Chapter III

Perseus the Deliverer

Perseus the Deliverer (published in 1942) is the only play of Sri Aurobindo to appear in his life time. All other plays were published posthumously. Also, it is the only play to have received his final touch for publication in a book form. It was originally serialised in the Calcutta Weekly, Bande Mataram, from June 30, 1907 to October 13, 1907. Subsequently, it was revised and included in Collected Poems and Plays of Sri Aurobindo, published in 1942. But two of its scenes (Act II, scene ii and iii), not available in 1942, were later found and incorporated in the text of the first complete edition, published as a book in 1955.

Perseus the Deliverer belongs to the middle of the Baroda period (1893-1906) of Sri Aurobindo. It was written "somewhere between the end of the nineties and the first years of the following decade." The Baroda period was "the significant seed time" of Sri Aurobindo's life during which his metaphysical and cosmological ideas, forming the main burden of his teachings in the Life Divine, were crystallised. In 1907,

2. Sri Aurobindo, Collected Plays, B.C.L. Vol. 6, p.iii.
when the play was published, Sri Aurobindo had already given up his job in Baroda College and "was caught in the maelstrom of Indian politics". Those were the days of fierce political activity for him. His writings in Bande Mataram as well as his revolutionary activities during the years had the same purpose of serving the shackles of Mother India's slavery. For that it was necessary to educate the Indian people because the vast majority of Indians still considered the ideal of independence as unpractical and impossible, "an almost insane chimera."

Sri Aurobindo took upon himself the difficult task. In a letter to Joseph Baptista he writes:

I entered into political action and continued it from 1905 to 1910 with one aim and one alone: to get into the mind of the people a settled will for freedom and the necessity of a struggle to achieve it, in place of the futile ambling methods till then in vogue.

For Sri Aurobindo, "out and out a philhellenist", and "a Greek in his aesthetic consciousness", it was natural to have made use of the Greek myth of Perseus "to rouse Indians from their lethargic ease and slothful complacency", and simultaneously he used stories from Indian classics like the


Mahabharata with the same purpose. "Week after week", says Dr. Prema Nandkumar, "the Bande Mataram articles poured contumely and ridicule on the British Rulers. Apart from the political articles, Sri Aurobindo contributed to the paper poems, like 'Vidula' and 'Baji Prabhou', meant to exhort the Indians to respond to the call of heroism". He knew how relevant to the prevailing Indian conditions the Greek myth was and also that it would engender in people's heart tremendous courage and optimism necessary for successful struggle for freedom from an oppressive alien rule.

Thus, there was a definite purpose in Sri Aurobindo's choice of the Perseus-Andromeda myth for his play 'Perseus the Deliverer' when he was engaged actively in the country's struggle for freedom. Prema Nandkumar says:

But the political situation in India being what it was at the time, he (Sri Aurobindo) also knew that his readers would be forging certain similitude and drawing certain conclusions. Andromeda chained to the rocks — Polydaon gloating in his victory —

1. During the Baroda period, especially the early part of it Sri Aurobindo acquainted himself with the rich Indian heritage. Through the study of the Vedas, the Upanishads, The Gita, The Ramayana, The Mahabharata and other Indian classics, he successfully tried to get at the Indian ethos and to imbibe the spirit of its civilisation and culture. This was a period of Sri Aurobindo's transformation from "an Anglicised Babu into a Vedic-Puranic scholar." During this period of literary study and self culture Sri Aurobindo was drawn "into the glorious vortex of Indian culture".


Perseus intervening effectively at the appointed time! Mother India was in chains — the forces of oppression and exploitation were apparently on the ascendent — but where was the god-annointed Deliverer?1

The Deliverer, it seemed, was yet to appear on the scene of national movement for freedom. Referring to the nationalist leaders at the helm of the freedom struggle, Sri Aurobindo says

Stranded on the desert island of their antiquated political ideas, they look forlornly over the heaving tumult around them and strive piteously to imagine themselves still in their old carefully sheltered arena of mimic political strife and safe, cheap, and profitable patriotism.2

Sri Aurobindo, thus, has a firm conviction that for her deliverance India did not need Cepheuses3 who believed in appeasement. He rightly foreshadowed that fiery band of nationalists, with heroic hearts and puissant minds, ready to pursue the goal of independence undaunted and undeterred by perils, and determined to wage a relentless, unsparing struggle with the certainty of final victory, could alone deliver good to the country. So, it was to rouse his people from stupor

3. The character of Cepheus, the king of Syria, in the play seems to have been created with the Moderate leaders of the Indian freedom struggle like H.R. Gokhale in mind who, according to Sri Aurobindo, dared not oppose the stern and relentless measures used by the British Govt. against the Nationalist Party and the members of Boycott Movement, and who "declared that the ideal of independence was an ideal which no sane man could hold". According to these leaders, the only possible attitude the British Govt. could adopt towards the ideal of independence was repression. Sri Aurobindo's Karmayogin, B.C.L. Vol. 2 (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972), pp. 75-80, 113-14.
and somnolence, to get into their minds an intense longing for freedom and the necessity of waging a struggle for it, to inculcate in their hearts self-sacrifice and unswerving faith in their ultimate victory that Sri Aurobindo chose the Greek myth for his play. It was in order to project the problems of his slave motherland and its aspirations for the future, that Sri Aurobindo wrote on themes like that of Perseus the Deliverer. The character of Perseus as 'Deliverer,' projected by Sri Aurobindo, must have stimulated intense political awareness among the readers of Bande Mataram.

According to Prof. K.R.S. Iyengar, the Andromeda myth "is among the most enchanting items in our vast racial heritage ....Poets of all times have been drawn to Andromeda as sensit iron is drawn to a magnet." Great poets, like Sophocles and Euripides, rendered the myth into tragic poetry, but, unfortunately, the plays were lost. However, Mr. Gilbert Norwood has been able to reconstruct the plot of Andromeda from the surviving fragments.

An important Latin poet, Ovid, also included the Perseus-Andromeda story in the fourth book of his Metamorphoses.

1. My indebtedness is due to Prof. K.R.S. Iyengar whose article "Andromeda", in Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual, Calcutta (1948) has been the source of most of the information used here about the Perseus-Andromeda myth.

where the career of Perseus has been described in detail. Prof. Iyengar, who has made a historical study of the Perseus-Andromeda myth from Euripides to Sri Aurobindo, mentions numerous references to the myth by poets and artists in the western world. Among the poets who have referred to the myth are Corneille, the French poet and Kingsley, the English poet. Corneille's opera, Andromeda and Kingsley's The Heroes (1856) and Andromeda (1859) were known to Sri Aurobindo when he took up the theme for his play. According to Dr. Prema Nandkumar, he was also "aware of the surviving fragments from Euripides as is seen from his treatment of Andromeda's love at first sight for Perseus". 1 About Kingsley's long narrative poem Andromeda, the only English poem on the Andromeda myth, Sri Aurobindo says:

Kingsley's Andromeda... is the most readable of English hexametre poems; .... Kingsley has the trick of romantic language, romantic imagination and thinking, but he is not an original poet;......it (Andromeda) is not sound and good stuff but romantic tinsel. 2

When Sri Aurobindo chose the Perseus-Andromeda myth for his play, he wanted to weave into it a new meaning, make it a vehicle for his philosophy and give it an immediacy of

1. Prema Nandkumar, "Perseus the Deliverer" in Perspectives on Indian Drama in English, p. 20.

purpose. The play is not, like Kingsley's *Andromeda*, a mere "romantic tinsel", nor is it "a *reductio ad absurdum* of its potent Greek original". According to Prof. Iyengar, "Kingsley wished to give Andromeda myth a modern — at least a Victorian — habitation and name", but he failed. Sri Aurobindo succeeded where Kingsley had failed. As Prof. Iyengar says:

> It was left to Sri Aurobindo to offer the modern world a vivid new rendering of the old myth, retaining all its old beauty and poetry and sense of mystery, but all served up with a modern flavour and relevance and urgency."

Thus, after Sophocles, Euripides, Ovid, Corneille and Kingsley, Sri Aurobindo's treatment of this theme is not a mere re-writing of the old myth, but a fresh rendering, with new meanings and bearings. While treating the theme afresh Sri Aurobindo has taken liberties with the locale, action and spirit of the existing myth. In the prefatory note to the play he himself says:

> In this piece the ancient legend has been divested of its original character of heroic myth; ... The country in which the action is located is a Syria of romance, not of history.

2. *Idem.*
3. *Idem.*
Once Sri Aurobindo has chosen the myth as his theme, he allows his creative imagination to act as its "sole disposer and arranger". He continues in the preface:

...the creative imagination is its sole disposer and arranger; fantasy reigns sovereign; the names of ancient countries and peoples are brought in only as a fringe of a decorative background; anachronisms romp in ..., ideas and associations from all climes and epochs mingle: myth, romance and realism make up a single whole.¹

Sri Aurobindo changes names, characters and places, creates fresh scenes, introduces life-like, full-blooded characters and strings cosmic visions and dimensions in such a way and to such an extent that "nothing but merely the outline of the old story remains while everything else becomes completely Aurobindonian."² The following minor changes have been made in the play from the original myth:

(i) Location in the myth is Ethiopia; but in Perseus the Deliverer it is changed to Syria, that too "of romance not of history."

(ii) In the myth Andromeda is chained to the rocks by the people to be devoured by a sea-monster as an atonement for her mother's impiety against the sea-god, Poseidon. Her mother "had boasted that the

¹ Sri Aurobindo, Collected Plays, B.C.L. Vol. 6, pp. 2-3.
sea-nymphs were not more beautiful than her daughter, and thus enraged Poseidon. In the play she opposes the crude and evil religion which calls upon human sacrifice to gods. So she is punished due to her opposition to "the dire cult" and to the god who eats the flesh of men.

(iii) Phineus is Andromeda's uncle in the myth. He loves his niece and plots with Cassiopea to kill Perseus after she has been rescued. In the play Phineus is the King of Tyre, betrothed to Andromeda.

(iv) Cassiopeia in the myth is against Perseus and works in complicity with Phineus to kill him. But in the play she stands for Perseus as do Iolaus and Andromeda.

(v) In the myth Perseus is attracted to Andromeda because of her rare physical charm. In the play he falls in love with her because of her spiritual qualities.

(vi) Unlike in the myth, where Perseus is the son of Zeus and Danae, Perseus in the play is "revealed as a protege of Pallas Athene, who inspires him, strengthens him and lifts him out of the common Greek strong-man into a half-divine entity." Aided by Athene,


Perseus oversteps his human limits to reach the heights of godliness — godliness in stature and personality.  

The Greek story has undergone some other changes, too which are of greater significance in the play. In it Sri Aurobindo has divested the ancient legend of its original character of a heroic myth. This is because, unlike Euripides and Corneille, the playwright does not intend to make the play the story of Perseus, "the heroic miracle-worker" and Andromeda, "a paragon of passive sufferance". His purpose is to transmute it into "a romantic story of human temperament and life impulses on the Elizabethan model". With the shift in emphasis in the play from the heroic deeds of Perseus to the drama in the inner world of man's mind, a recasting of the play on the Elizabethan model is not uncalled for. As Dr. Prema Nandkumar says: "Sri Aurobindo had no doubt desired to render anew the myth (of Perseus and Andromeda) but had to avoid the pseudo-romantic stance of Kingsley. Consciously he chose the Elizabethan model, for the five-act structure affords the greatest scope for the imaginative recreation of an age that is now past."

Kingsley also wanted to impart to the myth a fresh modern relevance. But what he has given us is "heroism that doesn't inspire and romance that doesn't transport."\(^1\) That is not the case with Sri Aurobindo.

Another change of consequence to be noticed in the play is the character of Andromeda. Due to an altogether different conception of her character and its presentation in a different light, the story of Perseus becomes, in Sri Aurobindo's play, "Primarily the story of Andromeda whose deliverer he (perseus) eventually becomes".\(^2\) Unlike in the Greek legend, where she is a passive figure, "a patient sufferer", Andromeda in Sri Aurobindo's play is full of individuality—loving, compassionate, bold, self-sacrificing, ready to revolt against the dire gods of a dire cult. The "paragon of passive sufferance" in the old myth is transformed into a paragon of love and self-sacrifice, into pity incarnate.

In Greek mythology Poseidon and Pallas Athene are depicted as inimical to each other. Poseidon is known for his reserves of power and"as a god of little intellectual and still less ethical character."\(^3\) Pallas Athene, on the

---


2. S.S. Kulkarni, "The Plays of Sri Aurobindo", in Perspectives on Indian Drama in English, p. 4.

other hand, is the goddess of wisdom, symbolizing love, light and benignity. In the Greek story of Andromeda, the main struggle is between Perseus and the sea-monster; but also involved in the conflict are Pallas Athene and Poseidon. Perseus wins the victory by killing the sea-monster. But from his victory over the sea-monster no moral is drawn. 1 "There is a sense of relief that Andromeda has been saved, that's about all." 2 Ovid visualizes the conflict on the human plane. Kingsley indeed contrasts "the pitiless sea-gods" with the "Lords of Olympus", but doesn't properly work out the implications. 3 But Sri Aurobindo hints at the implications of the conflict and also broadens them. As a result, Andromeda myth in his play is not "a moral allegory of pride and retribution and redemption" 4; nor is it "a naturalistic allegory of the eventual victory of the sun over the sea and its mists and its storms." 5 In Perseus the Deliverer the myth is made a vehicle for Sri Aurobindo's evolutionary philosophy.

2. Idem.
3. Idem.
4. Ibid., p. 163.
5. Idem.
In the purpose with which Sri Aurobindo's mind was preoccupied at the time of writing *Perseus the Deliverer* lies a suggestion for one of its prominent themes — deliverance from captivity. The other conspicuous theme in the play emanates from his philosophy of man's evolutionary destiny — his growing upward and spiritual, his rising above the lower self and manifesting the higher divine self. Here it may be remembered that the closing passage of the play, which is a formal statement of the evolutionary action, was added to the play later. This doesn't, however, mean that the idea of evolution is not inherent in the action of the play. In fact, the idea is an integral part of the clash of character and circumstance and the resultant change shown in the play.

Sri Aurobindo's choice of the theme of deliverance for his play — in the opening decade of the present century was of great relevance to the then conditions of India. If we look at the background to Sri Aurobindo's joining of national movement for freedom, we find that he was inevitably drawn to it by the intense patriotic fire that burnt in him. Even when he was at Cambridge, his father kept him posted with

---

1. But the blind nether forces still have power
   And the ascent is slow and long is Time.
   Yet shall Truth grow and harmony increase:
   The day shall come when men feel close and one.
   Meanwhile one forward step is something gained,
   Since little by little earth must open to heaven
   Till her dim soul awakes into the Light.

the oppression and tyranny of the British regime and the
reign of terror it had let loose on the Indian people. His
father sent him "the newspaper, The Bengali, with passages
marked relating cases of maltreatment of Indians by Englishmen
and he wrote in his letters denouncing the British Government
as a heartless Government."¹ As a student of Cambridge he
was a member and also secretary for sometime of the Indian
Majlis and delivered many revolutionary speeches. He decided
to work to liberate his country and joined "Lotus and Dagger",
a secret society of those who vowed to work for India's
liberation, towards the end of his career at Cambridge. On
his return to India, he gave further proof of his interest
in India's freedom by writing the articles in the Induprakash,
which were titled 'New Lamps for the Old' and which strongly
criticised the prevailing moderate policy of the Congress.
They showed that his interest in India's independence "was
not merely academic but dynamic: it was an intense flame
that touched many hearts and set them ablaze."² The articles
among other things revealed the twenty one year old Sri
Aurobindo's burning patriotism. It was for this intense
love for his country that Sri Aurobindo sacrificed the
prestigious career of a civil servant, the princely salary

and prestige of the Vice-Principalship of Baroda College and, indeed, all material prospects when he plunged into the politics of his country. He was not one who would think of trivial things like career when the motherland was in the demonic grip of a tyrannical foreign rule. In his historical letter dated August 30, 1905, he wrote to his wife:

...while others look upon their country as an inert piece of matter — a few meadows and fields, forests and hills and rivers — I look upon my country as the Mother. I adore Her, I worship Her as the Mother. What would a son do if a demon sat on his mother's breast and started sucking her blood? Would he quietly sit down to his dinner, amuse himself with his wife and children, or would he rush out to deliver his mother?

He rushed out to deliver his Mother for he knew that he was capable of doing it. In the same letter Sri Aurobindo, further said:

I know I have the strength to deliver this fallen race. It is not physical strength — I am not going to fight with sword or gun — but the strength of knowledge. The power of the Kshatriya is not the only one; there is also the power of the Brahmin, the power that is founded on knowledge. This feeling is not new in me, it is not of today. I was born with it, it is in my very marrow. God sent me to earth to accomplish this great mission... I do not say that the work will be accomplished during my life time, but it certainly will be done.

So, on the testimony of Sri Aurobindo himself, it can be said that he was drawn irresistibly to the idea of the

1. A.B. Purohit, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, p. 82.
2. *Idem*. 
deliverance of the Mother India from captivity. He was sure that he was equal to the task and that the task was sure to be accomplished.

Perseus the Deliverer is one among his numerous writings in Bande Mataram through which he gave clarion call to the people to arise, awake and struggle relentlessly and tirelessly till the shackles of slavery were broken and the Mother India was liberated. After her liberation Sri Aurobindo also wanted India to be reinstated in her glorious role of leading the entire humanity on to the path of spirituality. The play was Sri Aurobindo's response to the direst need of the hour as, in fact, were most of his writings during the period.

The need of the hour, as Sri Aurobindo perceived it, was supreme self-sacrifice, tenacity of purpose, iron will and iron heart. On April 23, 1908 Sri Aurobindo in Bande Mataram wrote:

The work now before us is of the sternest kind and requires men of an unflinching sternness to carry it out. The hero, the martyr, the man of iron will and iron heart, the grim fighter whose tough nerves defest cannot tire out danger relax, the born leader, in action, the man who cannot sleep or rest while his country is enslaved, the priest of Kali who can tear his heart out of his body and offer it as a bleeding sacrifice on the Mother's altar, the heart of fire and the tongue of flame whose lightest word is an inspiration to self-sacrifice or a spur to action, for these the time is coming, the call will soon go forth.

So the play may be considered as embodying the call to the people to prepare themselves for the coming struggle while there is yet time, for the struggle promised to be extremely grim, and, to be equal to it, one needed to be the grim fighter Sri Aurobindo describes.

The unique relevance of the Andromeda myth, embodying the theme of deliverance from captivity, to the political situation of India, when *Perseus the Deliverer* was being written, seems to be the most probable and a valid reason for the choice of the myth for the play. The political implications of the theme to be projected dramatically through the play were obviously great and far-reaching for the captive India and her people.

The symbolic significance of the story of Andromeda and Perseus stands out due to the way Sri Aurobindo presents it in *Perseus the Deliverer*. Andromeda, the Syrian princess, has committed sacrilege in the eyes of the primitive people of Syria who believe in a primitive cult and worship dark gods like Poseidon. Moved by pity for Smerdas, a Babylonian victim of shipwreck to be sacrificed at the altar of Poseidon, she frees him and thus incurs the fiercest wrath of the sea-god. According to Polydaon, the priest, she is responsible for all the havoc the furious god causes in Syria. Instead of showing mercy to hapless victims of shipwreck, the Syrians make them bleed to quench the blood-thirst of their dark-violent gods. Tyranus, one such victim in the play, says:
This is that strange inhospitable coast
Where the wrecked traveller in his own warm blood
Is given guest-bath. 1

Praxilla as a typical Syrian has no mercy to show to people
who die in shipwreck if they are not Syrians. She rather
enjoys the sight of their death. To her it is

...like a wild stupendous sacrifice
Offered by the grey-filleted grim surges
On the gigantic altar of the rocks
To the calm cliffs seated like gods above. 2

She advises Andromeda also not to waste her tears over the
death of "barbarous jabbering foreigners":

You make a luxury of others' woe.
So when we watch a piteous tragedy,
We grace with real tears its painted sorrows.
When you are older and have true things to weep for,
Then you will understand. 3

But Andromeda would not be thus advised:

I'll not be older!
I will not understand! I only know
That men are heartless and your gods most cruel.
I hate them! 4

She is moved to pity, her heart overflowing with compassion
for the poor helpless men who are soon to be killed according

1. Sri Aurobindo, Perseus the Deliverer, Collected Plays,
   B.C.L. Vol. 6, p.18.
   The play referred to in this chapter in Collected
   Plays, B.C.L. Vol. 6 is Perseus the Deliverer unless
   otherwise mentioned.
2. Ibid., p.32.
3. Ibid., p.33.
4. Idem.
to the cruel laws of Syria on dark Poseidon's altar. She firmly tells Diomede:

They shall not die.
It is a shame, a cruel cold injustice.

My sungod saved them, they belong to him,
Not to your hateful gods. They are his and mine.
I will not let you kill them. 1

The pity and compassion Andromeda is moved by are no virtues to Syrians; these are simply alien to their semi-primitive race. That is why Diomede warns Andromeda against releasing the captives in the precincts of Polydaon's temple:

It is a crime
Full of impiety, a deed of danger
That venturous and iron spirits would be aghast
To dream of. You think because you are a child,
You will be pardoned, because you are a princess
No hand will dare to punish you. You do not know
Men's hearts. They will not pause to pity you,
They will not spare. The people in its rage
Will tear us both to pieces, limb from limb,
With blows and fury, roaring round like tigers. 2

Nothing, however, can deter Andromeda now on the "brink of action". She challenges even the gods to punish her if showing pity to men, who are weak and suffer, is a crime she must be punished for:

O, and you,
If there is any god in the deaf skies
That pities men or helps them, O protect me!

2. Ibid., p. 76.
But if you are inexorably unmoved
And punish pity, I, Andromeda,
Who am a woman on this earth, will help
My brothers. Then, if you must punish me,
Strike home. You should have given me no heart;
It is too late now to forbid it feeling.1

It is then that Athene, the goddess of wisdom and love, appears.

Her blessings, no doubt, are with Andromeda in her bold action.

But she does warn her against the eventualities of the action:

But dost thou know that thy reward shall be
Betrayal and fierce hatred? God and man
Shall league in wrath to kill and torture thee
Mid dire revellings.2

However, Andromeda wants to save the life of the captives at
any cost only to cool the "anguish of pity" in her heart. She
will be "at peace" if she is able to save their lives. If in
the act she dies, she will be "still at peace". Nothing
dissuades her from what she intends. She frees Smerdas, who
was left to his fate even by her sun-god, Perseus, because
Smerdas "showed too much/The sordid fear that pities only
itself,"3 and she does not care a fig for the consequences of
her action.

The fears expressed by Diomede and Athene about the conse-
quences of Andromeda's action prove true almost to the letter.

1. Sri Aurobindo, Collected Plays, B.C.L. Vol. 6, p. 78.
2. Ibid., pp. 79-80.
3. Ibid., p. 92.
She is accused of "impious sacrilege" the penalty for which is death. Polydaon and his accomplices easily incite Syrians against their own princess. But when she is asked to account for her action, Andromeda tells Perissus, the butcher, most fearlessly:

Because I would not have their human hearts
Mercilessly uprooted for the bloody
Monster you worship as a god! because
I am capable of pain and so can feel
The pain of others! For which if you I love
Must kill me, do it. I alone am guilty.1

In spite of all, however, in spite of her royal parents, the priest seems to prevail. He declares the penalty for Andromeda's sacrilege:

Poseidon wills
That on the beach this criminal be bound
For monsters of the sea to rend in fragments,
And all the royal ancient blood of Syria
Must be poured richly forth to appease and cleanse.2

All this is not to the liking of Phineus, one of Polydaon's accomplices, who has his own selfish designs. But his does suit the black designs of Polydaon. The power-mad priest is verily a demon who wants to gain power by shedding innocent blood. Feeling confident that the turn of events now cannot but favour him and further his selfish designs, Polydaon says:

1. Sri Aurobindo, Collected Plays, B.C.L. Vol. 6, p.112.
2. Idem.
The drama's nearly over. Now to ring out
The royal characters amid fierce howlings
And splendid, pitiless, crimson massacre,—
A great finale! Then, then I shall be King.1

And what will he do to perpetuate him in power once he has gained it? The monstrosity in human form, Polydaon is seized by megalomaniac frenzy. He says:

I will paint Syria gloriously with blood.
Hundreds shall daily die to incarnadine
The streets of my city and my palace floors,
For I would walk in redness.2

Andromeda is chained to a rock to be devoured by sea-monsters. Polydaon gloats in his victory. Chained to the cliffs, Andromeda feels helpless and miserable:

These cruel chains
Weary the arms they keep held stiffly out
Against the rough cold jagged stones. My bosom
Hardly contains its thronging sobs; my heart
Is torn with misery: ..........................

I have failed
In all I did and die accursed and hated
I die alone and miserably, no heart
To pity me: ..........................3

Sri Aurobindo symbolically shows the plight of India with demons sitting on her breast and sucking her life blood. The British rulers revelled like Polydaon in acts of mean cruelty and cold injustice to the suffering millions of India. Those,

__________________________________________________________________________
2. Idem.
3. Ibid., p. 157.
who, with their hearts fired by patriotic self-sacrifice, plunged into the national struggle for freedom, were subjected to means of torture cruel beyond words. Their crime, like Andromeda's, was to rise in revolt against forces of barbarism that would not brook any attempt at freedom by those they have enslaved.

Andromeda suffers moods of misery, self-pity, frustration which find expression in her piteous cry for help:

Alas! is there no pity for me? Is there No kind bright sword to save me in all this world?¹

She had dreamt of "other powers", she says, other than the cruel merciless Poseidon, and wonders if there will be no divine intervention to rescue her. The divine intervenes and presently Cydone comes to assure her about her release and the safety of her brother, Iolaus:

The gods are with him, sister. In a few hours We shall be all together and released From these swift perils.²

In her most critical moments, when even the hope of divine intervention begins to fade, comes Cydone to give her the assurance of release. On the heels of the assurance comes Perseus, the divine representative. He cleaves Andromeda's chains and lifts her in his arms to safety. Obviously, to generate the

---

2. Ibid., p. 159.
hope that this might happen in the case of India too, that the "god-annointed Deliverer" will soon come to break her free from slavery seems to be the purpose of Perseus the Deliverer.

In the play, there are many hints of divine intervention as a result of which Andromeda and others are saved. Cydone to Andromeda says:

The gods are with him, sister. In a few hours
We shall be all together and released
From these swift perils.1

Perissus tells Therops:

The gods are at work and Iolaus shall not die.2

Dercetes points to Perseus and says:

'Tis he who baffled us upon the beach,
I see the gods are busy in our Syria.3

Through such utterances of his various characters Sri Aurobindo, perhaps, wanted to inspire in the hearts of his countrymen the faith that India's freedom is a certainty, that even the gods will it and are ready to intervene to effect it sooner than later.

When the play was written, for Sri Aurobindo "it was the time of 'country first, humanity afterwards and the rest

1. Sri Aurobindo, Collected Plays, B.C.L. Vol.6, p. 159.
2. Ibid., p. 171.
3. Ibid., p. 172.
nowhere'. He had earlier been uninterested even in Yoga, for it required him, he thought, to give up the world which he could not. He wanted, before everything else, to liberate his country and the idea of India's freedom kept haunting his mind. Hence the recurrence of the theme of deliverance in his writings of the time. He made such changes in the story of Andromeda myth as rendered it primarily the story of her deliverance so that through the theme of deliverance he could give prophetic intimations of India's freedom and make people determined to wrest their nation's freedom. He wanted the people of his country to draw optimistic conclusions from Cydone's assurances to Andromeda, and to rest assured about the safety as well as the freedom of their Motherland even in the face of the gravest difficulties and dangers. The following words of Perseus to Andromeda seem to have been addressed to Mother India by Sri Aurobindo:

Look up, O sunny-curled Andromeda!
Perseus, the son of Danae, is with thee
To whom thou now belongest. Fear no more
Sea-monsters nor the iron-souled Poseidon,
Nor the more monsters flinty-hearted rabble
Who bound thee here. ...


2. Before he began Yoga, Sri Aurobindo wanted an assurance from Lele that he would not be required to cease working for his country's freedom or writing poetry. It was only when he got the assurance that he took up spiritual sadhana. Besides he learnt that Yoga can give a man tremendous power which he needed to liberate his country. So he agreed to begin Yoga. That is why, he said that his was a side-door entry into the Spiritual Life.

Idem.
Lift up thy eyes: long curtains: aid the azure
With thy regards, O sunshine. Look at me
And see thy safety. 1

When the grim battle between Perseus and the sea-monster is in
progress, when hell and heaven are at grips together, Andromeda
lifts her heart in prayer to Athene:

Virgin, beautiful
Athene, virgin-mother of my soul!
I cannot lift my hands to thee, they are chained
To the wild cliff, but lift my heart instead,
Virgin, assist thy hero in the fight.
Descend, armipotent maiden, child of Zeus,
Shoot from his god-like brain the strength of will
That conquers evil: in one victorious stroke
Collecting hurl it on the grisly foe. 2

Andromeda, thus praying for divine help, could as well be the
Mother India in chains, like the Syrian princess. Andromeda's
prayer is granted and presently Perseus is seen coming to her,
"bright and victorious". To Andromeda's overwhelming delight,
he declares:

The grisly beast is slain that was thy terror,
And thou may'st sun the world with smiles again,
Andromeda. 3

A Perseus to deliver Mother India also will soon come, the
grisly foe will be killed, and she will be allowed to face the
world with smiles as ever before — this is the optimism
Perseus the Deliverer was intended to generate in the heart

2. Ibid., p. 163.
3. Idem.
of its readers of pre-Independence days. The readers of the play must have seen India in Andromeda. Similarly, Perseus must have symbolised the forces of freedom represented by Indian political leadership with Lokmanya Tilak at its head. Polydaon and Poseidon for Sri Aurobindo's readers must have been symbols of the British tyrannical forces and the British Crown respectively. The ultimate fate of Andromeda must have suggested to the Indian people similar happy fate of their Motherland too.

The theme of love has also been interwoven in the play though as a minor one. This is clear when we analyse the motivating force behind the act of Andromeda in freeing Smerdas and the act of Perseus himself in setting Andromeda free. Perseus, no doubt, saves Smerdas and Tyranus, the hapless victims of shipwreck in the Syrian sea, from "the dead surges of the inhuman flood." But he refuses to defend them against Iolaus and his soldiers for the merchants are not prepared to fight in self-defence. Tyranus flings away the sword and, resigning to the inevitable, surrenders himself to the soldiers:

Take me.
I will not please the gods with impotent writhing
Under the harrow of my fate.2

Smerdas, an extremely greedy and cowardly creature, does not fight to defend his life, but expects Tyranus or Perseus to do

1. Sri Aurobindo, Collected Plays, B.C.L. Vol. 6, p. 16.
2. Ibid., p. 19.
it for him. Some time after the two have been taken prisoners
for being sacrificed at the altar of Poseidon, Perseus happens
to meet them once again. He is impressed by the self-composure
of Tyranus, who shows no signs of agitation due to the impend-
ing doom, but is absolutely calm and self-composed:

I have composed my soul to my sad fortunes,
Yet wherefore sad? Fate has dealt largely with me.
... ... ... ... ... ... and now Fate gives me
This tragic not inglorious death: I am
The banquet of a god. It fits, it fits,
And I repine not.

So he shears his chains, for his is a soul worth saving. But
Smerdas to him is a "sordid treacherous thing of fears"² trying
to bribe him. Therefore, he does not feel inclined to sever
his chains and leaves Smerdas contemptuously to his lot.

But Andromeda's attitude to weak and suffering human beings
is different. She takes it on herself to free Smerdas out of
sheer compassion. She is impelled to free him by her love for
human beings which does not weigh a man's virtues and vices
before coming to his rescue. She says:

Is't not enough
To see a face in tears and heal the sorrow,
Or must we weigh whether the face is fair
Or ugly? I think that even a snake in pain
Would tempt me to its succour, though I knew
That afterwards 'twould bite me.'³

1. Sri Aurobindo, Collected Plays, B.C.L. Vol. 6, p. 86.
2. Ibid., p. 87.
3. Ibid., p. 92.
So, she frees Smerdas and rises higher, by the act, even than her sun-god, Perseus. This is because of love overflowing her heart. Love is not born yet in the heart of Perseus. Though he is very powerful, his heart is seized by hate for men like Smerdas. But he is quick to rescue Andromeda even though the act means open defiance of the edicts of Syrian gods. The reason is clear. The response of his power to Andromeda's plight is so markedly different because his heart has experienced love and he is now a transmuted man. It is his passionate love for her that is the motivating force behind his act of saving Andromeda from the jaws of the sea-monsters, involving such a grand display of superhuman power that vanquishes demonic forces of hate and mean cruel violence.

Thus, it is one of the implicit purposes of the playwright to suggest the great strength of love through Perseus the Deliverer.

Perseus the Deliverer has another theme which is equally important. The play being a work of more than mere contemporary relevance, it also deals with a subject that attracted wide attention both of philosophers and literary writers in Europe towards the end of the nineteenth century. It is the theme of evolution. The theme naturally has as much contemporary interest for the world as a whole today as it is likely to have in times to come. When the play was written, Sri Aurobindo had achieved through vigorous pranayam for years what he called "a silent mind" and "had glimpsed the possibilities of earth's success in its evolutionary endeavour to reach
a higher life." So Sri Aurobindo seems to have chosen to enshrine in the play the prophetic intimations of the earth's great future and man's great evolutionary destiny. In fact, Sri Aurobindo's activities of all sorts — writing, politics, Yoga, etc., — had the same purpose. They were parts of the same large act aimed at a greater existence and consciousness, i.e., a divine life on the earth. He believed in the essential divinity of man and in the possibility of its unfolding here in the material existence. What he sang years later in Savitri seems to have been his faith also when he was writing Perseus the Deliverer. In Savitri he says:

A mutual debt binds man to the Supreme:
His nature we must put on as he puts ours;
We are sons of God and must be even as he:
His human portion, we must grow divine,
Our life is a paradox with God for key.2

According to Sri Aurobindo:

The ascent to the divine Life is the human journey,
the Work of works, the acceptable sacrifice. This alone is man's real business in the world and the justification of his existence, without which he would be only an insect crawling among other ephemeral insects on a speck of surface mud and water which has managed to form itself amid the appalling immensities of the physical universe.3


Perseus the Deliverer, seems to suggest that his dramatic creations, most of which are his early creations, contain his philosophical ideas that were later to form the main burden of his philosophical works and Savitri, his magnum opus. What he says in The Life Divine above, he says in other words in Savitri also:

A long dim preparation is man's life.
A circle of toil and hope and war and peace

A search for something or someone never found
Cult of an ideal never made real here,
An endless spiral of ascent and fall
Until at last is reached the giant point
Through which His glory shines for whom we were made
And we break into the infinity of God.

The landmarks of the little person fell,
The island ego joined its continent.

Perseus the Deliverer suggests the same "circle of toil and hope and war and peace....", the same "endless spiral of ascent and fall" which ultimately brings us to and opens the floodgates of Divine Light. It is written to hint at "the first promptings of the deeper and higher psychic and spiritual being which it is his ultimate destiny to become"\(^2\), to suggest "the godhead lurking in man's secret soul"\(^3\), and to insinuate that, in spite of the journey being endlessly long, man must

3. Ibid., p. 178.
reach his destination. When Cepheus, the King of Syria, asks Perseus:

Then man too may arise to greater heights,
His being draw nearer to the gods?

Perseus answers:

Perhaps.
But the blind nether forces still have power
And the ascent is slow and long is Time.
Yet shall Truth grow and harmony increase:
The day shall come when men feel close and one.
Meanwhile one forward step is something gained,
Since little by little earth must open to heaven
Till her dim soul awakes into the Light.

This shows Sri Aurobindo's faith in man's ultimate conquest of the blind nether forces and his gradual growth into divinity. It is nothing but a foreshadowing of his concept of evolution as propounded later.

Sri Aurobindo's evolutionary principle is the most important principle in his cosmology. The main postulates of his evolutionary theory may be stated as follows:

(i) The universe, the material world, is a real manifestation of the Divine. The Divine, through its creative power, brings the multiplicity of the material world. The creation "is like an adventure of the One to see itself variously."³

2. Idem.
(ii) The Divine effects self-concealment or self-absorption in the movements of inconscient Force and the forms of inert matter. The self-concealment or self-absorption or trance of the infinity, its getting lost in its own multiplicity, is the state which is called the Inconscient. This self-concealing of the Divine in a descent through Supermind, Mind, Life to the last rung Matter is called Involution. The cosmic manifestation of the Supreme seems to be the opposite of itself, something in which there can be Darkness, Inconscience, Inertia, Disharmony and Disintegration. But in truth all is secretly the Divine, the Eternal, the Infinite. There is the being of Infinite in the apparent infinite non-being, the Superconscient hidden in the Inconscient.

(iii) In each atom of the cosmic existence there is a divine impulse which impels it to self-discovery, to evolution, to a self-revealing of the Divine in an ascent from Matter to Life, from Life to Mind, from Mind to Supermind and from Supermind to the Spirit, to the Divine, the triune luminous Infinite. Evolution is an essential movement of the universe. What evolves from the universe must already be involved in it. If involution is self-concealment of the divine in the Inconscience, evolution is its self-discovery in the same — the reverse process of involution.
(iv) The various grades of reality have a basic unity in them. Matter is the same as Spirit, or a form of it. If Spirit is the soul of Matter, Matter is the body of Spirit.

(v) There is a secret self-compulsion in all things to manifest what is involved in them. There is in them an infinite reality struggling to arrive at itself. But there is also an Inertia, resisting this manifestation or self-fulfilment. The "upward levitation" of the Spirit is resisted by "a downward gravitation" towards the Inconscience. This Inertia countering the efforts of upward movement makes evolution necessary and as a result of it evolution becomes "a struggle between an insistent call to manifestation and an iron retardatory reluctant Inertia." ¹

Sri Aurobindo's concept of evolution through conflict seems to have in it echoes of the Hegelian dialectic — his concept of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. According to Sri Aurobindo evolution is "slow outburst of Something that was hidden all along in matter"², not a mechanical or sudden explosion or outburst of the Divine, but a slow ascent to divinity:

...little by little earth must open to heaven
Till her dim soul awakes into the Light. ³

2. Ibid., p. 112.
Man must progress in future also as he has so done throughout in the past. But an important prerequisite of his evolution is conflict from which he should emerge triumphant, overcoming the numberless difficulties and dangers that are part of his earthly life. In Perseus the Deliverer Sri Aurobindo suggests not only the inevitability of conflict in human life committed to growing divine, but also the certainty of his ultimate divinity.

Pallas Athene, daughter of Zeus, has been entrusted, as she herself says, with the task of leading man to his "mastery of all his outward world":

Me the Omnipotent
Made from His being to lead and discipline
The immortal spirit of man, till it attain
To order and magnificent mastery
Of all his outward world.1

But she knows that man's ascent to the divine life, to godhead must be "a circle of toil and hope and war and peace", his path to divinity must be strewn with countless dangers and difficulties. Hence her challenge to Poseidon:

Therefore I bid thee not,
O azure strong Poseidon, to abate
Thy savage tumults; rather his march oppose.
For through the shocks of difficulty and death
Man shall attain his godhead.2

2. Ibid., p. 8.
The challenge, however, comes only when Poseidon, the dark god, the god of terror and woe and blood, refuses to listen to her advice not to cause the hideous massacre of the surviving victims of shipwreck in the Syrian seas. She says:

O iron king,
Desist from blood, be glad of kindlier gifts
And suffer men to live.¹

The inexorable and blood-thirsty god tells Athene back:

Behold, Athene,
My waters, see them lift their foam-white tops
Charging from sky to sky in rapid tumult:
Admire their force, admire their thunderous speed.

Shall I permit the grand anarchic seas
To be a road and the imperious Ocean
A means of merchandise? Shall the frail keels
Of thy ephemeral mortals score its back
With servile furrows and petty souls of men
Triumphing tame the illimitable sea?
I am not of the mild and later gods,
But of that elder world; ... ...

... ... ... ... ... ... ...
... ... ... ... ... ... ...
... ... ... ... ... ... ...
... ... ... ... ... ... ...
Return into thy heavens,
Pallas Athene, I into my deep.²

This is Darkness, Inconscience, Inertia countering the efforts of upward movement and making struggle inevitable for evolution. The "upward levitation" of Athene is resisted by "the downward gravitation" of Poseidon so that Athene, "dweller in the light", challenges Poseidon, dweller in the deep dark oceans, to fight:

² 2. Ibid., pp. 8-9.
Dash then thy billows up against my aegis
In battle! think not to hide in thy deep oceans;
For I will drive thy waters from the world
And leave thee naked to the light.1

Significantly, in the conflict between Light and Darkness, the
victory, as Athene's words insinuate, will fall to Light which
will leave darkness "naked to the light". The two gods agree
to fight through their champions and Athene in a tone of
perfect self-assurance declares:

Farewell, until I press
My feet upon thy blue enormous mane
And add thy Ocean to my growing empire. 2

The hint is quite clear here. As a result of the conflict,
Poseidon's empire of darkness, ignorance and evil will stand
illumined, enlightened and will be annexed to Athene's empire
of light, wisdom and good. The conflict thus will lead to
change, to progress, to evolution — the evolution from "a
semi-primitive temperament to a brighter intellectualism and
humanism." 3

The prologue of the play hints not only at the conflict
but also at the resultant change, not only at the clash of
thesis and anti-thesis, but also at the synthesis. Perseus,
"the Olympian's son", and the champion of Athene, is heading

2. Ibid., p. 10.
3. Ibid., p. 2.
fast towards Syria, the battle-ground of conflict between two mighty opposites, simultaneously with the fast approach of dawn to the country. Athene says:

Thou wingest, Perseus,
From northern snows to this fair sunny land,
Not knowing in the night what way thou wendest;
But the dawn comes and over earth's far rim
The round sun rises, as thyself shalt rise
On Syria and thy rosy Andromeda,
A thing of light.1

The play turns out to be what the prologue promises it to be — a drama of conflict and change and progress. Not only Perseus the Deliverer, but all the dramas of Sri Aurobindo, according to Prof. K.R.S. Iyengar, are dramas of conflict and change:

These are really dramas of life and love, of conflict and chance: of conflict that is at the heart of life, of change that is the result of the dialectic of the conflicting opposites — of 'thesis' and 'antithesis'.2

The plays depict the conflict inherent in life and also throw out suggestions, hint at possibilities, and invoke inspiring visions of the future.3 Perseus the Deliverer in particular is a play presaging man's evolutionary destiny.

The world of Perseus the Deliverer combines "poignant oppositions". It depicts the conflict of mighty opposites of

3. Idem.
various kinds and on various levels which throw into bold relief its inherent conflict. Zeus' mind-born daughter, Pallas Athene, is in conflict with Poseidon, who is "the fallen god become titanic or demonic, who would hold the earth in the old dark ways, the iron narrow laws and the little life-urges, the cruelty and blood sacrifice."¹ They fight actually through their champions. Athene is represented by Perseus, the son of Zeus, and Poseidon, by the sea-monsters. On the human plane Cepheus, the King of Syria, fights Polydason, the priest. On yet another plane, the psychological, the conflict is between man's higher self and his lower animal self; between enlightenment and superstition; between new ethics and old ethics; between semi-primitive temperament and bright intellectualism and humanism, between spirituality and materialism; between dark and violent life forces, or the blind nether forces, symbolised by Polydason and "the godhead lurking in man's secret soul" — between what Prof. Iyengar calls, the Devas and the Asuras.

The conflict between the opposites is grim, and it seems for some time that the forces of evil, aligned with Polydason, would succeed in their conspiracy to eliminate from the Syrian scene Andromeda, Iolaus, Cassiopea, Cepheus, etc., who represent the forces of good. But then comes Perseus, the divine representative, to intervene at the right time. He not only kills the

sea-monster to rescue Andromeda, but also frees from the demonic clutches of Polydaon her noble parents and brother, thus proving true the intuition of Cassiopea. When Iolaus is on the verge of cruel slaughter as a result of Polydaon's conspiracy and when armed men have surrounded the Syrian King and the Queen, Polydaon victoriously says:

Cepheus and Cassiopea, man and woman,
Not sovereigns now, you see what end they have
Who war upon the gods. 1

Cassiopea does not crynge or beg for mercy, but fearlessly answers:

There are other gods
Than thy Poseidon. They shall punish thee. 2

These other gods and the other powers, Andromeda had dreamed of, do exist and intervene at the right moment. Phineus, Therops, Dercetes, Perissus all develop differences with the priest and begin to fall apart. Not only Cassiopea, but also these accomplices of Polydaon feel that he is a madman and an inhuman monster. When Polydaon exults in his victory, thinking that Andromeda has been devoured by sea-monsters, Dercetes says:

This is a horrid and inhuman laughter,
Restrain thy humour, priest! My sword's uneasy. 3

To Therops, the priest's insistence on killing Iolaus and also

2. Idem.
3. Ibid., p. 169.
the King and the queen smacks of "a scandal in Poseidon's temple." He advises their exile as punishment. Dercetes also expresses himself against the monstrous ways of Polydaon as he feels that hell will be let loose on Syria if this "maniac" and "madman" is allowed to rule the country.

Perissus is right when he says that "the gods are at work and Iolaus shall not die." The falling apart of evil forces supporting Polydaon and his eventual isolation is, as it were, already at the instance of gods, Perseus has killed the sea-monster and lifted Andromeda "mightily from the cliff to heaven." Polydaon, however, is still not afraid of him and says:

Art thou a god? I am a greater, dreadfuller, Tremble and go from me: I need thee not.

The Syrian people who have been howling at the members of the royal family, demands their massacre and praising them in turns, welcome Perseus finally when he severs the bonds of Iolaus and restores to Cepheus his kingship. Polydaon still does not yield and threatens:

I have seen all and laughed. Iolaus, and thou, O Argive Perseus, You know not who I am. I have endured Your foolish transient triumph that you might feel

2. Ibid., p. 171.
3. Ibid., p. 168.
4. Ibid., p. 173.
My punishments more bitter-terrible
'Tis time, 'tis time. I will reveal myself
Your horror-staring eyes shall know me, princes,
When I hurl death and Ocean on your heads.1

Obviously, the man is frantic; defeat has turned him mad. It is quite befittingly that Perissus, the butcher, sees in the cruel monster his fellow-craftsman:

What, Polydaon! Good cheer, priest!
Roll not thy eyes: I am thy friend Perissus,
I am thy old loving school-mate; are we not now fellow-craftsmen, priest and butcher?2

The megalomaniac priest presently falls to the ground and dies. As Iolau sa Y's, "his own evil has destroyed him."3 He further comments:

The gods have punished him for his offences,
Ambition and a hideous cruelty
Ingenious in mere horror.4

But it is Perseus who best sums up the moral of the priest's megalomania and his lust for power. Perseus says:

This man for a few hours became the vessel
Of an occult and formidable Force
And through his form it did fierce terrible things
Unhuman: but his small and gloomy mind
And impure dark heart could not contain the Force.
It turned in him to madness and demonic
Huge longings. Then the Power withdrew from him
Leaving the broken incapable instrument,
And all its might was split from his body.5

1. Sri Aurobindo, Collected Plays, B.C.L. Vol. 6, p. 177.
2. Idem.
3. Ibid., p. 179.
5. Idem.
With Polydæon's death the way to peace and freedom for all
the people of Syria is cleared of the worst stumbling block.
Now is the time to let all—high or low, Tyranus or Smerdas—
have their deserts. Now is the time for Perseus' welcome by
the people of Syria and the king and the queen, and his wedding
to Andromeda. Cepheus says to Perseus:

'O welcome, brilliant victor, mighty Perseus!'
Saviour of Syria, angel of the gods,
Kind was the fate that led thee to our shores.1

There is Phineus who still tries to oppose the marriage of
Perseus to Andromeda; but Perseus turns him and all his men to
stone. This marks his final victory over the forces of evil in
Syria. Perseus, however, does not claim any credit for these
acts of heroism and simply ascribes them all to Athene. In the
beginning of the play he tells Iolaus:

Though great Athene breathes Olympian strength
Into my arms sometimes, I am no more
Than a brief mortal.2

Here towards the close of the play, he again says:

King, the Tyrians all are dead,
Nor need' st thou build them pyres nor dig them graves.
If any hereafter ask what perfect sculptor
Chiselled these forms in Syria's royal court,
Say then, "Athene, child armipotent
Of the Olympian, hewed by Perseus' hand
In one divine and careless stroke these statues.
To her give glory."3

Thus, the dark days of Syria come to an end. Thus suddenly end the evil befalling the Syrian royal family. Here Sri Aurobindo unmistakably suggests that all this happens largely as a result of divine descent to earth to rescue the forces of good. He shows that the propitious gods through their Deputies, like Perseus, rescue man from evil and facilitate his upward movement.\footnote{This is a vindication of one of the important postulates of his own evolutionary philosophy namely, descent of the Divine to help man's progress on the path of divinity, his movement towards self-realisation. Howsoever deadly might be the opposition of the nether forces to man's forward march, he must irresistibly move towards his higher self, to divinity, his ultimate destiny. This is the message of Perseus the Deliverer, where, after a grim resistance, the dire primitive cult of Syria is shown as yielding place to a new religion of bright intellectualism and deep humanism, thus making for the reign of broader minds and kindlier manners, which in turn must ensure the growth of human, mild and majestic.}

\footnote{1. After his victory over the sea-monster, Polydectes, etc., Perseus, in his long introduction to Syrians, says:}

Syrians, I am Perseus,
The mighty son of Zeus and Danae
The blood of gods is in my veins, the strength
Of gods is in my arm: Athene helps me.

\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots

What I have done, is by Athene's strength.

\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots

Even while I speak, the world has changed around you,
Syrians, the earth is calm, the heavens smile,
A mighty silence listens on the sea.
All this I have done, and yet not I, but one greater.
Such is Athene's might and theirs who serve her.

and merciful men, man's advance, in other words, to higher states of life and being.