The Rakshasas

(The Rakshasa, the violent kinetic Ego, establishes his claim to mastery of the world replacing the animal Soul,—to be followed by controlled and intellectualised but unregenerated Ego, the Asura. Each such type and level of consciousness sees the Divine in its own image and its level in Nature is sustained by a differing form of the World-Mother.)

“Glory and greatness and the joy of life,
Strength, pride, victorious force, whatever man
Desires, whatever the wild beast enjoys,
Bodies of women and the lives of men,
I claim to be my kingdom. I have force
My title to substantiate, and I seek
No crown unearned, no lordship undeserved.
Ask what austerity Thou wilt, Maker of man,
Expense of blood or labour or long years
Spent in tremendous meditations, lives
Upon Thy altar spent of brutes or men,
Or if with gold Thy favour purchasable
I may command, rich offerings to glut
Thy temples and Thy priests. I have a heart,
A hand for any mighty sacrifice,
A fiery patience in my vehement mood;
I will submit. But ask not this of me,
Meek silence and a pale imprisoned soul
Made colourless of its humanity;
Ask not the heart that quakes, the hand that spares.
What strength can give, not weakness, that demand.
O Rudra, O eternal Mahâdev,
Thou too art fierce and mighty, wrathful, bold,
Snuffing Thy winds for blood of sacrifice,
And angrily Thou rul’st a prostrate world.
O Râkshasa Almighty, look on me,
Rávan, the lord of all Thy Rákshasas,
Give me Thy high command to smite Thy foes;
But most I would afflict, chase and destroy
Thy devotees who traduce Thee, making Thee
A God of love, a God too sweet to rule.
I have the knowledge; what Thou art, I know,
And know myself, for Thou and I are one.”
So prayed the Lord of Lunca, and in Heaven
Sri Krishna smiled, the Friend of all mankind,
A smile of sweetness and divine delight,
And asked, “O Masters of the knowledge, Seers
Who help me by your thoughts to help mankind,
Hearken what Rávan cries against the stars,
Demanding earth for heritage. Advise,
Shall he then have it?” And a cry arose,
“He would root out the Brahmin from the earth,
Impose his dreadful Yoga on mankind,
And make the violent heart, the iron hand
Sovereign of all.” Sri Krishna made reply,
“From out Myself he went to do My will.
He has not lied, he has the knowledge. He
And I are one. How then shall I refuse?
Does it not say, the Veda that you know,
‘When one knows That, then whatso he desires,
It shall be his?’ And Atri sage replied,
“Let him then rule a season and be slain.”
And He who reigns, “Something you know, O Seers,
Not all My purpose. It is long decreed,
The Rákshasa shall rule the peopled earth.
He takes the brute into himself for man,
Yielding it offerings, while with grandiose thoughts
And violent aspirations he controls;
He purifies the demon in the race,
Slaying in wrath, not cruelty. Awhile
He puts the Vánara out of the world,
Accustoming to grandeur all mankind;
The Ifrit\(^1\) he rejects. Were he denied
His period, man could not progress. But since
He sees himself as Me, not Me in him,
And takes the life and body for the whole,
He cannot last. Therefore is Atri’s word
Accepted.” And before the Rákshasa,
Out of the terror of the sacrifice,
Naked and dark, with a blood-dripping sword
And dreadful eyes that seemed to burn the world,
Kálí the Rákshasi in flames arose.
“Demand a boon!” she cried, and all the gods
Trembled. “Give me the earth for my delight,
Her gods to be my slaves,” the Giant cried,
“Of strength and passion let me have my fill,
Of violence and pride.” “So let it be,”
She answered. “Shall it be eternal then?”
Rávan demanded and she thundered, “No!
For neither thou nor I are best nor last.
The Asúrí shall rise to fill my place,
The Asura thy children shall dethrone.
An aeon thou hast taken to evolve,
An aeon thou shalt rule. But since thy wish
I have denied, ask yet another boon.”
“Let this be mine, that when at last I sink,
Nor brute nor demon, man nor Titan’s hand,
Nor any lesser creature shall o’erthrow,
But only God Himself compel my fall.”
And Kálí answered, smiling terribly,
“It is decreed,” and laughing loud she passed.
Then Rávan from his sacrifice arose.

\(^1\) The Ifrit, the Djinn, is the demoniac element in Nature.