together
 like a brain,
With a blessing to the warm, benignant passion of the
 rain!

Then died the vision with the ceasing shower;
A wondrous fragrance wrapt her round about,
And as the spirit of a lowly flower,
She felt the speechless thrill of bursting buds,
When weeping Monsoon woos the land with tears;
She felt the lust of the unfolding bloom,
The universal dreaming of the seed,
That dries the petal in its hot embrace!

Then in her dream night crept upon the world;
She slept a longing in a bulbul's heart,
That watched and listened to the brooding night;

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She saw afar within the dark concave
The jewel eyes of devas pierce the gloom;
But lo! with face that paled the stars, arose
The argent pride of dusky hemispheres,
Beneath whose silver kisses, heaved with love
The deep, true breast of Ocean, till its tremor
Crept to the distant shores where lotus flowers,
Lapt in a drowsy fragrance, felt the thrill,
And cast a sopor o'er the earth and air;
Then felt she how the night-bird's heart can throb,
When seeking music for a vital song:
She felt the blood-warmth and the hot desires,
Till in one long, wild ecstasy of notes
Her spirit poured forth glowing on the breeze,
That fell to calm; and down the forest shades
She fled a dying symphony, that dim,
And dimmer quivered in the moonlit air,
Till but a fragrant memory was left
That e'en itself soon perished in the bloom.

Then felt she what it is to live, yet die;
To sweetly languish like a sound away,
To fade like fragrance from a fitful gale,
And perish? Ah, within her quivered yet
A thrill undying, for if life be life,
It cannot die, but boundless as the Void,
And strangely endless as the circled years,
Must throb forever through the coarser world,
The world of matter, that it form, destroy,
Shoot up in trees, breathe fragrant in the flower,
Yea, be a fancy in a sage's brain!

Then knew she first the deathlessness of life;
How infinite the beating of a pulse;
Far through the realms of space her spirit spread,

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Beyond the limit where poor finitude
Fades in its boasts, and grows itself a part
Of one immutable, harmonious throb!

Then broke the glory of an eveless day;
Then shone the brilliance of a boundless truth:
She saw the worlds swing to a choral chant,
Around the centre of a common will;
And each an atom in a mighty brain,
Through which melodious consciousness did flash,
To which the musing of an earthly seer
Were dreamless sleep: here felt the soul no wish
For fabled golden city jewel-decked,
Where mild-eyed Indolence awakes the harp;
The ever-widening, vast, cerulean dome,
With ever-rising nave, where systems flash
In fret-work intricate, is fane enough
For thee, O Soul of all things, Life of all;
The sympathetic worlds are harp enough
Through which thou canst thy melodies outpour;
The roaring suns thy holy altars burn,
Tho' not with death, to glut a fabled wrath,
Nor blood, to paint withal a nightmare's hate!

Speech broke unprompted from the dreamer's lips:
"O varied power, sightless architect,
We find thee drowsy at the poppy's heart,
We find thee wakeful in the laughing child;
We hate thee, hating in the reptile's eye,
We love thee, loving in the maiden's blush;
We breathe thy breath, and love thee witlessly;
We glow with thee through every crimson vein;
Sandaled with consciousness thou treadest the dim
And mystic labyrinth of subtle brain,
And passion blows in flowers beneath thy charm

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And thrill of footfall; and betimes thou comest
Clad in the sable of the thunder cloud
And through the veins createst liquid storm;
And 'God' we call thee, but thou speakest not
Tho' faith grow cold upon the lips of men.
And still we falter for the dumb to speak,
And petulant, pine into cynic's doubts,
While all about us fragrance breathes a dream,
And nearby doth the streamlet improvise!
O thou who art the living of the world,
Unveil to me the face of the true sun,
Now hidden by a ray of golden light."

Whereat, upon her burst a deluge vast
Of luminous fury, as upon the fiends
Of nether night within the blind abyss,
Broke the first dawning of the myriad suns!

Upon the flood the Spirit of the Deep
Shone like a sun; star-shod it strode and vast,
Crowned with a thousand rays; Essential Day,
The positive of being, Light and Truth,
Whose name the gods but utter to revere!

And soon from out the brilliance sprang anew
What should be voice, for it was eloquent
Beyond all speaking; yet it rather seemed
A new-born element, that steeped the soul
In profound knowledge, suited unto it
As ear and eye are formed for sound and light:
And so flowed forth the mystic, lucent words
Unto the silent question of her soul.

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III.

INTERLUDE.

As soars the cliff above the dusky vale
And laves its summit in the eastern glow;
Respeaking faintly some far song or wail
Unto itself, and to the mist below;
Thus would I soar and meet the Morning so,
And thus, though stone-like, echo a far cry;
More kindred to the dusk that clings below
Than to the glory of the Morn, thus I
Revive a fainting voice, where many echoes die.

The perfume of the lotus dies away
And sunflowers smile their broad, plebeian smile;
No bulbul steals my willing sense to-day,
But on the fence the blackbird brawls the while;
The world moves conscious of the jealous dial;
The sun drags senseless, where once Surya sprang;
And so I speak with self-condemning smile
In heavy words, that once, light-winged, sang
And twang a rusty string, where once a lyre rang!

Those brain-flowers subtle Fancy rears to bloom,
Yet rarely blow in beauty on the lip;
Unchilled by death and fearless of the tomb,
Tho' sable Kala, frowning darkly, dip
His shafts in liquid flame Raskchasos sip,
These blooms I plant in more unkindly sod;
Yet doth a pigmy scarce presume to skip
Along the Blue; nor with Earth's metal shod,
Essay to take the charmed, bright footprints of a God!

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Succeeding ages lower drag the skies,
And heavens dwindle as the seasons wane;
In vain we lift to thee, O Brahm, our eyes;
And hosts of worn-out Gods are sought in vain:
Jehovah toils to break Trimourti's reign;
(Wert thou eternal I would call to thee)
O Arbiter of orbits, joy and pain,
Who art the one unfathomed, restless sea,
O Nameless Source, now breathe a lotus charm on me!

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IV.

BIRTH OF BRAHM.

Broad Chaos slept; all stillness, blind, dumb stillness;
E'en such a tremor as within the mind
Wakes troubled dream, upon the drowsy ear
Of vast Tranquility had roared a storm,
And shaken Space from its cold sleep to wake
In feverish orbits, zones of burning life!

In pulseless dissolution slumbered on
The embryo elements; and the throneless Vast
Was needless of a king, who had been realmless.
Yet through the murky silence restless crept
The Principle of Being; (in whose throes,
Hopes, fears and all the future Cosmos' throbs
Yet dumbly struggled 'gainst their latency)
The Cause of cause, retreating unto cause
In tireless succession through the night;
Dumb spirit, conjured of Attraction warm
'Twixt molecules chaotic; soul of storm;
The brooding Spirit in the calm; the heat
Of genial suns; the comet's hissing hate;
And vitalizing quiver of the pulse.

Unheeded swept the ages o'er the deep
With uncorrosive haste: for fleeting Time,
The potent pulse of e'er evolving change,
By man alone in his finite conceit
And vanity of being, is bid stay
Lest it should lull the momentary itch
He hoards within his pulses; Ages rolled
Their empty circles; and meanwhile the Deeps

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Fervescient by attraction of their parts,
Were wild in ferment; and their atoms dumb
Grew plastic 'neath the Spirit's thoughtless will
And waxing sentient, bodied forth a God,
Huge Demiurge, who reveled in the sway
Of primal consciousness, the paradox
Of erstwhile Night and Chaos with her aeons!

And thus awaking from insentient sleep
Unto a dazzling realm of knowing, He,
The master of the meaning of the spell
Of "I am I" that baffles circumspection,
Marveled at all; and as a babe might laugh
To hear the rattle of his toy, new-bought,
He was ecstatic with the tingling thrill
And thoughtful quiver of each nerve; his pulse
Woke tense vibrations in his awful brain,
And each concordant unto each, they swayed
His being unto longings that were sounds;
And somewhat thus the crescent God might muse:—

"Being?
Form?
Aware of being?
To know of form?
And what knows?
And where is that which knows?
Can it be that which never was before
That feels and knows? It is not that, that is not,
For that which knows was not a short while past!
Ah! 't may be these strange beings (gazing at hands) get
thee near!
Aha, thou comest when the Something wills,
Perhaps the Something's minion, not the Something,
And these (gazing at body and limbs) I wish to know thee:
ho! they move;

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They move when Something wishes that they move;
Then these and those are minions, not the Something!
It seems naught is beside just these and those
And that which feeleth, knoweth, seeth; strange!
Methinks the Something dwelleth in myself,
So near akin we be in what we wish
So near akin it must be same as I.
And then I am; but was not some while past?
And can aught be that was not? What strange fun!
(laughs)

Hark! whence those beings that rushed through my brain
And shrieked so gaily? Nothing? then 'twas I.

"Ah, this is marvelous; alas, alone?
Am I alone, who feels, thinks, knows, all these,
And none to serve me whom I found so regal?
There shall be servitors, by that weird name
I feel within me like a spell; I swear
There shall be servitors; ho, sluggish shades
Awake, and let me hear thee raise thy sounds
To praise me! Wake! or I shall speak the name
That slumbers in my pulses, but shall lash
Thy sluggish stupor into wakefulness,
That sleeps not through eternities of pain!
Wake, by the name of OM, I bid thee wake,
And praise me!"

Thus spoke the God, and Distance, shuddering heard;
And Height and Depth of darkness heard and groaned:
Till with one mighty impulse rose the din
Of wild awakening, and the Vast broke forth
In one deep thunder that shall never die,
But be the menace of the groaning spheres,
Till Ajakava free them; and that cry,
Burned with the uttered syllables,
"HAIL BRAHM!"

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V.

PROCREATION.

Divine Unrest, thou art the God eterne;
Thy fevered dream is being's only stay;
Disordered space awakens when you yearn,
And night glows ruddy into perfect day:
Thou art the spirit of each sun's swift ray;
Along the trackless Vast thy moan hath dwelt,
And silver orbits paved the stars' dark way:
Where'er thy dream hath rankled, Void hath felt
Her icy blood bound warm and into being melt!

Upon a time, Brahm discontented grew
With excess of contentment; for in vain
Time o'er his cloudless contemplation flew,
Nor stirred the tranquil summer of his brain;
He longed for storm, commotion, blight or bane
Or aught that might alleviate a mind
Now satiate with peace; 'Twere pleasing pain,
That might for him a new existence find;
But weary grew the God, and slumbered as he pined.

Like drowsy moments flew the ages fleet,
With dreary monotone of endless yearning;
His thought was glowing with a fevered heat,
He dreamed the Void, like his own mind, was burning,
And writhing, hissing, in vast circles turning;
Desire swept throughout him like a storm,
And soon in ecstasy he was discerning
From his own warmth, Infinity wax warm;
With sympathetic pulse to vibrate into form!

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A mystic spirit from his vision crept
And over Chaos lover-like it hung,
That, forthwith humbled in its fury, slept
And murmured fondly as the spirit sung
A song unlike the trilling of a tongue,
But harmony ineffable, divine,
That, loathing death, still unto being clung;
And Force and Matter, wedded, ceased to pine,
But slept, lulled by the bliss of amorous entwine.

Transcendent is the love that mortals know,
When two fond dreamers swoon in soft caress;
Adrift upon their dalliant passions flow,
Like birds that float on zephyr's happiness;
For their's is ravishment than gods' scarce less;
Their pulse shall quiver through a lengthened line;
Creation's raptured touch they each possess,
Which each doth worship at the other's shrine:
She is a Goddess chaste, and he a God divine:

But such is shadow of a taintless sun:
Warm-veined grew Chaos with the potent kiss;
Throughout her vastness heated storm did run,
Whose uncurbed lightning scathed with many a hiss,
Arousing Night in every vein, to bliss
And dreams of morning, dawning bold and fair;
Awaking life dispelled her drowsiness;
Such love had not been and it shall be ne'er,
As gave the ages wings above this primal pair!

Not the soft-curtained love of nuptial bed,
That yields the blushing maid a flitting night;
But of the tigress in the jungle bred,
Submitting fiercely to the lustful fight:
Without the nuptial torches' langorous light;

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But 'round them stealthy, dreamful Silence drew
The curtains of unbounded darkness tight;
And each in madness to the other flew,
With seething, flaming lust in one hot fury grew!

E'en now upon thy orb of shade and mist,
Where man, hysteric, grumbles for an hour;
All that hath made him able to exist,
All that hath wreathed his care-expelling bower,
All that hath warmed his veins with pride or power,
Is an inherent memory, still warm,
Bursting within the brain like scented flower,
Of that first thrill, when formless breathed to form,
And zephyr-like it croons of when it flashed, a storm!

Deep in the womb of Chaos grew the dream,
As thought builds image in the toiling brain;
The unborn glory of each stellar beam,
The wrath of tempest, mercy of the rain,
The worlds, the depths, in one, unbounded pain,
Groaned, writhing to their birth; and then at last,
Fired by inactivity's disdain,
Her progeny the pregnant Chaos cast
Forth with a deathless wail, and died, her birth-pangs past!

O, martyred mother, Deity maternal,
Who gavest the life-pulse to all things that be;
Thy heavenly offspring in their march diurnal,
Chant one grand requiem, swelling e'er to thee;
The sonorous sadness of the wailing sea
Forgets thee not; the night-bird knows thy wail,
And pours its tremulous infelicity
With the dull note of the as mournful gale,
A prayerful, cadent sob, and a most touching tale;

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As if when thou didst give the magic fire,
That heats the lightning, and the sage's thought,
Pathetic prescience of thy doom, so dire,
Like tuneless string in lyre, darkly wrought
A minor chord, half beautiful, that naught
Could charm to silence; O, that thou couldst deign
To speak, but thou art silent, yet has taught,
Innately, martyrs how to smile in pain,
For thou didst fade in death, that Life might deathless
 reign!

Forth in a flood of light the new-born fly,
Loud, regal suns, and moons, subdued and meek;
The comet, wild misanthrope of the sky,
Seeming naught but forgetfulness to seek:
Appointed paths the sturdy give the weak;
The sun is law unto the satellite;
And here and there an isolated clique
Of independent stars refresh the night,
And all the Boundless throbs with new-developed light!

And lo! the Cosmos breathed a living whole:
Suns 'rose on darkened worlds; clouds formed and flashed;
Storm swept like pulse of madness through a soul
And broke in tender tears; waves foamed and dashed
On barren shores, that trembled, half abashed
At the sun's kisses and the Ocean's thrill,
And with desire warmed; then through them flashed
A pregnant promise, till each dale and hill
Fed at its beating breast the offspring of high Will!

And all was lovely: Day was fair to see;
Night had her opiate charm, her lovely eyes;
And slumber fell with sweet felicity
Of unbound dreams down from the mystic skies:

THE DIVINE ENCHANTMENT

But in his dream Brahm wept and shook with sighs
For something lov'lier; restless did he pine;
But lo! from his unrest he saw arise
A thing that laughed, wept, loved in one sun's shine,
Strange being wrought of earth, yet part of him, divine!

And there he stood within his natal vale,
And cried about him, but the fields said naught;
A varied music trembled in the gale
And oft repeated what he vainly sought;
The flower looked up with explanation fraught,
And little heeded was its speechless worth;
But breaking idols, lately fondly wrought,
With all his gladness, sadness, sank to earth,
Phenomenon divine of madness and of mirth!

Wild with the hot ephemera, called life;
Fierce in the clutches of a useless woe;
With eyes that saw not whence the clouds of strife,
And desperately deeming he could do
Naught but to die; 'twere pardonably so,
That he, half god, should menial be, and fawn,
Wresting from silence a most wordy flow
Of promise of some land where good have gone,
And thus his sunless skies envermeil with false dawn!

And thou, Oblivion, from thy sable isle,
Speak of thy wealth in dumb deific shades;
All-conquering Theomachist, why smile
When man's cold fancy leaves his God that fades?
Gods on thy hills, and gods within thy glades,
Yet still art thou insatiate, and while,
Man still shall ply this paradox of trades,
Theogony, thou shalt by thy swift guile
Receive his handiwork, and him with changeless smile!

THE DIVINE ENCHANTMENT

But e'er behind his rows of fashioned gods,
His rude conceptions, rudelier put in clay;
Insensible unto his prayers and nods,
A broader being throbs through night and day;
And they are truest devotees who say,
"Where'er the Principle of Being warms,
Man, beast, the flower, the tree, or what you may,
All things, my fellows, though in varied forms,
Nor can I boast a pulse more god-like, than the storm's!"

And more than merely fondly may we deem
The whole Vast conscious with a thought unknown;
Haunting the systems, as hugh brain's dream,
Out of the planets' fixed relation grown;
Binding the orbs in many a conjuring zone
Of weird illusion, which could we forego
And that all-potent thought be felt and known,
Would then not through our minds omniscience flow,
And we that Being learn, to which all gods are low?

But wrapt in cloud, our dreams are black with night;
Life seems a tale too tedious to be heard
Unto its anti-climax; like the flight
Of darkness' sable, silence-pinioned bird,
Our thought flits through wild ruins, weirdly stirred
By its dark, retrospective flight alone;
The cloud-born Present can not speak a word
Of promise; the dead Past is Ruin's own;
And so the earth is wrapt in one unending moan;

Until it seems as though the fevered Vast,
Like mortal dreamer, brooding fondly long;
Swept down the current of his musing, fast,
Waxing in heat, and swelling fiercely strong,
Has lost the thread of its once joyous song,

THE DIVINE ENCHANTMENT

To drone discordant, melancholy strains;
And darkly drifting into murky wrong,
Hath earth o'erstrewn with Doubt's contending fanes,
Till dream hath dreamer scourged, and bound with galling
chains!

But when man grew from chance-creating sleep,
A jealous gift, unconsciously let fall,
Slight as a dewdrop in the mighty deep,
Hath all but freed him from Brahm's mystic thrall
And weird enchantment; and beyond recall,
That gift shall make him deathless, for star-shod,
The Vast shall hold no tale for him at all;
But Gods from heavens shall tumble at his nod,
And he shall leap from clay and truly soar, a God!

Thou art that gift, O Reason, soul of power,
Thou alcahest of earth's illusive dreams;
'Twas in thy ill-timed, thy incipient hour,
The many gods arose amid their schemes,
Erratic offspring born of drowsy dreams;
But thou shalt with omnipotence imbue
This earth-child, till he be whate'er he deems;
And bidding ye, Celestial Shades, adieu,
Shall mount those empty thrones he fondly wrought for
you!

But still he grovels, and the dupe is still,
Of midnight moralists who prate of light;
Deeming it holy to subdue his will
And brook the chainless spirit in its flight;
Hoping for day, yet living in the night,
When nearby doth an eveless, vast day burn;
Nor with horizon to retard the sight
With circumscribing glitter; let him turn,
And drink immortal rays, e'er eye, is dust in urn!

THE DIVINE ENCHANTMENT

Ephemeron, thou dweller in a cloud,
Well mayest thou cry, unanswered through the storm,
"Will all my breath be stifled with the shroud,
Or shall my pulse bound ever, nor less warm;
Or do I dwell in, and thereto conform,
The dream of some great consciousness, nor deem
Myself, as I am, but a conjured form
Of transcendental Fancy; do I seem,
Or be, and all I see conception's sensuous dream?"

"Still Brahma's dream, in ever-widening curves,
Chants through the systems with creating thrill;
But hath the dreamer wakened, or still serves
He blindly that somnific, dubious will,
That vexes him with darkness, and doth fill
His mind, which is the universe, with storm;
And shall we, conscious shadows, flit until
He wake to find his dream alone was warm?
O, Sun of Truth, burst forth, and dissipate the storm!"

THE DIVINE ENCHANTMENT

VI.

PRESERVATION.

In heaven's high portals, where glories eterne
With myriad-times earth's solar sparklings burn,
Sat Vishnu; the stars in their shame fled away
Far into the shades of the realm without day.
No morning breaks here with its wakening smile;
No evening fades here, casting dark dreams the while;
For Vishnu, the mighty, bears day in his eye,
And, scanning his kingdom, illumines the sky;
'Tis Vishnu that smiles, and we revel in light;
'Tis Vishnu that frowns, and we grovel in night!

In the portals he sat, and his task was a dream,
That nurtured his soul, like a lotus-born stream;
He sat and he dreamed 'till his dreams in their glow
Had circled the worlds and the darkness below;
Like a talisman sped o'er the living and dead,
And lingered with love where his mercy had fled.
Then, burning with rapture, he woke from his vision,
And echoed his voice through the temples elysian:
"Ho! devas of heaven, awake from your dreams,
And hither ye sprites, dew-besprent from your streams,
Let all of the hills, and each lotus-strewn dale,
Be charmed from the spell of its indolent tale;
Quaff slumberous amrita, immortals be gay,
I go on a glorious journey to-day!
Now startles the sun 'neath the slumbering earth,
Soon the golden Twilight to the Day shall give birth;
But I hasten away, ere the break of the day,
Strewing dream-laden seeds as I speed on my way
To the molten-gold den of the struggling Day,

THE DIVINE ENCHANTMENT

Where I'll bind him forthwith by his long, flaming hair,
Before he can waken the world to its care;
Then a dream shall unveil until mortals their fears,
And Illusion shall cast down the sceptre of years;
Then waking, this dream in their lives bright shall live,
Presaging the calm that Nirvana can give;
Shall lessen the weight of Sansara, and lo,
The Future shall whisper wherever they go!"

He spoke, nay, he sang, and his song was his deed;
Then, grasping from off a huge lotus its seed
Sprang upon a broad leaf of the plant, and away
Sped off toward the den of the wakening Day.
Heaven's light soon was past, and the shades of the world
Now around like the wings of a huge bird were furled;
And closing his eyes, lest the shadows should fail,
He pinioned his flight over hilltop and dale:
Over ocean he sped, and the lotus-charm bore
Surcease to its unrest and silenced its roar;
Over rivers he flew, and quick dropping their glee,
They lost all their dreams and their hopes of the sea;
And moveless they stood, yet the ripple was left,
Nor gone was the eddy by jutting rock cleft;
Each seemed but a river from some artist's brush
Or stream of a dream in a magical hush.
He flew o'er the city, that groaned in its sleep,
But it soon fell to visions of rapture and deep;
For each seed that was dropped, was a flower ere it fell
And burdened the air with a wonderful spell!
But just as the Sun smiled with anticipation
Of zenith aflaming, a glorious station,
Lo! Vishnu was there; by the long, flaming hair,
He bound Surya tight in his much-loathed lair;
Then round the bright eyes cast a black thunder-cloud
And chained was the brilliant, the boastful, the proud!

THE DIVINE ENCHANTMENT

Then back through the gloom, through the heavenly light,
Sped Vishnu with all of anxiety's flight;
He entered the portals, and heavenly choirs
Broke forth with the magic of languishing lyres,
While over earth's every dale, hilltop and stream
Hovered darkly the mist of a wonderful dream.

The Dream.

Hung the Cosmos over Æther's vibrant billow,
As a sorrow darkly hovers o'er a brain;
Black as hate that finds the heart a troubled pillow;
As a minor god's weak curse that fell in vain!

And the planets, toy-like whirled without a meaning,
Doomed all futilely their goalless paths to plod;
Set by idle hands throughout the Vast careening,
To beguile the puerile moment of a god!

And upon them the embodied souls of fever,
Robbed of sameness with the vast Tranquility,
By the spell of some deific arch-deceiver,
Who hath cursed them by commanding that they be!

Who hath snatched from out the slumberous pulsed ocean
Of Infinitude, a throb, and with a leer,
Sent it hot through many a sanguine, torturous motion,
Pleased at that resulting paradox—a tear;

Hurled it conscious through the veins of pains and terror,
Through the fierce, plethoric pulse of lust and greed;
Painted pleasures that should lead it on to error,
Fashioned punishment to recompense the deed.

But the dark cloud of the Cosmos like a vision
Or an angry storm, swept past and all was still;
Fled diversity and all the gods' derision
Ceased the feuds of each contending human will!

THE DIVINE ENCHANTMENT

And the thoughtless pulse forgot its painful being,
With the dubious errant passions that befell;
While the gods from out their fashioned heavens fleeing,
Sank forgotten 'neath Nirvana and its spell!

* * * * *

Now the morn was grown old, and Vishnu in the feast
Had often gazed off to the impatient East;
And now, springing onto his leaf, sped away
Toward the wrath-reddened den of the raving, bound Day.
Then he broke the strong chains from the long, flaming
hair,

And, fuming with rage, sprang the sun from his lair:
Then the heavens grew bright, and the stars with a wail
Shot out of the sky like a crystalline hail:
And the Moon, dozing still, with her confident glow,
Melted off in the light like a crescent of snow!
Then the river leapt on with a tinkling glee
And the waters dashed high on the startling sea:
And now as the Day was aflame in the skies
The whole world awoke with a burst of surprise!

Long seasons have past, and the lotus is rife
With oblivious dreams in that age and its life;
But the weary world since the same dream has dreamed oft,
While martyrs have died for it, skeptics have scoffed:
To some 'twas a tale for ridiculous mirth,
Not fit for the toils and the broils of an earth:
To some, in despondence and gloom of the night,
A shimmering, glimmering, unfading light:
And when from the crown of the mounts would rush down
The storm, with its teeth and its voice of a hound;
And the whips of the gale, with the fury of hail,
Would waken the sprites of the air to a wail;
They trustingly slept 'till the heavens should smile
And the lotus-dream guarded them safely the while.

THE DIVINE ENCHANTMENT

VII.

DISSOLUTION.

The time had come, the hoary years were still,
Another age had rounded to a close;
Inevitable as ocean blends with rill,
The law that blows and blights each summer rose,
Had proven Time as fallible as those;
Degeneration wove the worlds a shroud;
Far off, where solar rays in darkness froze,
Wild Chaos led her jealous hosts of cloud,
Against the golden worlds, and wailed her wrath aloud!

The vital Will had burned its being cold;
Its flame had smouldered into vast disease;
The Earth's proud pulse throbbed not with magic old,
And discontent was vocal in her seas:
Naught could she give her offspring, but the lees
Of vanished vintage, which did fail to sate
The universal fever's frenzied pleas:
And Life, that loved its being so of late,
Gazed at itself at last, and vanished with hot hate!

And Kala, crouching in the nether gloom,
Beholding fear creep o'er each aged world,
As though it gazed in some colossal tomb,
His stormy banner, long unswept and furled,
He cast into the cloud his frenzy whirled;
Then fondly tested Ajakava's might,
From which the bolt of death he erst had hurled,
And raised his pinions, bat-like, clouds of night,
Long alien to the thrill of swoop in godly flight.

THE DIVINE ENCHANTMENT

The silence deep, that weighed upon him long,
Now found a voice to utter its mad dreams;
The melancholy of inaction, strong,
Now like a cloud, when golden Surya gleams
Across dark fields and gloom-oppressed streams,
Fell off like sable snow, and loudly broke
In thunder; and the orbitless stars' beams
Refused to glow, as fearful of the stroke,
Then like a whirling storm he thundered more than spoke:

"Ye boastful orbs that revel in a day
That by thy glowing vanity is cast;
Still sweetly dreaming 'tis the quenchless ray,
Know ye that darkness is thy doom at last;
No more thou'lt trip along thy orbits fast
On silver sandals; poppied Night shall sleep
Upon them with a spell; the haunting Past
Through space all tenantless, shall wail and weep
And Kala, lord of lords, shall slumber on the deep."

Thereat sprang forth like dark waves of the seas,
With many an imprecation, many a scream,
Assouras, Nagas, Sarpas, Pisatches,
Dark as the flight of hate-distempered dream;
With lurid light their hungry orbs did gleam,
Their plumeless pinions shrieked in dizzy flight;
The spirits of the Skull God's words would seem,
These imps of hate, that in dark doom bedight,
Unbridled rode the gloom and fury of the Night.

Behind them strove the consciousness of death
With wild destruction that the fiends had wrought;
Too fierce they seemed to be the things of breath,
But rather darkling and abortive thought,
Within the Vast a brain where Pain had wrought,

THE DIVINE ENCHANTMENT

Harmonious dreams to wild insanity;
Or from the Anarch's frenzied mind had caught,
A self-consuming rage; each demon's cry
Hung on the swooning air, and moaned but could not die!

"We mirror our hate in the hollow eye,
We lurkingly laugh in the last parting sigh;
We see by dead eyes' light,
We breathe by the sigh's flight;
Our blood is past life's blood,
The murderer's knife's blood,
Wild, sanguine-souled Strife's blood,
Our living is death:
We creep in the brain's thought,
And fill it with strains, wrought
Of Madness' hot breath;
Thus fettered the free soul,
The skull is our ghee-bowl,
And Life is a banquet for Death!

"Then on, we have slumbered
By darkness encumbered,
For ages unnumbered,
Life triumphs the while:

"The myriad scintillant spheres,
Vain in the pride of years,
Jest of their waiting biers
With silver smile:

"Over their pompous light
Sweep we with sable flight,
Stifle their Day with night,
Darken their dial."

THE DIVINE ENCHANTMENT

The Void was wrapped in universal storm
And Death lay gorged, where ruddy Life had slept,
Whose quivering footprints, charmed and glowing warm,
Now chilled beneath the strange God's tread and slept;
And dreaming Brahm among the ruins crept,
A latent spirit without aim or will;
The childless Past within the shadows wept;
Thus Life and Death strove bitterly, until
Wild Chaos swept the deeps, and satiate, was still.

So now the doom was wrought; O, smouldering orb,
Speak from thy glooms, what art thou but a spark?
My soul at thee once awed, it did absorb
From thee conceptions of what eyes ne'er mark;
And it grew humble to thee, and did hark
To visionary voices of thy will;
Thou once wert God to me; avaunt! dead spark,
Thou palest, but my soul by its own will.
Is overflowed with day, without thee revels still.

Thou wert my God; for at thy glance, the earth
Blushed like a maiden in her bridal night,
And fruitful grew; around its verdant girth,
Thou spreadest a charm, and wreathed a smile of light;
Clouds formed and thundered at thy regal sight;
Thou wert of hope and life and love the nurse;
Thy frown was famine, and thy absence night;
Yet that which loved thy smile, and feared thy curse,
Hurled thee in fuming haste through endless Universe!

Thus Gods; my soul shall seek no higher will;
It is a God, its morn, its noon, its gloom;
It seeks no skies, reveres no sacred hill,
And hath no shudder at an open tomb;
A sister-thread in one combining loom;

THE DIVINE ENCHANTMENT

The throb from pulse that bounds in many veins;
Not one, but All, the flash within the gloom;
The same that glows in thunder-cloud that rains,
That warms this breast, yon sun, and pales the moon that
 wanes!

The hollow ages sped in silent haste,
And Ruin lolled, and knew their spell in vain;
On every hand, the desultory waste
Darkled, nor dreamed what was would be again:
Change neither moved nor breathed, lest such were pain;
Forms, poised in life, thus hung exanimate;
A fierce forgetting, a divine disdain
Moulded their features; all dispassionate,
But Kala and dumb Night who banqueted their hate!

But when Brahm woke, outstretching his strong arms,
Offcasting sable clouds that wrapped his form;
He smiled upon the groping Void's alarms,
And set a sun to pierce the gloom of storm,
Which searched from out the dusk fierce Kala's form,
Enthroned on skulls that creaked with dizzy height;
Beneath him groveled suns that still were warm,
Since Ajakava's arrow in its flight,
Had moaned a dismal dirge to all save Death and Night.

THE DIVINE ENCHANTMENT

VIII.

NIRVANA.

A drowsy spirit floated from the dark,
Its lips envermeiled with the poppy bloom;
Dim was its eye with one e'er-dying spark,
That weakly struggled with somnific gloom:
Yet naught about the spirit told of tomb,
For on its cheek the damask came and went;
Its lips breathed fragrance of immortal bloom;
Yet each heart-throb and breath of sopor sent,
Falter'd 'twixt languor and indifferent intent.

"The Gods are sleeping," thus the spirit sighed;
"The Gods are dreaming," then why wakeful be?
The seas have slumbered long without a tide,
And canst thou be more wakeful than the sea?
The Sun is cold; more watchful thou than he?
No more high Brahm the tuneful planets hears;
He floateth on the infinite, calm sea:
Come, pensive spirits, and forget thy tears;
Come lie with me, and share the stupor of the spheres.

"Time foldeth now his pinions, and lies down,
Weary with conquest of eternity;
The regal form hath tossed away the crown,
And thou shalt sleep as peacefully as he:
And wouldst thou wish to any longer be?
Why dost thou deem thy feeble victories dear?
Why curb the conscious flash, or chain the sea
With sentient steel? Hast thou enchained the tear,
Or made thy distant hopes glow truer, or more near?

THE DIVINE ENCHANTMENT

“Where rushed the planets, poppies drowse the while,
And Night is drunken with their opiate;
Young, rosy Twilight slumbers with a smile,
And quite forgets the day is growing late:
Then wouldst thou linger here disconsolate?”
Thus crooning music the drowsed spirit kept;
Its droll words swooned and fell exanimate,
E'er through their weary syllables they crept;
And as the spirit ceased, full heavily it slept!

The meek souls heard the visionary voice,
They weighed the vanished, and the time to be;
Too weary they to happily rejoice,
Poor, weary pilgrims in apostasy;
Weary of throbbing through the sanguine sea
Of lustful being: finished was the quest:
Now dawned on them the great Identity;
They cast Sansara from them as a jest;
They saw that all is one; they knew, and fell to rest!

Calm, awful calm; yet not the calm of death;
Sleep, heavy sleep; but not the drowse that's cold;
Calm scarcely stirred with an unconscious breath;
Sleep, charming Time, lest slumberer grow old:
Life's pointless tale and tedious, is told:
The Gods themselves have wearied of their pride:
Brahm slumbereth, nor dreameth of the mould
Of realms where He and Vanity might bide:
And Yama breathes the spell, his sceptre laid aside!

THE DIVINE ENCHANTMENT

IX.

DISENCHANTMENT.

Wrapt in the vision Devanaguy soared,
And deemed herself a part of all she knew,
Till glancing toward the spark that had been home,
The magic vapor of her dream was cleft,
And through the rift, harsh voices seemed to beat
In doleful lamentation; curses, groans;
And there were some who prayed to graven gods
And some who passed them with a knowing sneer;
And some did homage to a magic name,
And improvised a curse for dole of doubt:
Then all arose, their prayers still on their lips,
And waged wild wars, that only vexed them more;
And o'er the slain the slayers fought again,
True to the magic of a muttered word,
Till all had fallen, all save one, and he
Amid the desolation, wept with doubt!

Then with a mighty impulse, cried she out,
"God is about thee, see thou slayest It;
It glows in thee, then look not to the skies:"
And as she spoke it seemed the mortal words
Weighed down the mystic balance of her mind;
So broke her dream; for thrice three moons had waned!

She saw great Surya with his baleful eyes,
And crown of flame, slip 'neath the girding dusk,
And Indra's countless tapers glow aloft!

Then grew a rapture at the virgin's heart,
And through her flashed a deep, ecstatic bliss

THE DIVINE ENCHANTMENT

Beyond the glory of conception's thrill;
So while her pulse beat music in her brain,
The infant Christna dawned upon the world!

And as she sat and mused, gazing the while
Into the clear, deep eyes, that seemed to her,
The mirrors of the mighty world, she spoke
Half to herself and half unto the child,
Who deemed it some sweet music, and was glad:
"And wilt thou be as others, Jeseus,
Who wassail upon sunbeams for an hour,
Then quaff the potent mystery of dusk?
And shalt thou feel the fever of their lusts,
To wither with them? O, my Lotus Flower,
My heart would grow a bulbul with a song,
Wouldst thou but be a comfort to their griefs;
A sun upon their night; thy life a song,
To charm the way of him who is at best,
A fevered, nescient traveler toward naught.

He says, "Behold the world, and me its king!"
Yet dreams not that some broader being buds,
And bursts around him, and he knows it not:
'Twixt taste and touch, sight, sound and scent,
A broader day than ever lit the East,
A fuller life than rushes in his veins,
A greater bliss than his crude sense can grasp,
And nights and noons, and worlds and latent suns,
Whose finitude bounds his infinity!

Brahm is a puppet; yet within I feel
A Something faultless; is it thee, O Source?
O earless Vast, art thou my maker's couch?

Whate'er, where'er, whence-e'er, howe'er, I hymn
Thy vast and wonderful completeness, OM!

THE DIVINE ENCHANTMENT

X.

POSTLUDE.

O, Spirit vast as Æther, hear me pray;
Wake from thy musing o'er the flower thou thrillest;
Smooth out thy frown in yonder thunder-cloud;
Forget thy smiling at the evening's brim,
And hear me, hear thy child.
I'd say, O Brahma, but destroyer thou;
Or Vishnu, but the flower wilts for thee;
Or Siva, but thou feedest man and flowers;
Come from thy couch of downy Æther waves,
Come from thy dwelling in the burning suns,
Creep through me with the songs thou canst but sing.

Not Æther, Earth nor Heaven, but all three,
Breathe o'er me, and my burning desert soul
Shall well with countless springs, and my warm heart
Shall be oasis in a waste of bloom.
If thou are Siva, spare; if Vishnu, bless;
If Brahma, recreate; we know thou art
The Eye of eye, unseeing and unseen;
The Ear of ear, unhearing and unheard;
The Thought of thought, unthinking, hid from thought.
Thou art, and art not to each votary;
Reviled and worshiped at earth's every shrine!
Thou art the dusk of Night, the light of Day,
The Morning's spirit, yet the Sunset's soul.
Thou thrillest woman's breast with ecstasy
And lo! she breathes with wondrous double life.
Thou dreamest in the cells of sage's mind,
And thoughts, immortal, spring like winged gods.

THE DIVINE ENCHANTMENT

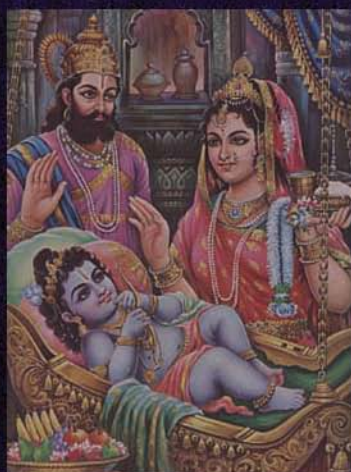
Whate'er they call thee in a foreign land,
Whate'er we name thee in this land of flowers,
Thou art the same dumb worker of all good,
(And evil, which is undeveloped good);
Yes, thou art dumb, thou hearest not my voice;
Night darkens, though I pray howe'er for light;
Morn wakens, though I clutch at fleeting gloom;
So I shall weep with Sorrow, it shall come;
And I shall laugh with Pleasure, it shall be;
Yea, fearless go to Death, for it is best;
This pulse I love so, is not mine to hoard
And limit to a putrid cell of flesh;
It is a part of thee, Great Infinite;
'Tis mine, 'tis yonder trees' and yonder weeds';
It blossoms in yon banyan, and yon bird
Is thrilled by it into a vital song.

O Nameless Essence, vast as Æther is,
And strangely, endless as the circled years,
As thou art deaf, I can not worship thee,
But my soul glows in child-like admiration:
All is well.

END.

Poetry

The first published long poem by America's finest epic poet, *The Divine Enchantment* is replete with the metaphysical insights and creative accomplishments that would later soar to unparalleled heights in *A Cycle of the West* and *Black Elk Speaks*. Springing forth from John G. Neihardt's fascination with Hindu mysticism and myth, the epic poem relates the vision of Devanaguy, who became the mother of Krishna, the incarnation of Vishnu. This



enchanting poem reveals the youthful exuberance of Neihardt as well as the brilliant visionary writer to come, concerned with the intricate dance of the divine and daily life and determined to use the poetic form to tell of the momentous events and cosmological themes that affect us all.

For more information on John G. Neihardt,
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