

MATA BHARATA

Ananda K. Coomaraswamy

THERE was once a tall, fair woman,—not indeed young, no one could have thought that— but serene to the uttermost and possessed of great patience and grace. In years past she had been famed for wisdom, and the wise men of the world had sat at her feet and carried away her teachings to the ends of the earth. But now she was older, and a little weary, and the light in her eyes served only as a star for the few who still beheld reality behind appearance. She was, moreover, wealthy, and many had sought her hand, and of these, one whom she loved least had possessed her body for many years; and now there came another and stranger wooer with promises of freedom and peace, and protection for her children; and she believed in him, and laid her hand in his.

For a time it was well, her new lord was contented with the wealth of her treasure houses and gave her the peace of neglect. But ere long he took more interest in his cold bride and her children, and said to himself, “This woman has strange ways unlike my own and those of my people, and her thoughts are not my thoughts; but she shall be trained and educated, that she may know what I know, and that the world may say that I have moulded her mind into the paths of progress.” For he knew not of her ancient wisdom, and she seemed to him slow of mind, and lacking in that practical ability on which he prided himself.

And while these thoughts were passing in his mind, some of her children were roused against him, by reason of his robbing them of power and interfering with the rights and laws that regulated their relations to each other; for they feared that their ancient heritage would pass away for ever. But still the mother dreamed of peace and rest and would not hear the children’s cry, but helped to subdue their waywardness; and ere long all was quiet again. But the wayward children loved not their new father and could not understand their mother. And their new father turned to other ways, and sent the children to schools where they were taught his language and his thoughts, and how great his people were, and self-sacrificing; and from what unrest and wretchedness he had saved their mother, and with no thought of gain or profit; and they were taught, too, to forget their ancient glory and from the height of the new learning to despise their ancient manners.

But now another thing happened; the mother bore a child to the foreign lord, and he was pleased thereat, and deemed that she (for it was a girl) should be a woman after his own heart, even as the daughters of his own people, and she should be fair and wealthy, and a bride for a son of his people. But when this child was born, the mother was roused from her dream, and lived only for the girl, and she grew up to remind the mother of her own youth, and favoured the

foreign lord little; yet she had somewhat of his energy and turn for practical affairs. The mother talked long and deeply with her, and the foreign lord did not take it aught amiss, for he deemed that all must go even as he, such a great man, would have it go. And he got teachers, and she was taught the wisdom and manners of his people. But in secret the mother taught her the ancient wisdom, and her heart was turned away from her father and his people and his teaching. And the mother was content; and now she was white-haired and weak with age, and a time came when she passed hence, for her work was done. And the foreign lord himself grew a little weary, for there were troubles in his own land, and some had said that he was a tyrant in a foreign land; and thereby his heart was pained, for had not he spent his life for others, and surely the labourer was worthy of his hire? But the girl grew strong, and would brook little of her father's tyranny, and she was a mother to the children of the children who came before her, and she was called the Mother by all; and perhaps she and her mother were after all the same. One day there arose murmurings amongst the children as of old, and they said that they needed no foreign lord to take their revenues and school their minds. Still they were subdued with a high hand and some were cast in prison, or worse, for the father was a patriarch of the old type and deemed it amiss that he had not the power of life and death over all his subject people. But now they would not brook his tyranny—for he himself unwittingly had taught them that the king-days were over, and made them dream of freedom.

All these trials were upon him, and he grew old and weary: and the young mother (she would be mother of all she said, but wedded unto none) helped all the children and taught them to love and help each other and to call her mother; and she left the foreign lord and went to live in a place apart, where the children came to her for counsel. And when the foreign lord would have stopped it, she was not there, but elsewhere; and it seemed that she was neither here nor there, but everywhere.

And this tale is yet unfinished; but the ending is not far away, and may be foreseen.

(यह लेख आनंद केंटिश मुथु कुमारस्वामी की पुस्तक "Essays In National idealism " से लिया गया है।)