

## 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, blood 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 burning 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.