

## THE NEW YEAR

*A play based on the writings of Sri Chinmoy*

### CAST OF CHARACTERS

Man .....	Abhinabha
Mendicant .....	Devashishu
Narcissus .....	Sumandala
Angulimal .....	Homagni
Orpheus .....	Lucas
Heraclitus .....	Natabara
Hades .....	Dinesh
Buddha .....	Suren
Achilles .....	Purnendu
Arjuna .....	Ashrita
Eurydice .....	Nicholas
Villagers .....	Paksharupa, Edoardo
Buddha's disciples .....	Garga, Andre
Offstage voice for poems .....	Devashishu
Recitation of Iliad in Ancient Greek .....	Divaspati

### TECHNICAL CREW

Music Director .....	Parichayaka
Musicians .....	Alap, Kanala, Sadanand, Pramodhan, Suswara, Pratul
Lighting .....	Harkara
Sound .....	Ashirvad, Ambarish
Prompt .....	Suswara

### SCENE 1

Man meets Mendicant

*Page 2*

### SCENE 2

Orpheus is forlorn

*Page 5*

### SCENE 3

You have to have Hope

*Page 9*

### SCENE 4

Everything Flows

*Page 11*

### SCENE 5

Return from Hades

*Page 15*

### SCENE 6

Lord Buddha

*Page 17*

### SCENE 7

The Divine Heroes

*Page 20*

**SCENE 1 – MAN MEETS MENDICANT**

(Alap plays on the Duduk. People approach the river to bathe, to fish, to wash clothes. As music fades we hear the sound of desolate wind blowing)

(ENTER MAN)

(Offstage voice):

*Barren of events  
Rich in pretensions  
My earthly life.*

*Obscurity  
My real name.*

*Wholly unto myself  
I exist.*

*I wrap no soul  
In my embrace.*

*No mentor worthy  
Of my calibre  
Have I.*

*I am all alone  
Between failure  
And frustration.*

*I am the red thread  
Between Nothingness  
And Eternity.*

(The sound of a river running by)

Man. I have walked upon this earth for millennia. I have smiled, I have cried. I have lived, I have died. Homes have been built, bridges, castles, palaces, temples. Empires and dynasties have flourished and they have all been trampled in the dust. And where I am? And who am I? I am lost. I am alone. I am nothing. When the sun rises tomorrow morning it will usher in the New Year but I will not celebrate. It offers nothing new for me.

ENTER A MENDICANT

Man. Who goes there?

Mendicant: A friend.

Man. I wrap no friend in my embrace. What is your profession, sir?

Mendicant. I am a wandering mendicant.

Man. A beggar?

Mendicant. Not a beggar, sir. For I am in need of nothing.

Man. You are human, sir. Humans are animals, and animals need food.

Mendicant. The kindness of human beings is my nourishment.

Man. Then you must be really hungry. Where are you going?

Mendicant. I follow the open road ahead of me. I am a citizen of the world. The constellation of stars is my roof, the lemon groves, the orange groves and the mango groves are my playground.

Man. A playground? Playgrounds are for children. Forgive me if I do not share your carefree view of life.

Mendicant. The sky is clear.

Man. The sun is setting fast.

Mendicant. And will rise again to reveal a new year.

Man. It were better that it never rise again, for it only sheds light on the futility of human life.

Mendicant. You are tired.

Man. I am tired. Tired of life.

Mendicant. Then could I suggest you take the weight off your feet and rest by this river for the night. Its cool murmuring waters are sure to soothe your troubled soul.

Man. What river is this?

Mendicant. It has many names. It is the confluence of two rivers – the River of Sound and the River of Silence. Musicians, minstrels and poets are drawn to her banks to invoke muse and melody.

(Kanala and Sadanand tune their instruments)

Man. The river is so wide. I can barely see the other shore.

Mendicant. It is as wide as a child's eye.

Man. It is clear and deep.

Mendicant. Many people come to the river, and the river comes to many people.

Man. The water is cool.

Mendicant. Its source is a glacier high up in the mountains. I met a traveller once who claimed that as the two rivers come together a kind of alchemy takes place that lends the waters an unusual property.

Man. What property is that?

Mendicant. He said that if you drink from the river on the eve of the New Year then in your sleep you will awaken the spirits of the ancient world to guide you into the new year.

Man. Well, I've never cared much for old folk tales, but I need to quench my thirst.

(Parichayaka music. Offstage Voice):

*Beyond speech and mind,  
Into the river of ever-effulgent Light  
My heart dives.  
Today, thousands of doors, closed for millennia,  
Are opened wide.*

Man. Well, I bid you good night, for I am in need of rest.

Mendicant. Good night. May flights of angels wing thee to thy rest.

(MUSIC – Kanala & Sadanand)

**SCENE 2 – ORPHEUS IS FORLORN**

(ENTER NARCISSUS)

Nar. Such sweet music.

Man. How can I sleep with all this noise?

Nar. Arise, awake, it is a beautiful moonlit night. The sky is filled with stars. See Aphrodite and Apollo twinkling in the heavens.

Man. What brings you to the river?

Nar. I am seeking refuge.

Man. From what?

Nar. From woman.

Man. From a woman?

Nar. From all women! My beauty is too much for them. They flock to me in adoration. Who can blame them?

Man. There are many men who would give anything to earn the affection of the fairer sex.

Nar. I despise these foolish creatures.

(MUSIC. Pramodhan sarangi. Sadanand on tabla)

(Angulimal enters with a scream. He kills someone and cuts off their thumb. He adds it to his necklace. He leaves)

Man. What fowl demon was this?

Mendicant. Oh, you don't know who this is?

Man. Who or what is he?

Mendicant. He is Angulimal the thief and killer.

Man. Who?

Mendicant: Angulimal.

Man. My heart is still racing with fear. He is ... a murderer. Has he no conscience? Without hesitation he took the life of this poor innocent.

Mendicant. He has taken many lives. Did you not see his necklace of thumbs?

Man. This world is filled with thieves and cutthroats. What hope is there for the human race?

(The sound of a man crying piteously)

Man. Can you hear that sound? Someone is in distress.

ENTER ORPHEUS

Orpheus: Alas, alas. My life has no meaning. My love, my love, my all.

Man. Are you in danger? Can I help you?

Orpheus: No one can help me. She is gone, gone, gone.

Man. Who is gone?

Orpheus: My beloved. The most beautiful, graceful creature ever to walk the earth – she is gone. O beloved Eurydice. Eurydice! Gone, gone, gone!

Man. What happened?

Orpheus: Its all a blur – it was love at first sight, our eyes met, her eyes are jewels, no stars, no galaxies, Eurydice! Eurydice! - yesterday we were married, - What is marriage? The smile of love, that allows two souls to soar above! O sweet blessings of Hymenaios, music sweet music, Eurydice! But no – the music has stopped, we ran through a forest, the forest was dark, darker than the darkest night, it was a very very dark forest, her hand was in mine, O soft hand, O sweet hand, the hand of Eurydice - she was breathing hard, I ran so fast, poor poor Eurydice, keep up, keep up, alas she is gone .....

Man. (To Mendicant) It is hard to understand this fellow's tale. (Mendicant shrugs). It seems he has lost his wife in the forest ....

Orpheus. I will never play the lyre again, there is no room for music in my life anymore, I have played my last notes. (He breaks his lyre)

Man. No, no – that is a beautiful and valuable instrument. Calm yourself. Lets just think about this rationally.

Orpheus. Rationally? Reason does not exist at a time like this. There is no reason, no justice in this world. It is all misery. We are nothing but poor wretched fools.

Man. Tell me. Do you love her?

Orpheus. With all my heart – I will never love another.

Man. Does she love you?

Orpheus. Yes, yes. Ours is a love true and pure.

Man. Well, go and find her.

Orpheus. (sobbing) What?

Man. Go and find her and bring her back.

Orpheus. Are you mocking me? You are mocking me! Have you no heart? Cruel, cruel mocker .... mockery man.

Man. I am not mocking you. How long has she been gone?

Orpheus. Within the hour – O Eurydice, my Eurydice.

Man. Where do you think she might have gone?

Orpheus. I know where she has gone. We all know where she has gone!

Man. We do?

Orpheus. Yes – there. She has crossed the river to the other side. She is gone.

Man. That's good. You know where she is.

Orpheus. That's good?

Man. You say she left less than an hour ago. How did she cross the river?

Orpheus. On the ferry. She crossed the river to the other side and I will see her face no more.

Man. There's a ferry? She took the ferry?

Orpheus. The ferry took her.

Man. Yeah, she took the ferry .....

Orpheus. No, the ferry took her!

Man. Whatever.... If you cross the river now, you will easily be able to find her.

Orpheus. What? What are you saying?

Man. I'm saying go and get her. If you go across the river, perhaps you can bring her back?

Orpheus. Bring her back?

Man. Maybe, if she wants to come back.

Orpheus. Of course she would want to come back.

Man. If you go and speak to her – I'm just saying, it's worth a try.

Orpheus. Yes, it's worth a try.

Man: Take the ferry, speak to her, and bring her back.

Orpheus. Take the ferry, speak to her, and bring her back. Brilliant. I will cross the river and bring her back.

Man. Good luck.

Orpheus. Charon! Charon! Take me across the river .....

EXIT ORPHEUS

Man. What a pitiful man.

Mendicant. Poor pitiful Orpheus. Caught in the web of human love.

Man. Orpheus is his name?

Mendicant. A musician of the highest calibre. When he sings he can charm the wildest of creatures. He bewitched Eurydice with his music, and she bewitched him with her beauty. Tell me, why did you encourage him to cross the river?

Man. You have to have hope.

Mendicant. Yes. You have to have hope.

(Parichayaka Music. Offstage Voice):

*Thou art my Lord, my golden dream, Thou art my life in death.  
O bless me with Thy Hope Supreme, Lord of the Eternal Breath!*

*Agelong the vision of Thy Sun, For darkness I have sought.  
I know the evils I should shun, And quickly bring to nought.*

*The earth is deaf and blind, my Lord; Its true goal it denies.  
It hears no voice, no heavenly word, From those who seek the skies.*

*O yet I feel Thy Kingly Grace, With my feeble mortality.  
I shall win at last the Noonward Race. Plunge in the Nectar-Sea.*

**SCENE 3 – YOU HAVE TO HAVE HOPE**

(sound of a dog barking)

Mendicant. He must be reaching the other side.

Man. It's impossible to see.

Mendicant. There is a dog on the other side and if you listen you can hear it barking.

Man. I hear more than one dog barking.

Mendicant. It is just one dog barking.

Man. I think you will find there are three dogs barking.

Mendicant. I believe it is one dog with three heads that barks.

Man. A three headed dog?

Mendicant. There is more in heaven and on earth than is dreamt of in your philosophy. I have seen three headed dogs, flying horses, monkeys that jump a thousand paces, a creature that is half man half horse, I have even seen a child with the head of an elephant!

Nar. You do realise where you have sent him?

Man. Across the river.

Nar. To the .... Under ... you know .... World ...

Man. You mean down?

Nar. Yes – to the Underworld!

Man. The Underworld?

Mendicant. You have sent him where no man goes willingly - beyond the curtain of Eternity. He has gone to bring Eurydice back from the dead.

Man. I thought his wife had left him.

Mendicant. She has left him, she died. As they were running through the forest she was bitten by a snake and breathed her last.

Nar. He is a fool to rush so madly after a woman. Women do the same to me and I find it despicable.

Man. What have I done?

Mendicant. You have sent a man to the world of the dead to retrieve his beloved.

Man. Nobody comes back from the dead. I didn't realise .....

Mendicant. You gave him hope.

Man. I gave him hope? I sent him on a mad errand. And who am I to give him hope? What strange creatures we humans be. When we have no hope in our own lives we still can jump at the opportunity to offer hope to other madcap fools.

Mendicant. You meant well.

Man. In trying to help I have made things worse. I have sent him to the land of death.....

Mendicant. And he'll have to face the dog. All three faces!

Man. Now I feel worse than I did before.

(Parichayaka Music. Offstage voice):

*With a blank sorrow, heavy I am now grown;  
Like things eternal, changeless stands my woe.  
In vain I try to overcome my foe.  
O Lord of Love! Make me more dead than stone.*

*The Grace of silent Smile I never feel;  
The forger of evil stamps my nights and days.  
His call my sleepless body ever obeys.  
My heart I annihilate and try to heal.*

*The dumb earth-waste now burns a hell to my soul.  
I fail to fight with its stupendous doom,  
My breath is a slave of that unending gloom.  
For Light I pine, but find a tenebrous goal.*

*Smoke-clouds cover my face of Spirit's fire;  
Naked I move in night's ignorance deep and dire.*

**SCENE 4 – EVERYTHING FLOWS**

(Greek Music. Enter Heraclitus)

Hera. Panta Rhei. Panta Rhei. Panta Rhei.

Man. Sorry, I don't understand.

Hera. You don't understand because you don't listen. Panta Rhei, Panta Rhei, Panta Rhei.

Man. This language is foreign to me.

Hera. PANTA RHEI, PANTA RHEI, PANTA RHEI.

Man. Saying it louder is not helping – all you are doing is giving me a headache.

Hera. Panta Rhei - Everything flows.

Man. My life has lost its flow. It is a stagnant pool.

Hera. So I see. But, you are mistaken. Everything is flowing. Everything is in a state of constant change. At every moment we are becoming – becoming something new.

Man. I don't understand.

Hera. It's all in my writings which are available in the great temple of Artemis.

Man. I'm not aware of such a temple.

Hera. Then you are a fool. It is one of the seven wonders of the world. You are, however, one of the seven blunders of the world!

Man. I didn't get your name.

Hera. Didn't you? Too bad. I am a lover of wisdom – a philosopher. One of the greatest philosophers of all time.

Man. Socrates?

Hera. No.

Man. Plato?

Hera. No.

Man. Pythagoras?

Hera. Not Pythagoras – he is all triangles. I am not into triangles – I am interested in life. We could be here for a decade – let me spare you the trouble – I am Heraclitus.

Man. Mr Heraclitus – you say everything flows. But I have just sent a man to the Underworld. With the passing of time where are we flowing to, despite all our noble deeds? As far as I can see we are all flowing to one thing. We are flowing towards death.

Hera. When his play on earth is over, it is true, a man must die. Everybody has to die one day. Everybody has to go away from this world. Everybody has to suffer from death.

Man. And then we flow no more.

Hera. Do you know what type of tree this is?

Man. It is a type of fig tree.

Hera. Yes. It is known as the Bodhi tree. How do you think this tree started? How did it start? How did it start?

Man. It was a seed in the ground.

Hera. And once it is full-grown it produces? It produces? It produces?

Man. Fruit.

Hera. What a genius you are! It came from a seed and it produces fruit. But the tree is not a seed and the tree is not a fruit. The seed becomes the tree, the tree becomes the fruit. It is all cause and effect.

Man. But that's just a tree .....

Hera. It is all cause and effect. Name me one thing in the universe that is not the effect of another thing and the cause for something else.

Man. Well .....

Hera. Come on, come on ....

Man. Well, there is nothing

Hera. Precisely. Your stupidity, for example, is the cause of my irritation! Look. The ocean becomes vapour, the vapour becomes clouds, the clouds become rain, you drink the rain and the rain becomes you. Everything flows.

Man. Everything flows.

Hera. Everything flows. *Panta Rhei*.

Man. *Panta Rhei*.

Hera. It is all impermanent.

(Parichayaka Music. Offstage Voice):

*The wave subsides and the wave rises.  
The flower withers and the flower blossoms.  
There is no end to human wants  
And human achievements.  
Nothing is permanent and nothing is fleeting.  
Then for whom shall we cry,  
For what shall we cry?  
Whom shall we invoke  
With a new thought and a new form?  
Everything eventually blossoms.*

Man. Then what is permanent?

Hera. It would seem that your ignorance is pretty permanent – but even that will be transformed some day. Pass me those branches that have fallen from the tree. What is there?

Man. It is just wood. Dead wood.

Hera. But in the evening when you get hungry, you can use these two branches to heat your food. Inside the wood there is fire. Right now you cannot see the fire, you cannot feel the fire. There is no evidence of the fire. But it exists within these branches.

Man. It is invisible.

Hera. In here there is a fire – in here there is something bright and permanent. In here beyond all the doubt, the expectation, beyond the fear, the pride, beyond mind and form there is something infinite. There you will find infinite peace.

Man. I need that. I need infinite peace and infinite bliss. Do you think I can ever have that?

Heraclitus. Why not? Why not?

Man. Your words have awakened a deep hunger within me. Please be my teacher. I want the experience of Infinite Peace.

Heraclitus. You are not ready.

Man. I am. Can you not see my desperation? Can you not feel my aspiration?

Heraclitus. You are not ready.

Man. Believe me, I am ready. I relinquish all attachment to the world. Give me the experience of infinite Peace.

Heraclitus. Come to the river. I will bless you.

(Heraclitus places his hands on the Man's head then pushes him under the water and holds him there. The man struggles to breathe and finally the Heraclitus releases him)

Man. What are you doing?

Heraclitus. When you were underneath the water, what did you experience?

Man. Are you trying to kill me?

Heraclitus. When you were underneath the water, what did you experience?

Man. All I wanted was air.

Heraclitus. When you want Peace and Truth as much as you want air, you will be ready. There is an ancient saying, "When the student is ready, the teacher will appear". I am not your teacher. But you will find your teacher soon. Drink from the river one more time, but know that no man drinks from the same river twice. You are changing, the river is changing, you are becoming .....

(Exit Heraclitus)

(Parichayaka Music. Offstage Voice):

*I know, I know,  
It is I who have to discover myself.  
I am the eternal seeker of my own reality.  
Here on earth I shall have to discover everything.  
Here in the finite I have to see You,  
O my Reality's Form  
O Infinity and Infinity's Immortality Life.*

### **SCENE 5 – RETURN FROM HADES**

Man. Did you see that? He almost drowned me.

Mendicant. Different teachers, different methods.

Man. He said he could not be my teacher, but that I would soon find my teacher. He has awakened some fire inside me – and it is clear that I need someone to guide me. This path of life is too full of mysteries.

Mendicant. The path to Peace is beset with challenges. There is only one perfect road, and that road is ahead of you, always ahead of you.

Nar. I do not need a teacher. I am not a weak and feeble creature as most men are. My beauty is my strength.

(He goes to the river to wash and looks in to see his own reflection)

Nar. Be still, my beating heart. What person is this? Is it a god for it cannot be a mere mortal. Those eyes – that jaw – those locks that flow. O Beauty, beauty unparalleled.

(Parichayaka Music – the kingdom of Hades. Enter Orpheus)

Orpheus: O Hades, Lord of Death, ruler of the dark and silent world. There is one who came to you too soon, a bud that was plucked before the flower bloomed. The loss is too strong for me to bear and all I ask of you is that you lend her back to me once more – just lend – for ultimately she will be yours. Let her return with me for some years to live out the full span of her life and love.

(Offstage voice of Hades): Orpheus. Orpheus. No one is released from my kingdom. But your request is so full of pity, your voice so full of desperation. A river of tears has overcome me and this cold strong heart is melted. I shall release Eurydice on one condition.

Orpheus: Say it. Say it. I will abide by your strict command. What is your condition?

Hades: Return through the cave the way you came. I will send Eurydice to follow you. But as you take the steps ahead of you – do not turn around to look at her. You cannot cast your eyes upon her face until you step into the light – until you both are in the world of the living.

Orpheus: It shall be so.

Hades: Go – and do not look back.

(Orpheus takes step after step and is followed by a veiled woman)

Orpheus: I hear your gentle footsteps close behind, my love. Stay close, stay close. Approach the light. We are almost there. I cannot wait another moment ...

(Orpheus steps into the light – then turns and Eurydice is swept away)

(Parichayaka Music. Offstage Voice):

*Love is the road that leads  
Our souls to union vast.  
Love is the passion-storm  
That sports with our vital-dust.*

*Love's child is emotion-flame.  
Love's eyes are freedom, fear.  
Love's heart is breath or death.  
And love is cheap, love dear.*

Man. Poor Orpheus.

Mendicant. He will not be allowed to enter Hades a second time.

Man. What will he do?

Mendicant. He will walk the earth desolate and wracked with grief.

Man. But he did this for love. Do they not say that Love conquers all?

Mendicant. There are different kinds of love: Human and Divine.

Man. What is the difference between human love and divine love?

Mendicant. Love is a bird. When we encage it, we call it human love. When we allow love to fly in the all-pervading Consciousness, we call it Divine Love. Human love is often the terrible attraction of bodies and nerves; Divine Love is the ever-blossoming affinity of souls. True beauty is in the soul. Orpheus sees beauty in Eurydice. He sees the reflection of his own soul but believes that beauty to belong to the body. And this poor man – Narcissus. See how he is transfixed by his own reflection. He doesn't even realise that it his own reflection. He will sit there for days, for months, for years in a state of self-hypnosis. He sees his own soul's beauty and believes it to be someone else. He will weep with adoration and drown in the river of ignorance. Human love is attachment. Divine Love is detachment. Detachment is real satisfaction. Attachment is quenchless thirst.

Man. My thirst is quenchless. If this is the fate of Orpheus, what hope is there for me? The transformation of human nature seems to be an impossible task.

Mendicant. If you are thirsty, take a drink from the river.

**SCENE 6 – LORD BUDDHA**

(Enter Buddha with two disciples. Music - Buddham Saranam Gauchami)

Man. Who is this?

Mendicant. This is Prince Siddhartha.

Man. He is a prince? His robes are simple and he wears no shoes. He sits on the ground, and there is an air of simplicity about him.

Mendicant. He is a prince, the heir to a great kingdom. But he has given up the life of royalty – the life of luxury.

Man. What is he doing at the foot of the tree? Why are his eyes closed? What is he doing with a garland of beads?

Mendicant. I am answering your questions one by one. What is he doing at the foot of the tree? He is praying and meditating. Why are his eyes closed? All his attention is focused within. What is he doing with the garland of beads? He is repeating the name of God and counting the number of chants on the beads.

Man. Excuse me, what do you do for a living?

Mendicant. We should not disturb him. Who knows what is happening inside him? Perhaps he and God are talking inwardly. He is enjoying infinite peace and bliss. He is about to become the Buddha.

Buddha. Here I shall sit, here at the foot of the Bodhi tree. Here I shall realise the Truth. I shall not move from this spot anymore. Even if I suffer from cold or hunger or thirst, or from anything else, I shall not move. Here at this very place my illumination must take place, and I shall put an end to sorrow.

(Parichayaka Music. Offstage Voice):

*No more my heart shall sob or grieve,  
My days and nights dissolve in God's own Light.  
Above the toil of life my soul  
Is a bird of fire winging the Infinite.*

*I have known the One and His secret Play,  
And passed beyond the sea of ignorance-dream.  
In tune with Him, I sport and sing,  
I own the golden Eye of the Supreme.*

*Drunk deep of Immortality,  
I am the root and boughs of the teeming vast.  
My form I have known and realised.  
The Supreme and I are one – all we outlast.*

Buddha. I know, at last I know the Truth! I know the way. I know the way to end sorrow, to exterminate the tree of suffering. From today on I shall serve humanity with my inner light. I have seen the Truth, and this Truth every human being on earth will achieve. My Truth is for all. My love is for all. My realisation is for all. I am for all. This life of mine, this dedicated life of mine, is for humanity's use.

Disciple. Angulimal! Angulimal is coming.

(Buddha's disciples disperse)

Man. Buddha, Lord Buddha, run. Angulimal the murderer is here – save yourself.

Angulimal: Stop! Stop!

Buddha: I have already stopped. It is you who have not stopped. You have killed hundreds of people. You wear a garland of thumbs around your neck. I have already stopped. I am stationed in the infinite Consciousness forever. But you are still roaming in the world of vital desires and trying to destroy the world. You have not yet come to a halt. In my case, I am already in the static silence of the Ineffable.

(Angulimal pulls out his machete and attempts to stab the Buddha, but the Buddha's light captures him. He falls at the feet of Buddha)

Angulimal: O Buddha, forgive me. Forgive my ignorance. Forgive me for what I have done to the world, and for what I was going to do right now.

Buddha: I have forgiven you. I have forgiven your past; I have forgiven your present.

Angulimal: If it is true that you have forgiven my past and my present, then I wish you to prove it.

Buddha: How do you want me to prove it?

Angulimal: Accept me as your disciple. If you accept me as your disciple, then I will believe that you have truly forgiven me, O Lord.

Buddha: You are my disciple, Angulimal. I accept you.

(Parichayaka Music. Offstage Voice):

*Forgive me, forgive me, this is the last time, forgive me.  
I shall offer to You at Your Feet the garland of Victory.  
I am the silent compassion of Your Infinity.  
You are the Ocean, I am the tiniest drop.  
This is my only identification*

Man. Lord Buddha, I have seen something extraordinary today. I have never seen a power like this. You transformed this murderer into a God-seeker. Please, please accept me as your disciple.

Buddha. "When the student is ready, the teacher will appear". I am not your teacher. But you will find your teacher soon. Drink from the river one more time, and know that no man drinks from the same river twice. You are changing, the river is changing, you are becoming .....

(EXIT BUDDHA and ANGULIMAL)

Man. I have seen a man of Peace. I have seen the goal of all human aspiration. But between me and the Buddha there is a yawning gulf. How can I reach that state of Realisation?

Mendicant. You must learn to act as a Divine Hero in your life – to transform your nature and overcome all obstacles. Every moment of every day is an opportunity to break asunder wild obstruction night.

**SCENE 7 – THE DIVINE HEROES**

(Distant sound of battle drums. Offstage voice recites the first lines of The Iliad in Ancient Greek. ENTER ACHILLES who approaches the river and bathes his wounds)

Man. You are injured.

Achilles. It is just one of many wounds – but all wounds heal with time. You should not linger here, for soon it will be dawn.

Man. What danger is in the dawn?

Achilles: The dawn itself poses no danger – it is my favourite time of day. But when the sun rises it will reveal the enemy who lie invisible in the yonder mist.

Man. Who are you?

Achilles. I am the eternal warrior; I am the eternal war. From Ancient Greece I hail and upon the field of Ilion I lived and died.

Man. Ilion?

Achilles: The battlefield of Troy.

Man. Achilles? Son of Thetis and leader of the Myrmidons? You are Achilles who fought at the battle of Troy!

Achilles. I used to fight for glory. The glory of Greece and the glory of my name. I wanted to be the greatest, the bravest, the most feared of all warriors of all time. I wanted to attain immortality.

Man. But now?

Achilles: But now I seek a different type of glory. Who goes there?

(ENTER ARJUNA)

Arjuna: Sheathe your sword, friend, I come in peace.

Achilles: I will not sheathe my sword until I know who you are, friend. Your armour and your weaponry are not familiar to me. Who sent you?

Arjuna. No one sent me. I am here to bathe in the river and offer oblations to the gods.

Achilles: Keep your distance, I am giving you fair warning.

Arjuna: Do you fear me so much, that you will not allow me to approach the riverbank?

Achilles: I fear no man. I trust no man. Now leave – I need peace and silence before the storm of battle.

Arjuna: It goes against my code of life to succumb to such threats and persecution. I have seen the battlefield drenched in blood, and watched my noble kinsmen fall one by one in the fury of the fight. My body burns with battle scars and my heart aches for all those sons and fathers who have been rudely taken from this world on the field of Kurukshetra. So step aside or you will join them.

Achilles: You fought at Kurukshetra in ancient India?

Arjuna: I did.

Achilles: Under what banner did you fight?

Arjuna: The mighty and noble Lord Hanuman.

Achilles: Then you are none other than the son of Pandu, you are Arjuna.

Arjuna: I am.

Achilles: I salute you. For I, Achilles, stand humbled in your sight.

Arjuna: Noble Achilles. Hero unparalleled. Today we will face the enemy together.

Man. These two great heroes have found in each other a kindred spirit.

Mendicant. These are no ordinary heroes – this is not an ordinary battleground - they are divine heroes.

Man. What is a Divine Hero?

Mendicant: A divine hero is not an ordinary soldier who will strike and kill. No, he fights for the manifestation of Peace here on earth. He acts not for himself but for the sake of the Divine, the Supreme. You should join them.

Man. O Heroes of the ancient world. You fought with valour on your battlefields, but tell me upon which battlefield you will now fight.

Arjuna. Behold, the battlefield stretches out before you – the enemy is ignorance. See the warriors in their chariots: pride, fear, anger, jealousy.

Achilles. The real victory is the victory over these enemies - the transformation of your own nature.

Arjuna. Join us.

Man. When I look out and come face to face with my own weaknesses – they reveal themselves as mighty Titans - I see my insurmountable pride, I see my wreckless insecurity, I see the fangs of my wild anxiety. I am overcome with nervousness. My limbs give way and my mouth is parched, my body quivers and my hair stands on end.

Achilles: Do not give way to nervousness. This path that you have chosen is not for the faint-hearted. Become the Divine Hero that you are.

Man. I see dark forces all around me .....

Arjuna. Confront them valiantly. Remember, you are not the body – you are the soul – the immortal soul of infinite strength and infinite light.

Achilles: Weapons cannot cleave the soul

Arjuna: Fire cannot burn the soul

Achilles: Water cannot drench the soul

Arjuna: Wind cannot dry the soul

Man. My fear is gone – please tell me what I must do?

Mendicant: I will be your charioteer – I will guide you through the battlefield of life. You play your part. I will protect you. I will be your teacher.

Man. You will be my teacher?

Mendicant: I will teach you all about the inner life, the life of perfection, inner and outer. Your weapon will be love, divine love. Try not to change the world, you will fail. Love the world. Lo, the world is changed, changed forever.

Man. I bow to you, my teacher. I bow to you O Heroes indomitable.

(SOUND OF CONCHES AND KETTLEDRUMS. ENTER ENTIRE CAST)

Achilles: A Spartan wind is rising from the east

Arjuna: The conches and the kettledrum call us into battle.

Mendicant: Look the first rays of light do pierce the morning sky.

Arjuna: A new day, a new year, a new aspiration.

Man: I am energised with a new hope, a new light, a new peace, a new joy.

Mendicant: Let us swear an oath this day, here upon this hallowed ground, to herald in a new life of aspiration. Come citizens of Greece, come children of Mother India, come heroes of all nations, come. Let us stand together in Oneness and in Peace - every man and every woman. Let us walk together, let us run together, let us fly together and transform our world with love.

(Offstage Voice):

*I sing because You sing.  
I smile because You smile.  
Because You play on the flute  
I have become Your flute.  
You play in the depths of my heart.  
You are mine, I am Yours.  
In one form you are my Mother and Father eternal,  
And Consciousness-moon, Consciousness-sun,  
All pervading.*

THE END