



***RABINDRANATH  
TAGORE***

***THE CYCLE  
OF SPRING***

**Rabindranath Tagore**

# **The Cycle of Spring**

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# INTRODUCTION

## Characters of the Prelude

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KING, VIZIER, GENERAL (BIJOY VARMA)

CHINESE AMBASSADOR, PUNDIT (SRUTI-BHUSHAN)

POET (KABI-SHEKHAR), GUARDS, COURTIER, HERALD

The stage is on two levels: the higher, at the back, for the Song-preludes alone, concealed by a purple curtain; the lower only being discovered when the drop goes up. Diagonally across the extreme left of the lower stage, is arranged the king's court, with various platforms, for the various dignitaries ascending to the canopied throne. The body of the stage is left free for the "Play" when that develops.

*(Enter some COURTIER.)*

[The names of the speakers are not given in the margin, as they can easily be guessed.]

Hush! Hush!

What is the matter?

The King is in great distress.

How dreadful!

Who is that over there, playing on his flute?

Why? What's the matter?

The King is greatly disturbed.

How dreadful!

What are those wild children doing, making so much noise?

They are the Mandal family.

Then tell the Mandal family to keep their children quiet.

Where can that Vizier have gone to?

Here I am. What's the matter?

Haven't you heard the news?

No, what?

The King is greatly troubled in his mind.

Well, I've got some very important news about the frontier war.

War we may have, but not the news.

Then the Chinese Ambassador is waiting to see His Majesty.

Let him wait. Anyhow he can't see the King.

Can't see the King?—Ah, here is the King at last. Look at him coming this way, with a mirror in his hand. "Long live the King. Long live the King."

If it please Your Majesty, it is time to go to the Court.

Time to go? Yes, time to go, but not to the Court.

What does Your Majesty mean?

Haven't you heard? The bell has just been rung to dismiss the Court.

When? What bell? We haven't heard any bell.

How could you hear? They have rung it in my ears alone.

Oh, Sire. No one can have had the impertinence to do that.

Vizier! They are ringing it now.

Pardon me, Sire, if I am very stupid; but I cannot understand.

Look at this, Vizier, look at this.

Your Majesty's hair——

Can't you see there's a bell-ringer there?

Oh, Your Majesty. Are you playing a joke?

The joke is not mine, but His, who has got the whole world by the ear, and is having His jest. Last night, when the Queen was putting a garland of jasmines round my neck, she cried out with alarm, "King, what is this? Here are two grey hairs behind your ear."

Oh, please, Sire, don't worry so much about a little thing like that. Why! The royal physician——

Vizier! The founder of our dynasty had his royal physician, too. But what could he do? Death has left his card of invitation behind my ear. The Queen wanted, then and there, to pluck out the grey hairs. But I said, "Queen, what's the use? You may remove Death's invitation, but can you remove Death, the Inviter?" So, for the present——

Yes, Sire, for the present, let us attend to business.

Business, Vizier! I have no time for business. Send for the Pundit. Send for Sruti-bhushan.

But, Sire, the General——

The General?—No, no, not the General. Send for the Pundit.

But, the news from the frontier——

Vizier, the news has come to me from the last great frontier of all, the frontier of Death. Send for the Pundit.

But if Your Majesty will give me one moment, the Ambassador from the great Emperor of China——

Vizier, a greater Emperor has sent his embassy to me. Call Sruti-bhushan.

Very well, Sire. But your father-in-law——

It is not my father-in-law whom I want now. Send for the Pundit.

But, if it please you to hear me this once. The poet, Kabi-shekhar, is waiting with his new book called the *Garden of Poesy*.

Let your poet disport himself, jumping about on the topmost branches of his Garden of Poesy, but send for the Pundit.

Very well, Sire. I will send for him at once.

Tell him to bring his book of devotions with him, called the *Ocean of Renunciation*.

Yes, Sire.

But, Vizier. Who are those outside making all that noise? Go out and stop them at once. I must have peace.

If it please Your Majesty, there is a famine in Nagapatam and the headmen of the villages are praying to be allowed to see your face.

My time is short, Vizier. I must have peace.

They say their time is shorter. They are at death's door. They, too, want peace,—peace from the burning of hunger.

Vizier! The burning of hunger is quenched at last on the funeral pyre.

Then these wretched people——

Wretched!—Listen to the advice of a wretched King to his wretched subjects. It is futile to be impatient, and try to break through the net of the inexorable Fisherman. Sooner or later, Death the Fisherman will have his haul.

Well then?

Let me have the Pundit, and his *Book of Renunciation*.

And in this scarcity——

Vizier! The real scarcity is of time, and not of food. We are all suffering from starvation of time. None of us has enough of it, neither the King, nor his people.

Then——

Then know, that our petitions for more time will all go to the last fire of doom. So why strain our voice in prayer?—Ah, here is Sruti-bhushan at last. My reverence to you.

Pundit, do tell the King that the Goddess of Fortune deserts him who gives way to melancholy.

Sruti-bhushan, what is my Vizier whispering to you?

He tells me, King, to instruct you in the ways of fortune.

What instruction can you give?

There is a verse in my book of devotions which runs as follows:

Fortune, as fickle as lotus-flower,  
Closes her favours when comes the hour.  
Oh, foolish man, how can you trust her,  
Who comes of a sudden, and goes in a fluster?

Ah, Pundit. One breath of your teaching blows out the false flame of ambition. Our teacher has said:

"Teeth fall out, hair grows grey;  
Yet man clings to hope that plays him false."

Well, King, now that you have introduced the subject of hope, let me give you another verse from the *Ocean of Renunciation*. It runs as follows: