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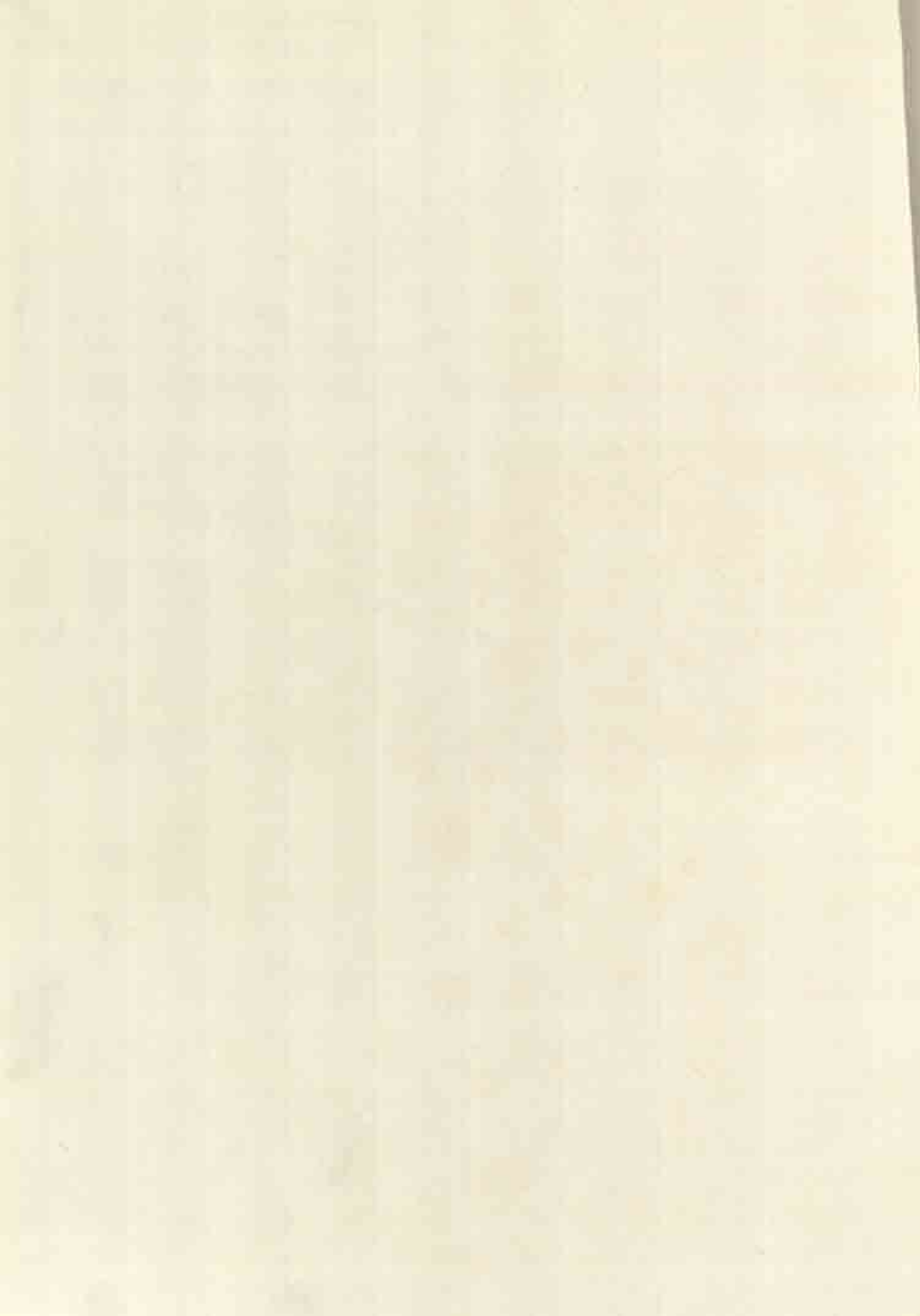
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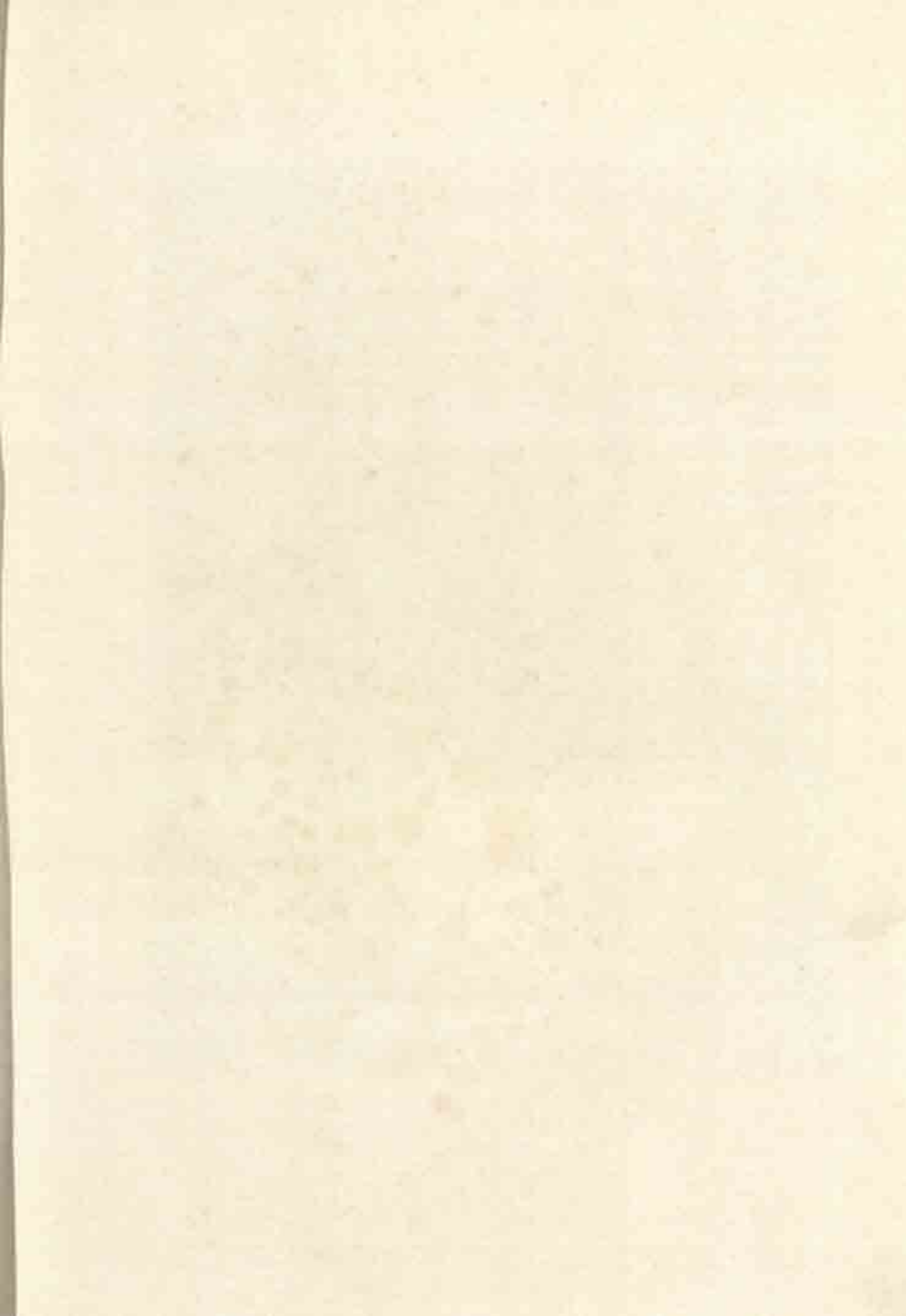
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THE ENGLISH WRITINGS OF
RABINDRANATH
TAGORE

VOLUME ONE

Poems





THE ENGLISH WRITINGS OF
RABINDRANATH
TAGORE

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Poems 81017

Edited by SISIR KUMAR DAS



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Das



SAHITYA AKADEMI

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Foreword

ALTHOUGH Rabindranath Tagore's reputation as a writer outside the Bengali-speaking world rests almost entirely on English translations, no attempt has been made yet to make his English works available to the interested readers. Sahitya Akademi, therefore, thought it extremely important to bring out a definitive edition of Tagore's works in English to project one of the greatest writers of our times, as a writer in English also.

The corpus of Tagore's writings in English is fairly large and diverse. He translated a large part of his Bengali poems and a few plays into English. He also translated a few poems of his contemporaries, and religious lyrics of medieval saints written both in Bengali and in Hindi. In addition to these translations, his original writings in English, mostly essays, form a substantial part of his total work. The present scheme is to make all his writings in English available in several volumes.

The first volume includes all books of the poems of Tagore published so far. The second volume will have the plays translated by Tagore and also the books of essays published during his lifetime. The third, and probably the last, volume will contain all other writings of Tagore, scattered in different journals and yet to be collected, and also those lectures and addresses not included in the first two volumes.

It is necessary to point out that the present scheme is to bring out the English writings of Tagore and not translations of Tagore by anyone else. Therefore, several translations of Tagore's works, some with his approval, published by Macmillan, will not be included here. This is not a reflection on the merit of these works: they have a role in the history of Tagore's reception. We are guided by the compulsion of the scheme which aims to collect Tagore's own English writings.

The works included in the first volume have been presented in four sections. The first section has all the major poetical works of Tagore, arranged in chronological order. Two interesting works of Tagore, *Stray Birds* and *Fireflies*, have been arranged in a separate section not only for their structural similarity but more for their linguistic character, as they contain both translations and original writings, and one is not always certain about their real identity. The third section comprises a poem, *The Child*, it being the only major poem of Tagore written directly in English and published as a separate book. The last section contains Tagore's translation of the poems of Kabir. The four sections, therefore, represent four different categories of Tagore's poems and translations. The appendices contain *The Fugitive* and *Lekhan* (1926), a bilingual work.

FOREWORD

The Akademi is grateful to Professor Sisir Kumar Das for preparing this edition of the English writings of Rabindranath Tagore and also for his excellent introduction and annotations.

New Delhi, 1993

U.R. ANANTHA MURTHY
President, Sahitya Akademi

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

SAHITYA AKADEMI feels genuinely excited to present this authentic collection of Rabindranath Tagore's works in English to admirers and critics of Tagore all over the world. These works from diverse sources are being brought together in a single anthology for the first time. The book has been designed to present Tagore's original works in English as well as his translations of his own works into English. This first volume of a three-volume anthology presents Tagore's poems collected during his lifetime. The second volume will feature the translations of his plays and his books of essays in English, while the third is expected to be an unprecedented collection of his hitherto uncollected works that lie scattered in journals and periodicals. We feel confident that Tagore readers everywhere will welcome this unique venture undertaken by the Sahitya Akademi in pure public interest.

INDRA NATH CHOUDHURI
Secretary

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

WE ARE grateful to Rabindra Bhavan, Visva-Bharati, and particularly to its librarian, Supriya Ray, for making the first editions of several works of Tagore available to us. We owe a debt of gratitude to Swapan Majumdar, Professor of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University, and to Sankha Ghosh, renowned poet and the greatest living authority on Tagore, for their unfailing guidance. Buddhadev Bhattacharya has helped us with his usual professional competence and a rare sense of involvement. We warmly thank Indira Chandrasekhar for editing the manuscript with meticulous care. Finally I thank Sahitya Akademi for very kindly entrusting me with this important task.

SISIR KUMAR DAS
Editor



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Introduction

I

THE BEGINNING of Rabindranath Tagore's career as a writer in English was sudden and without any particular creative compulsions. Till the publication of his first English work *Gitanjali* (Song Offerings), published by the India Society, London, in 1912, Rabindranath, though a celebrity in Bengal, was an obscure figure outside the Bengali-speaking area in India, and totally unknown in the West. At that time he was fifty-one years old and his place in the history of Bengali literature was firmly assured. The prolific writer that he was, he had already produced more than twenty odd books of verse, nearly a dozen plays, a considerable number of essays and short stories and three major novels. Despite severe criticism from certain groups, which he faced throughout his life for his bold and perceptive experimentation with different literary forms and techniques, and for his ideological orientation, he was regarded as the greatest Bengali writer ever born. Brahmabandhab Upadhyay (1861–1907), a radical political activist of Bengal, described Rabindranath as 'the world-poet of Bengal' in the editorial of his journal *Sophia* dated 1 September 1900. 'If ever the Bengali language is studied by foreigners,' he wrote prophetically, 'it will be for the sake of Rabindra. He is a world-poet. He is like the Devadaru which has its roots deep down, down the lowlands but which threatens to pierce the sky—such is its loftiness. He will be ranked amongst those seers who have come to know the essence of beauty through pain and anguish.' Upadhyay was not alone in making such claims about Tagore. Ten years later a younger contemporary of Tagore rapturously declared during a public reception given to the poet during his fiftieth birthday: '*Jagat kabi sabhāy morā tomār kori garba*' (We boast of you in the assembly of the poets of the world).

It is interesting, therefore, to know why Tagore did feel obliged to write in English at all at that particular stage of his life. Unlike some of his predecessors and contemporaries, Tagore did not have any ambition for fame as a writer in English. He had visited England twice, responded to European literature and music enthusiastically, he knew the anglicized elite of Calcutta quite intimately, but in his choice of language for his

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literary expression he had no dilemma. He wrote exclusively in Bengali.

Yet his international reputation rests—and in all probability will rest in the foreseeable future—entirely on *Gitanjali* in English and other works of his in English that followed it. Even in many parts of India, not to speak of the rest of the world, he is known mainly through these English translations or translations of these translations.

The tremendous enthusiasm with which *Gitanjali* was greeted by many distinguished poets and thinkers in England, including W.B. Yeats who wrote a brilliant introduction to it, prompted Rabindranath to translate more of his writings. During the next ten years he published more than a dozen books of prose, poems and plays in quick succession in response to the growing interest of western readers in his writings. Undoubtedly he is the only major writer in the literary history of any country who decided to translate his own works to reach a larger audience. His decision to become his own translator, and subsequently to write in English, though not entirely beneficial to him, was nonetheless a momentous one. The Nobel Prize in Literature was awarded to him in 1913 for *Gitanjali* (1912) and *The Gardener* (1913). The citation of the award praised his 'profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse by which, with consummate skill, he has made his poetic thought expressed in his own English words, a part of the literature of the West.' Whether he indeed made his poetic thought a part of the literature of the West is a different proposition. But with his English translations his transition from a Bengali writer to a world figure became complete.

II

It may not be irrelevant to say a few words about the circumstances that led Tagore to be the most reputed, as well as a controversial, bilingual author of our time. Tagore planned his third visit to England in May 1912. He was due to sail from Calcutta on 19 March, but the voyage had to be postponed because of a sudden illness. Extremely disappointed, he retired to Shelaidah, his estate on the banks of the river Padma, where he had spent many days of his youth and written some of his memorable poems and short stories. There, Tagore started translating the poems of the Bengali *Gitanjali* (1910) obviously for some readers in England, who might have been aware of his reputation in Bengal. In a letter to his niece Indira Devi, which is worth quoting, Tagore tells the story of the genesis of the translation of the *Gitanjali* poems:¹

You have alluded to the English translation of *Gitanjali*, I cannot imagine to the day how people came to like it so much. That I cannot write English is such a patent fact that I never had even the vanity to feel ashamed of it. If anybody wrote an English note asking me to tea, I did not feel equal to answering it. Perhaps

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you think that by now I have got over that delusion. By no means. That I have written in English seems to be the delusion. On the day I was to board the ship, I fainted due to my frantic efforts at leave-taking and the journey itself was postponed. Then I went to Shelaidah to take rest. But unless the brain is fully active, one does not feel strong enough to relax completely; so the only way to keep myself calm was to take up some light work.

It was then the month of Chaitra (March-April), the air was thick with the fragrance of mango-blossoms and all hours of the day were delirious with the song of birds. When a child is full of vigour, he does not think of his mother. It is only when he is tired that he wants to nestle in her lap. That was exactly my position. With all my heart and with all my holiday I seemed to have settled comfortably in the arms of Chaitra, without missing a particle of light, its air, its scene and its song. In such a state one cannot remain idle. It is an odd habit of mine, as you know, that when the air strikes my bones, they tend to respond in music. Yet I had not the energy to sit down and write anything new. So I took up the poems of *Gitanjali*² and set myself to translate them one by one. You may wonder why such a crazy ambition should possess one in such a weak state of health. But believe me, I did not undertake this task in a spirit of reckless bravado. I simply felt an urge to recapture through the medium of another language the feelings and sentiments which had created such a feast of joy within me in the days gone by.

The pages of a small exercise book came to be filled gradually, and with it in my pocket I boarded the ship. The idea of keeping it in my pocket was that when my mind became restless on the high seas, I could recline on a deck-chair and set myself to translate one or two poems from time to time. And that is what actually happened. From one exercise book I passed on to another. Rothenstein already had an inkling of my reputation as a poet from another Indian friend. Therefore, when in the course of conversations he expressed a desire to see some of my poems, I handed him my manuscript with some diffidence. I could hardly believe the opinion he expressed after going through it. He then made over the manuscript to Yeats. The story of what followed is known to you. From this explanation of mine you will see that I was not responsible for the offence, which was due mainly to the force of circumstance.

This account of the genesis of the English *Gitanjali* recorded with exemplary modesty is certainly of great documentary value. A careful examination of facts available from other sources, however, contradicts some of the statements made by Tagore, and certainly throws more light on a few points not clearly explained in the letter. Although the translations began rather suddenly without any particular reason as suggested by Tagore in this letter, that exercise was really the culmination of efforts started at least a decade earlier.

The history of English translations of Tagore began as early as around 1890 when he himself translated a poem entitled '*Nishpal Kāmanā*' (Fruitless Desire).³ This is, however, a stray and solitary example without any follow-up. From the beginning of the twentieth century, however, Tagore gave some thought to the translation of his writings mainly because of the

INTRODUCTION

persuasion of his scientist-friend Jagadish Chandra Bose (1859–1937) who became widely known in Europe for his sensational investigations into the response of plants, recorded in his work *Responses in the Living and Non-Living* (1902). Bose, an ardent admirer of Tagore's stories, wrote towards the end of the year 1900 from London, 'I will not allow you to remain in obscurity in the countryside.'⁴ He himself translated three stories of Tagore but failed to get them published in England. It was around this time that a few admirers of Tagore in Bengal, too, showed equal keenness in presenting him to a larger audience outside Bengal. Bipin Chandra Pal (1858–1932), one of the renowned political figures of that time, translated four stories of Tagore, all of which were published in *New India*, a journal edited by him, between 1901 and 1902. Pramathalal Sen (1866–1930), nephew of the great Brahmo leader Keshab Chandra Sen (1838–84), also translated a few poems of Tagore. These attempts, however, were not sustained for long and the enthusiasm of his friends was shortlived.

But between the years 1909 and 1912 there was a sudden emergence of translators of Tagore, their efforts more concerted and well-planned. Among them were Roby Dutt (1883–1918), a noted Indian–English poet-translator;⁵ Ajit Kumar Chakravarti (1886–1918), a gifted teacher of English at Santiniketan, and also the first Bengali critic to write a book on Tagore; Ananda K. Coomaraswamy (1877–1947), the Sri Lankan-born great exponent of Indian art and aesthetics; and Sister Nivedita (1867–1911), the Irish-born disciple of Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902). Between December 1909 and June 1912 at least fifteen short stories and nine poems appeared in *The Modern Review*, the most well-known Calcutta journal of the time, edited by Ramananda Chatterji (1865–1943). Later researches in this field reveal that not only did his admirers start translating Tagore in great earnest, but, what is more interesting and significant, a group of young Bengali scholars, then in England, joined in the exercise of projecting Tagore to readers outside Bengal. The translation activities, then, began to be intensified more or less simultaneously in Calcutta and in London.⁶ We do not know the nature of the response of the British audience to the translations made by Roby Dutt. Tagore himself did not like them. Ajit Kumar Chakravarti went to Manchester College, Oxford, in September 1910 for higher education but had to return home within a few months because of his ill health. Even during his brief stay at Oxford he translated a few poems of Tagore for his British friends, one of them being R.F. Rattray, who was perhaps, as he himself thought later, 'the first European to become acquainted with Tagore's poems in English'.⁷ Soon after his return to Santiniketan, Chakravarti met Coomaraswamy who came there in February 1911 and stayed for some time. Not only did Coomaraswamy encourage Chakravarti to continue with his translations but he successfully persuaded Tagore himself to collaborate with him in translating his poems into English, two of which were published in *The Modern Review* that year.⁸

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Coomaraswamy quoted these two poems in an essay entitled 'Poems of Rabindranath Tagore' included in his book *Art and Swadeshi* (Madras, 1911).

Another incident, apparently a stray one, needs mention here: the visit of William Rothenstein (1872-1945) to Calcutta. Rothenstein, the man who was going to play a great role in the career of Tagore, was known in India for his deep interest in Indian art and particularly for his involvement in the establishment of the India Society in London in 1910. It was established for the defence and projection of Indian fine arts.⁹ Through E.V. Havell (1861-1934), former Principal, School of Art, Calcutta, and a most spirited champion of Indian art, Rothenstein came to know of Abanindranath (1871-1961) and Gaganendranath (1864-1938), two nephews of Tagore, already well-known figures in contemporary Indian art. Rothenstein came to Calcutta in January 1911 mainly at the invitation of these two artists—Abanindranath and Gaganendranath—and visited the ancestral house of the Tagores where he met the poet too. Twenty-two years later in his memoirs Rothenstein wrote that he met the celebrated nephews of Tagore but he regretted that 'that this uncle was one of the remarkable men of his time no one gave me a hint.'¹⁰ It is rather strange, to say the least, because it is difficult to believe that Coomaraswamy, who sailed in the same boat in October 1910 during Rothenstein's journey to India, did not introduce the poet in the course of their conversations about India. However, we know that Coomaraswamy requested him to visit Santiniketan 'to know Rabindranath in his own world'—as did Abanindranath himself. Rothenstein had a short and busy schedule in Calcutta but he found enough time to make a few sketches of the poet. Moreover, he met several admirers of Tagore including Ramananda Chatterji, editor of *The Modern Review*. What is crucial in the history of Tagore's English translations is that soon after his return to London, Rothenstein wrote to Tagore: 'It has been for me a real privilege and joy to have had the advantage of meeting you . . .' and 'you will perhaps remember that I shall be grateful for any translation of poems and stories which may appear in any time'.¹¹ This was the beginning of a friendship that changed Tagore's career altogether.

It was about that time, probably before he wrote this letter, that Rothenstein met Pramathalal Sen, the Oxford-educated Brahmo leader, and Brajendranath Seal (1864-1938), a scholar of encyclopaedic range, both great admirers of Tagore, then living in London. In all probability Rothenstein found his impressions about the poet strongly vindicated by the enthusiastic references to Tagore by these two scholars. On the evidence of Rothenstein's memoirs and a letter of Tagore written to Ajit Chakravarti,¹² it is more or less clear that Rothenstein who happened to read the translation of a Tagore story in *The Modern Review*¹³ inquired about his other writings: stories and poems. It encouraged Pramathalal Sen to request Tagore to send some of his poems which had already been ren-

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dered into English by Ajit Chakravarti. Tagore responded favourably. He in turn asked Chakravarti to send them with necessary editorial comments.

Rothenstein mentions an 'exercise book containing translations of poems by Rabindranath made by Ajit Chakravarti' which he received, in all probability, before the end of the year. And one can also guess he was impressed by them and talked about them to his close friends. He and his friend A.H. Fox Strangway, Secretary of the newly founded India Society, contemplated to publish some of those translations in various British literary magazines. It was around this time that Tagore had planned to sail to England but the trip was postponed. When he was finally ready to leave Calcutta in March the following year (i.e. 1912), that journey too had to be postponed for a few months due to his sudden illness, as mentioned in his letter to Indira Devi already quoted.

Two very important facts emerge from the activities of Tagore admirers during this period: one, a demand for translations of his writings, first of the stories and then of the poems; and two, Tagore's own realization of the necessity for translations of his works. His friends in Calcutta had initiated the task and his friends in England joined them. One can see that a pressure was slowly and steadily building up. Tagore responded to the requests for more translations with calm detachment, without any involvement. His collaboration with Coomaraswamy was more a polite gesture to a distinguished scholar. He preferred to leave the job of translation to Ajit Chakravarti and, it appears, he was doing it admirably. But when the request from Rothenstein for publication of the translations coincided, more or less, with his plan of visiting England Tagore must have given more serious thought to translations of his works. Never before this had he made any comments on the translations of his poems, but suddenly in a letter dated 14 May 1912 to Pramathalal Sen he articulated some of his observations in respect of the translations of his writings. None of the existing translations met with his approval: he disliked the translations of Roby Dutt; he had reservations about Ajit Chakravarti's translations too. He strongly disapproved of all metrical translations and wanted his poems to be translated into lucid prose. But what is most crucial in this letter is the first indication of his desire to translate his own poems. He wrote, 'if possible I will try it myself when I reach England'.¹⁴ In fact when he wrote this he had already started the enterprise.

Two factors, then, contributed to the emergence of Tagore as his own translator. One, the pressure from his admirers, first in India and later in England, for more translations of his writings; and two, his growing unhappiness with the translations done by others. It was a kind of creative impulse that had been simmering within him for a long time and finally burst into the open. For about three years a preparation had been going on, silently, which culminated in his momentous decision to be his own translator.

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III

While Tagore was preparing himself for a new career throughout his journey to England, his friends in England were getting ready to receive him ceremoniously. They, led by Rothenstein, planned a public dinner in honour of Tagore. Another close friend of Rothenstein, not yet identified, proposed informally that Tagore should be awarded an Oxford degree, which was turned down by Lord Curzon, then Chancellor of Oxford. It may be mentioned that Lord Curzon was Governor-General of India when Bengal was partitioned for the first time, at his behest, and Tagore had offended him by voicing his protest against the bifurcation of Bengal. It is also important to mention that Rothenstein sent a few poems of Tagore, translated by Ajit Chakravarti, to *The Nation*, planned in such a manner that one of them, 'The Country of Found-Everything', was published on 15 June 1912, a day before Tagore reached London.¹⁵ All these indicate that Rothenstein took every care to introduce the poet to his friends and to the British public in a befitting manner.

The excitement and joy with which Tagore began translating his own poems in the quiet surroundings of rural Bengal continued throughout his long voyage. Once he reached London things began to happen with amazing rapidity. Within a day of his arrival in London the *Gitanjali* manuscript was lost in the subway by his son Rathindranath. Luckily it was retrieved from the lost-property office, and Tagore promptly delivered the manuscript to Rothenstein. Rothenstein who had met the poet two years ago at Jorasanko and discovered in him, as he wrote in his memoirs, 'an inner charm as well as great physical beauty . . .', must have been very moved by the poems Tagore gave him to read. On the evening of 7 July 1913¹⁶ he arranged a meeting of some of his friends which included May Sinclair, Ernest Rhys, Henry Nevinson, Charles Truvelan, W.B. Yeats and Fox Strangway at his Hampstead house where Yeats read out some of the poems in his beautiful voice. Yeats, deeply moved by these poems, recorded his impressions later in the introduction he wrote for *Gitanjali*.

I have carried the manuscript of these translations about with me for days, reading it in railway trains, or on the top of omnibuses and in restaurants, and I have often had to close it lest some stranger would see how much it moved me. These lyrics—which are in the original, my Indians tell me, full of subtlety of rhythm, of untranslatable delicacies of colour, of metrical invention—display in their thought a world I have dreamed of all my life long. The work of a supreme culture, they yet appear as much the growth of the common soil as the grass and the rushes.

Those present that evening at Rothenstein's Hampstead house were ecstatic in their appreciation of those poems: theirs was indeed a unanimous chorus of acclamation for a great poet. Within a few weeks of his arrival Tagore became the centre of attraction of the most powerful literary élite

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in England.¹² The India Society decided to bring out a limited edition of *Gitanjali*, the name given by Tagore, and the first edition was published in November 1912. Tagore left for the USA in October 1912 but came to know of the highly favourable reviews of the book that appeared in the British press soon after its publication.

The immediate response of British literary circles to Tagore was so overwhelmingly warm that even before the publication of *Gitanjali*, Tagore was enthused to translate more of his poems during his brief and hectic stay in England from mid-June to the last week of October, and they were published the following year by Macmillan and Co. under the titles *The Gardener* and *The Crescent Moon*. Perhaps that was not enough; some of his young admirers¹³ quickly translated *Dākghar* and *Rājā*, two major plays of Tagore, with great enthusiasm. When he returned to London in April 1913 from the USA several of his manuscripts, therefore, were ready for the press. The crowning success of his new career, however, came a few months later, on 13 November 1913. News of the award of the Nobel Prize to Tagore reached Santiniketan on that day and it was received by teachers and students there with great joy and pride.

IV

The historical predicament that almost forced Tagore to become a bilingual author needs serious attention. Since the beginning of English education in India many writers faced a crisis of choice of language which deepened with the growth of the population of English-speaking Indians and with increasing familiarity with the English language and literature. Several writers before Tagore, Michael Madhusudan Datta (1824–73), Bankim Chandra Chatterji (1838–94) and Toru Dutt (1856–77), in particular, wrote in English. While Toru died at the age of nineteen without passing through any discernible tension in respect of her choice of language—she wrote in English and French—both Michael Madhusudan and Bankim Chandra finally switched to Bengali. The nineteenth-century debate on the possibility of creating a literature in an alien language had lost much of its potency by the beginning of the twentieth century, which witnessed the rise of Sarojini Naidu (1879–1950), Manmohan Ghosh (1869–1924) and Sri Aurobindo (1872–1950), and a little later the three distinguished novelists, Mulk Raj Anand (1905), R.K. Narayan (1906) and Raja Rao (1908). But Tagore belonged to that group of Indians who never faced any kind of dilemma over language; he accepted the mother-tongue as the only and inevitable medium of creative expression.

In his foreword to a collection¹⁴ of poems written in English by Bengalis including Toru Dutt, Romesh Chander Dutt, Manmohan Ghosh and others, Tagore described these poems as illustrations of imitative efforts of the Bengalis passionately responding to western literature, and asserted that

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'our literature' (i.e. Bengali literature) has finally discovered its 'natural channel in the mother-tongue'. Tagore's description of the mother-tongue as the natural channel of literary expression will be seriously challenged today by many Indians who have made English their own, who have demonstrated their ability to handle that language with the competence and sensibility of the native speaker, and who simply do not believe in the natural efficacy of the mother-tongue. The dilemma of linguistic choice in the nineteenth century originated not only because of the western-educated Indian's attraction for the language of his master, but also because of his doubts about the adequacy of his mother-tongue as a medium for the new sensibilities acquired by him. The issue of the inadequacy of Indian languages as the media of new and complex emotions was soon proved erroneous by the growth of a new and vibrant literature in those languages. The attraction of English as a language of the ruling West, however, remained, and still remains, a colonial legacy.

This attraction, however, cannot be explained fully and satisfactorily only in terms of the colonial predicament. The issue of linguistic choice of the Indian writer was also part of a larger problem involving a power relation between the major and minor languages. By a 'major' language I do not mean only a language spoken by a large number of people, spoken over a large territory, or a language rich in literature and philosophy. To achieve the status of a major language, it must be associated with power: political, economic and ideological. None of the Indian languages, despite their long and distinguished literary history and enormously large number of speakers, is a 'major' language. An Indian writer, that is a writer who writes in an Indian language either by choice or by accident, is fated to be unknown to the rest of the world irrespective of his literary accomplishments, unless he is translated into a 'major' language. English came to India not as the language of Shakespeare and Milton and the Bible alone, but primarily as the language of the East India Company promising new financial prospects and political patronage. Even the teaching of English literature was part of a larger colonial project. India had its bilingualism or multilingualism even before the introduction of the English language. But there was a hierarchy of languages each having its importance as a means of communication, each having more or less clearly defined social functions. English being the language of the ruling power altered that hierarchy in such a manner that the relation between it and other Indian languages was turned into a relation of opposition between a 'major' and a 'minor' language. This opposition was later redefined as that of 'international' and 'national', 'national' and 'regional', by the ruling elite of India after independence.

It is not that the major-minor opposition is true only of colonial India and the post-colonial third world; it is also true to some extent of the 'smaller' nations of Europe. Being less powerful, politically and otherwise,

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these nations could not afford to be monolingual and were obliged to learn a 'major' language. However, very few writers from Romania or Poland, Czechoslovakia or Bulgaria, Holland or Scandinavia, Greece or Iceland would have thought of abandoning their 'mother-tongue' in preference to a major language like English, or French, or German. Fortunately for them there always existed a group of intermediaries including translators, critics and publishers who tried to overcome the constraints of 'minor' languages. The functions of such intermediaries have been patronized by the major languages, mainly because they are components of the western cultural universe. The Indian situation is entirely different in this respect. India was not only a part of the exotic Orient but also a colony. The Orientalists, of course, translated ancient works, but their interest, with a few exceptions as usual, was not exactly literary; the Sanskrit or Tamil texts that were translated for the western audience did not go beyond a microscopic community. There was hardly any attempt by the western scholars to translate the vast literary treasure that India had, or even to acquaint the western public about its nature and quality. That task, therefore, was left to Indians themselves. While it is the normal practice all over the world to translate foreign texts into one's own language and seldom is the practice reversed, in India, literatures composed in 'minor' languages were, and still are, expected to be translated by Indians themselves into a 'major' language. Tagore's faith in the mother-tongue being the natural channel of literature remained unshaken, but he had to come to terms finally with the major-minor linguistic opposition that conditioned India's colonial history. We do not know of any author of his stature in any one of the European literatures who would think of translating his own work into another language.

What is important is that Tagore did not surrender totally to a language of power but continued to remain a bilingual writer till the end of his life. Again, we do not know of any writer in the history of literature who wrote so much in an alien language and yet remained as prolific and as important in his mother-tongue as he was before he became a bilingual writer.

V

Tagore's image as a preacher or prophet almost coincided with his emergence as a poet with a new voice in the western world. These two images remained distinct only for a 'brief period' before the former began to dominate the latter, and finally the two got rolled into one. These two roles have clear and distinct linguistic manifestations: poetry and prose. The genesis of Tagore as a prose writer in English is intimately connected with his role as a preacher or a spokesman of modern India, which began almost simultaneously with his new career as a translator. The other inte-

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resting point to note is that his role as a prophet or spokesman of modern India is also very intimately related with his travels abroad and later with his travels in India.

Before he left India in May 1912 for his third visit to England, in an address to the inmates of Santiniketan he described that journey as a pilgrimage, a journey without any particular mission. It was a time when the political agitation in Bengal was gaining momentum. Only a few years earlier during the movement against the bifurcation of Bengal Tagore had taken an active part in voicing the anger and pain of the people whom he mobilized with moving words and haunting music; but then he got disillusioned with the twists and turns of politics and retired to the quietness of Santiniketan. The years between 1906 and 1912 constituted one of the most satisfying and radiant phases of his creative life. Not only did he write some of his finest lyrics, included in *Kheyā* (1906) and *Gītāñjali* (1910), and two plays, *Rājā* (1910) and *Dākghar* (1912), both unique in conception and structure and theatrical possibilities, but also the novel *Gorā* (1910), a work of epic dimension recording the tense moral and political struggle of modern India. Despite his intense patriotism Tagore did not share either the uncritical adulation of the Indian past or the militant nationalism denouncing the West—both inevitable in the existing historical situation. To describe the voyage to the West as a spiritual journey, a pilgrimage, therefore, is quite significant. He undertook a new cultural project without fully realizing its obligations at that time, but in all earnest, to discover the 'spiritual strength' of the western civilization. Later, pilgrimage became the recurring metaphor of all his travels abroad.

In each of his visits abroad Tagore undoubtedly gained new experiences; his thought and expression acquired new meaning and power. But with this journey in 1912, almost unknowingly, he assumed a new role for himself, the kind of role that Swami Vivekananda, before him, had played so splendidly. Tagore did not have any plan to visit America when he left Calcutta. He wanted to spend a well-deserved vacation in London. But when he realized the impossibility of getting there the rest and quietness he was longing for, he was persuaded to leave London and spend some time at Urbana, Illinois, where his son Rathindranath was studying. He was happy in the quiet surroundings of the beautiful university campus.²⁰ To begin with, he had 'uninterrupted leisure' in that place. But being a man destined to be followed by fame he quickly became the centre of attraction of a small community in the university that almost dragged him out of his pensive isolation. Within ten days of his arrival the local Unitarians (some of whom were familiar with the activities of the Brahmo Samaj in general and of Devendranath, father of the poet, in particular), invited him to speak at the Unity Club. Tagore was asked—and he agreed—to speak on religious themes; he delivered four lectures. Thus began a new career for Tagore.

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It is not that Tagore did not enjoy that role. At home he had regularly been speaking and writing on different aspects of religion in his capacity as a member of the Adi Brahma Samaj and founder of the school at Santiniketan, and his sermons delivered at the prayer meetings at Santiniketan were collected and published in several volumes. 'The burden of the new work', therefore, in the words of his biographer, 'was not unpleasant for him.' But what needs greater attention is, to quote his biographer again, 'he [Tagore] discovered that in England he spent time in translating [his] poems and plays; in America in writing prose. Strangely, during his six month long stay in America he wrote only one poem.'²¹

Tagore's reception as a poet in America was partly hindered by his new role, that of a religious thinker. In December 1912 six of his poems were published in *Poetry* of Chicago, at the instance of Ezra Pound, then secretary to W.B. Yeats. That must have created some interest in Indian poetry in America and the poets and critics would have liked to hear about Tagore's views on poetry. But when Tagore visited Chicago after several postponements, in response to the invitation of Harriet Monroe, the editor of *Poetry*, and stayed at Harriet Moody's house, he did not speak on literature as everyone expected, but on 'Ideals of the Ancient Civilization of India' and 'The Problems of Evil', at the Abraham Lincoln Center. He was invited to the Congress of the National Federation of Religious Liberals held at Rochester, and later to Harvard by Professor James Houghton Wood at the Department of Philosophy to deliver a series of lectures. All these lectures were mainly responsible for the emergence of the image of religious preacher or mystic which became sharper and stronger during his subsequent visits to America.

The American lectures were collected and published by Macmillan and Co. in October 1913 under the title *Sādhanā*, the first book of essays in English by Tagore. From now on his writings in English began to flow in two streams: (1) translations of his poems, and (2) essays and discourses directly written in English. The award of the Nobel Prize that made Tagore a celebrity all over the world, including in India, also created new responsibilities for him. Invitations from various organizations exerted pressure upon him to write more in English than perhaps he wanted to. At least ten books of his essays in English were published before his death and a large number of writings, in the form of prefaces and forewords, speeches and addresses, that he prepared and published remain scattered in different places and are yet to be collected. This is not to suggest, however, that the prose he wrote primarily in response to external demands are of topical interest and of little value. On the contrary, many of these books would make any writer proud of their power and beauty. But it is the difference in the genesis of the two categories of Tagore's writings in English, the translations and the original work, that makes them so conspicuously divergent. The former is the culmination of long and

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intermittent efforts to present his poetic world to a foreign audience, the latter the fruits of a new responsibility suddenly imposed upon him.

VI

The exaltation of Tagore by the Anglo-American world was shortlived. It has been often alleged, not without justification, that the poor quality of translation was primarily responsible for the eclipse of his fame in Europe and America. The charges of banality, irritating obviousness and insipid, cloying rhetoric made against the translations by him (as well as by others with his approval) are too well known to reiterate.²² Yet it is with these works that he overwhelmed Europe; and some of the finest poets and critics of this century joined in the lusty chorus of his praise. I would like to quote the observations of two western admirers of Tagore, both of whom had limited access to his original writings in Bengali, only to indicate the growing uneasiness with his English works despite the beauty of *Gitanjali* which is more or less undisputed. Edward Thompson²³ wrote in 1926:

It is one of the most surprising things in the world's literature that such a mastery over an alien tongue ever came to any man. Conrad conquered our language more completely; but he began to attack it in his teens, whereas Rabindranath was over fifty before 'I began my courtship of your tongue'. . . .

. . . his real reputation began to decline, almost as soon as it reached its height. . . . Rabindranath's loss of reputation to me is a distressing thing, yet I think the poet himself and his publishers are almost entirely to blame. Very grave mistakes were made. *Gitanjali* was a selling proposition, as it deserved to be. So book after book was hurried out, almost fortuitously, and flung at the public. After *Gitanjali* came *The Gardener*. . . . This gave pleasure to many. But the word had gone round that he was a 'mystic'. . . . *The Crescent Moon* followed, and then the English *Sadhana*. His fate was sealed.²⁴

About fifty years later Mary Lago, an American scholar of Bengali literature, also complained about the translations and about the method of preparation of the English works of Tagore:

In view of Tagore's importance in world literary history, it is also fair to note that the English collections of 1912 to 1918 seem to have been prepared with a peculiar lack of imagination about the range of interest that might be taken or encouraged, both then and in the future, in the sources of these poems which mark so clearly the start of a new era in East-West cultural exchange.²⁵

The main objections that the Tagore scholars raised, namely, the frequent insertions in his English translations of 'pretty-pretty nonsense', as Thompson puts it,²⁶ and the 'fundamental assumption that the essential East would remain East and the essential West would remain West', as Lago complains, are undoubtedly valid. If Tagore's image of the mystic was in

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conformity with the oriental stereotype constructed by the western man. Tagore, too, unfortunately addressed the western stereotype as perceived by him. Thompson wrote regarding his (Tagore's) translations that 'his treatment of his western public has sometimes amounted to an insult to their intelligence. He has carefully selected such simple, sweet things as he appears to think they can appreciate.' The same allegation was made by the great Tagore admirer Victoria Ocampo, who has narrated one incident which is worth quoting in full.

'It is nearly tea-time,' I said, 'but before going down, please do translate this poem for me.' Leaning over the pages spread out before him, I could see, undecipherable, like the traces of birds' feet on the sand, the delicate, mysterious patterns of the Bengali characters. Tagore took up the page and started translating, literally, he told me. What he read, hesitating sometimes, seemed to me tremendously enlightening. It was as if by miracle, or chance, I had entered into direct contact, at last, with the poetic material (or raw material) of the written thing without having on the pair of gloves translations always are—gloves that blunt our sense of touch and prevent our taking hold of the words with sensitive bare hands, all-important words, because only the poet can build with them a fragile bridge between the intangible and the tangible, between the intangible reality of poetry and the tangible unreality of our matter-of-fact daily life.

I asked Tagore to put the English version into writing later. On the next day he gave it to me, written in his beautiful English handwriting. I read the poem in his presence and could not conceal my disappointment. 'But such and such things you read to me yesterday are not here,' I reproached him, 'why did you suppress them? They were the centre, the heart of the poem.' He replied that he thought that would not interest westerners. The blood rose to my cheeks as if as I had been slapped. Tagore had, of course, answered as he did because he was convinced of being right, never dreaming that he could hurt me. I told him with a vehemence I seldom permitted myself with him (though impetuosity is natural to me) that for once he was terribly mistaken.²⁷

Tagore realized the extent of the damage he had himself caused to his reputation at a very late stage. He tried to amend it but without any success. His anxiety and anguish for his English works were so great—letters written to Amiya Chakravarti²⁸ in 1934 are the evidence—that almost frantically he wanted to stop reprints of some of the works for ever. 'I have done great injustice to the translations', writes Tagore in a letter to Chakravarti (dated 23 October 1934), 'I could be so careless and insolent simply because they were my own writings.' In another letter he writes, 'most of the poems of *Fruit-Gathering* and *Lover's Gift* are obsolete. . . . They must be abolished for good. Quite a few poems are to be deleted from *The Fugitive* too' (28 November 1934). He who had so stubbornly refused to accept a few changes suggested by Robert Bridges in his poems to be included in an anthology—*The Spirit of Man*²⁹ (an anthology in English and French, 1916)—in 1915 now writes (28 March 1935) that he does not have

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the slightest objection (*leś mātra ūpathi*) if any one of 'my English poet-friends' edits them in whatever manner he likes.

Within twenty years since he handed over the *Gitanjali* manuscript to Rothenstein, eighteen works of his in English were published abroad. What is surprising is the speed with which his publisher brought them out in the market and the pressure under which Tagore went on producing them. Here is the list of works that were published in England and America, arranged chronologically.

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| 1912 | <i>Gitanjali</i> |
| 1913 | <i>The Gardener</i> <i>Sādhana</i> <i>The Crescent Moon</i> <i>Chitra</i> |
| 1914 | <i>One Hundred Poems of Kabir</i> |
| 1916 | <i>Fruit-Gathering</i> <i>Stray Birds</i> |
| 1917 | <i>Sacrifice and Other Plays</i> <i>Personality</i> <i>Nationalism</i> |
| 1918 | <i>Lover's Gift and Crossing</i> |
| 1921 | <i>The Fugitive</i> |
| 1922 | <i>Creative Unity</i> |
| 1928 ²⁰ | <i>Fireflies</i> <i>Letters to a Friend</i> |
| 1931 | <i>The Child</i> <i>The Religion of Man</i> |

In addition to this Tagore published a few more works in India, for example, *The Fugitive* (1919), a different work from the one published by his British publishers two years later, *The Parrot's Training* (Thacker Spinck and Co., Calcutta, 1918), *Talks in China* (Calcutta, 1925) and also a large number of translations and essays that he had to write under public pressure. What escaped Tagore's notice in the uninterrupted flow of production of his works in English was not only the growing monotony of style and diction of the translation but also the unimaginative selections and arrangements. An analysis of all his translated work will reveal that none of them, with the exception of *Stray Birds* and *Fireflies* (which in any case do not claim equal status with his major poetic works), was arranged according to a particular plan or scheme. *Gitanjali*, for example, includes poems from at least ten books of his (see Notes). They have at least some connection, one may argue, all of them being religious poems; the majority com-

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ing from *Naivedya* (1901), *Kheyā* (1906), *Gītānjali* (1910) and *Gītīmālya* (1914, poems were written in 1912–13). *The Crescent Moon* shows greater unity as 35 poems of the total 40 included in this work came from the Bengali work *Śiśu*. The problem began with *The Gardener*, for which Tagore selected 85 poems. Of these only 26 came from *Kṣāṇikā* (1900), 10 from *Sonār Tari* (1894) and the rest from 10 other sources (see the chart on p. 25). Undoubtedly there is a unity in the English *Gītānjali* and that unity was achieved mainly because of the thematic kinship among the poems chosen (though the robust sonnet-like structures of many *Naivedya* poems are radically different from the mellowed rhythm of *Kheyā*). But Tagore tried to prepare *The Gardener* quite consciously, as a contrast to the mystic *Gītānjali*, and therefore selected poems of love mainly from his works published between 1896 and 1900. Unfortunately the translation was inadequate: it was too insipid and dull to reflect the variety and opulence of the original. In a short preface to this work Tagore confessed that he had 'abridged' and sometimes paraphrased the original poems. This became a dangerous habit with him; he truncated many of his excellent poems with unbelievable insensitivity. Despite his attempt to counteract the effect of the religious lyrics of *Gītānjali*, *The Gardener* failed to establish a different image of Tagore; rather, the first signs of uneasiness among his readers were visible soon after its publication.

In his next work, *Fruit-Gathering* (1916), Tagore selected 15 poems from *Balākā* (1916) and 22 poems from *Gītānjali-Gītālī-Gītīmālya* and at least 8 from *Kathā* (1900), in addition to others chosen from 8 odd works. The *Balākā* poems, conspicuous by their rich verbal structure, sustained power of thought and imagination and broad sweep, are radically different from the serene and tender world of *Gītānjali-Gītīmālya*. The *Kathā* poems, on the other hand, as Thompson observes, 'show Rabindranath's narrative gift with a simplicity and directness',³¹ and are, as Kripalani points out, along with the poems of *Kāhini*, 'themselves a new, miniature modern Mahabharata, a noble treasury of India's moral and spiritual heritage'.³² But not the slightest attempt has been made to preserve the distinctiveness of these three unique zones of poetic art and experience in the translation. Even the chronological sequence was not maintained: it is a dismal and haphazard anthology. And the same abject carelessness continued in the next two books: *Lover's Gift and Crossing* (1918) and *The Fugitive* (1921). *Stray Birds* (1916) and *Fireflies* (1928) are more compact because of their structural similarity and the nature of their genesis (see Notes). But those two works appeared more as gleanings of the sayings of a wise man, rather than poems, though a considerable number of them are memorable poetic expressions.

As I have already mentioned, Tagore realized at a late stage of his life the extent of damage done by himself. Around 1934–35, painfully conscious of it, he wanted to bring out an anthology. Not only did he

| Source | GT ^a 103 | GRD 85 | CM 40 | FRT ^b 86 | LG 60 | C 78 | Fug 109 | CPP 10 | P 119 | Fug(B) 80 |
|----------------------------|------------------------|-----------|----------|------------------------|----------|----------------|----------------|-----------|----------|--------------|
| Kādi o Komal (1886) | | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | | 3 | | 2 | 4 |
| Māyār Khelā (1888) | | 3 | | | | | | | 2 | |
| Mānāsī (1890) | | 3 | | | 2 | | 4 | | 3 | 6 |
| Sonār Tarī (1894) | | 8 | 1 | | | | 8 ^d | | 1 | 11 |
| Citrā (1896) | | 6 | | 1 | 5 | | 6 | | 1 | 5 |
| Caitālī (1896) | 1 | 7 | | | 4 | | 9 ^d | | 3 | 9 |
| Kāhīnī (1900) | | | | 2 | 1 | | 5 | | | |
| Kālpanā (1900) | 1 | 13 | | 1 | 3 | 1 | | 1 | 1 | |
| Kathā (1900) | | | | 8 | | | 1 | | 1 | |
| Kṣanikā (1900) | | 26 | 1 | | 12 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Naivedya (1901) | 16 ^a | | | 3 | | 9 ^d | | 1 | 6 | 3 |
| Smaran (1903) | 1 | | 5 | 4 | | | 2 | | 2 | 3 |
| Śīśu (1903) | 3 | | 35 | | | 1 | | | | |
| Kheyā (1906) | 11 | 4 | | 5 | 5 | 5 | 1 | | 2 | 2 |
| Prāyaścitta (1909) | | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 2 | | | | |
| Gitānjali (1910) | 53 | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 8 | | | 2 | |
| Rājā (1910) | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | |
| Acalayātan (1912) | 1 | | | | 1 | 2 | | | 2 | |
| Gitālī (1914) | | | | 14 | | 5 | | 1 | 3 | |
| Gitimālyā (1914) | 16 | | 1 | 17 | 1 | 8 | 1 | | 3 | 2 |
| Utsarga (1914) | 1 | 6 | | 7 | 3 | 6 | 3 ^d | | 5 | 2 |
| Balākā (1916) | | | | 15 | 11 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Palātakā (1918) | | | | | | | 17 | | | 5 |
| Lipikā (1922) | | | | | | | 19 | | | |
| Miscellaneous ^b | | 3 | | 4 | 1 | 12 | 8 | | | 14 |
| Translations ^c | | | | | 4 | | 17 | | | |
| Unidentified source | | | | 2 | | 17 | 4 | | | 5 |

^aThe abbreviations stand for *Gitanjali*, *The Gardener*, *The Crescent Moon*, *Fruit-Gathering*, *Lover's Gift*, *Crossing*, *The Fugitive*, *Collected Poems and Plays* and *Poems*. The figures under them indicate the total number of poems in these works. *Fug(B)* is the Bolepur edition.

^bPoems and songs from *Prajāpatir Nirbandha*, *Chabi o Gān*, *Brahmo Saṅgīt*, etc. are indicated under this heading. (For details see Sources.)

^c*Poems of Kabir* is excluded. Only the translations in *Lover's Gift* and *The Fugitive* are indicated.

^dThe discrepancy in the total is because in some cases Tagore has condensed two Bengali poems into one in the English translation: poems 89 and 90 of *Naivedya* are merged into one (no. 95) in *Gitanjali*; poems 41 and 42 of *Naivedya* become one (no. 36) in *Crossing*; 'Asamay' and 'mauna' of *Caitālī* are rolled into one (no. 12) in *The Fugitive II*; poems 25 and 26 of *Utsarga* become poem 31 in *The Fugitive III*. The

process is reversed twice in *The Fugitive*: 'mānas sundarī' and 'basundharā' (from *Sonār Tarī*) are the sources of five (nos. 8, 9, 10, 18 in *Fug II*; no. 6 in *Fug III*) and three poems (nos. 7, 32, 33 in *Fug III*) respectively. In *Fruit-Gathering*, poem 83 contains three poems. (See Sources.)

^eApart from the five poems indicated in the chart the rest of the poems in *Collected Poems and Plays* come from *Parities* (2), *Punaśca* (2) and *Gitābitān* (1).

^fOnly 41 poems are indicated in the chart. Most of the other translations are from various books of songs: seven from *Purāṇī* (1925); five from *Punaśca* (1932); six from *Rogīśayyā* (1940); three from *Parities* (1932), two each from *Pātrapuṭ* (1936), *Sepati* (1938), *Bicāritā* (1933), *Nabajālak* (1940); one each from *Mahuyā* (1928), *Bhūbhā* (1954), *Sev Saptak* (1935), *Syamālī* (1936). Tagore's last phase is represented sparingly.

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The thematic relationship that exists between the English and Bengali writings of Tagore has yet to be properly explored. A close reading of the existing translations shows clearly that many of them are not translations at all but transcreations in the true sense of the term. At times two Bengali poems have been fused into one, at times three poems have emerged from one poem in the original and quite often, particularly towards the end of his English career, he wrote almost new poems with only faint resemblances to some Bengali poems. Thus they also provide an interesting storehouse of raw materials pointing as much towards the mystery of creativity as to the activity of translation. 'My English writing', wrote Tagore to Ajit Chakravarti in a letter dated 12 May 1913, 'emerges out of my subconscious.' He continued, 'Once I mount the peak of conscious will all my wit and wisdom get muddled. That is why I cannot gird up my loins to do a translation. I can only set my boat adrift and not sit at the helm at all. Then, if and when I touch shore I cannot quite understand myself how it all happened.'¹⁷

The Child, the longest poem that Tagore wrote in English, in 1930, inspired by the passion play he watched in Germany, is yet another example linking his Bengali writing with the English. It was translated into Bengali by Tagore himself under the title *Sisutirtha*. This very activity indicates strongly, indeed, the indivisibility of his literary life: he did not allow the English Tagore to be isolated from the Bengali Tagore. The Bengali poem *Sisutirtha* with its orchestrated movements, beginning with a turbulent rhythm, reaching a crescendo of fury and violence and then gently expanding and resolving into serene and tender notes, stands like a magnificent gateway to the last phase of his poetic career.

Equally significant are the English prose writings of Tagore included in at least half-a-dozen books. His English prose works, although independent and self-contained, are extensions of his Bengali prose works. The basic differences between the two streams of writings are the ways in which they problematize similar issues and concerns for different audiences: the former for an international readership and the latter for the Bengali reader. The essays in *Sādhanā* (1913) or *Personality* (1917) derive much of their material from his Bengali works *Dharma* or the Santiniketan lectures, which again can be traced back to the Upanishadic doctrines as appropriated by the Brahmo Samaj, his own strong conviction and originality of interpretation notwithstanding. But the two outstanding works, *Nationalism* (1917) and *Talks in China* (1925), not only sparkle with eloquence and grace but are valuable documents concerning serious predicaments of contemporary history. The former work is a most forceful denunciation of imperialism that breeds militant nationalism—this work made Tagore a target of attack both in the West and in Japan—and the latter derived from Tagore's expectations of as well as experience in China, during the most turbulent period of her history. Tagore, as pointed out earlier, slowly grew into an

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able spokesman of India, not only of her religious past but more of her present concerns. His English prose will be remembered for a long time as a testament of modern India responding to all the forces of change of the century. 'More than any other Indian,' writes Nehru,³⁸

he [Tagore] has helped to bring into harmony the ideals of the East and the West, and broadened the bases of Indian nationalism. He has been India's internationalist par excellence, believing and working for international cooperation, taking India's message to other countries and bringing their message to his own people. . . . It was Tagore's immense service to India, as it has been Gandhi's in a different plane, that he forced the people in measure out of their narrow grooves of thought and made them think of broader issues affecting humanity. Tagore was the great humanist of India.

VIII

Tagore's English works are important both for their historic and intrinsic worth. There was hardly any Indian author before him who received such a tumultuous welcome and also such wide critical attention from the western reading public. Although the history of Indo-European literary contact is fairly long, spreading over a few centuries, there were only a few texts that had made some impact on the western mind. The stories of the *Pañcatantra* which had migrated from India through the trade-routes to Europe appeared in the fables of Aesop and later in the more sophisticated *Fables* by La Fontaine in the seventeenth century. At the beginning of the eighteenth century A. Duperron translated the *Īsopaniṣad* into Latin from its Persian version made by Prince Dara Shikoh, which deeply moved Schopenhauer.³⁹ Goethe's eulogy of Kalidasa's *Śakuntalā* is too well known to be repeated. These are the three texts—all of them written in Sanskrit—that had created some interest in Europe in Indian literature. The enthusiasm generated by these texts, howsoever genuine and spontaneous, was shortlived. In view of the magnitude of Indian literature and its breathtaking sweep and intricacies, these three instances are like three solitary islands separated by a vast expanse of wilderness. Neither the scholarly translations of the Tamil classics by G.V. Pope nor the abridged versions of the Sanskrit twin-epics by R.C. Dutt could enthuse the western reader to take any serious interest in the major literary traditions of the subcontinent. What dominated the western mind in respect of Indian literature were certain stereotypes; vague and imperfect notions of an exotic, erotic mystical literature, a literature that defies the major norms of western literature. It was partly conditioned by the sense of cultural superiority that was first so blatantly articulated by Macaulay, and partly because the attempts to understand 'the other', were generally half-hearted and sporadic. They hardly went beyond gentle courtesy. The stereotypes continued

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- Bhavan, Santiniketan. The first version, 'Desire for a Human Soul', is an incomplete translation by Tagore. The other version was in all probability done by Lokendranath Palit, a friend of Tagore. It was published in *The Modern Review* (May 1911) under the title 'Fruitless Cry'. Later, Tagore did a fresh translation of the poem which is to be found in *Lover's Gift* (1918), poem no. 25.
- 4 Letter dated 2 November 1900, written in Bengali, collected in *Cithupatra* (Vol. VI, p. 175), a collection of Tagore's Bengali letters published by Visva-Bharati in several volumes.
 - 5 Dutt translated ten poems of Tagore, all of them included in his *Echoes from East and West*, Galloway & Potter, Cambridge, 1909. These were the first published translations of Tagore in England.
 - 6 See Nityapriya Ghosh, *Dākgharer Harharā*, Prama Prakasani, Calcutta, 1985, pp. 67-79; and Bikash Chakravarti, 'Ingrejite Rabindranāth', *Pratiksan*, Sanskriti Sankhyā, Baisākh, 1394, 1987, pp. 77-88.
 - 7 R.F. Rattray, *Poets in the Flesh*, The Golden Head Press, Cambridge, 1961, p. 1, quoted in Chakravarti, 'Ingrejite Rabindranāth'.
 - 8 One poem translated by Chakravarti and Coomaraswamy appeared in *The Modern Review* in March 1911, and two translated by Coomaraswamy and Tagore in the next issue. The poems are 'Janma Kathā' (Birth Story) and 'Bidyā' (Farewell), both from *Sisu*.
 - 9 For details of the society see Mary M. Lago, *Imperfect Encounter*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1977, pp. 2-8. Its president was T.W. Rhys Davids (1843-1922), the eminent Buddhist scholar, and its secretary was A.H. Fox Strangway (1859-1948), a schoolmaster of Wellington College.
 - 10 William Rothenstein, *Men and Memories: 1900-1922*, London, 1932, p. 249.
 - 11 Letter dated 21 February 1911. See Lago, *Imperfect Encounter*, p. 35.
 - 12 Chakravarti, 'Ingrejite Rabindranāth', p. 84.
 - 13 This story could be 'The Hungry Stones' (*The Modern Review*, February 1910), translated by Pannalal Bose. Pierre Fallon S.J. mentions it (in 'Tagore in the West', *Rabindranath Tagore, A Centenary Volume*, Sahitya Akademi, 1961), without indicating the source. According to Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyay, however, the story is 'Kābuliwālā', translated by Sister Nivedita and published in *The Modern Review* (January 1912). This story is to be found in *The Hungry Stones and Other Stories*, Macmillan, London, 1916, under the title 'Kabuliwallah'.
 - 14 The letter is preserved at Rabindra Bhavan, quoted by Chakravarti in 'Ingrejite Rabindranāth'.
 - 15 The name of the translator was not mentioned. Later when it was reprinted in *The Modern Review* (September 1912), the editor mentioned that it was translated by Chakravarti.
 - 16 Both Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyay and Krishna Kripalani, the two distinguished biographers of Tagore, have mentioned the date as 30 June 1913, which has been found to be incorrect.
 - 17 See Rathindranath Tagore, *On the Edges of Time*, Orient Longman, Calcutta, 1958, pp. 116-17.
 - 18 Debabrata Mukhopadhyay, then a student at Oxford, translated the play *Dākghar* (1912) under the title *The Post Office*, which was first published by Cuala Press, Dublin, in July 1914. K.C. Sen, then studying at Cambridge and

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- later a member of the Indian Civil Service, translated *Rājā* (1910), which was published by Macmillan under the title *The King of the Dark Chamber* in 1914. The name of the translator was not mentioned by the publisher.
- 19 Theodore Douglas Dunn, *The Bengali Book of English Verse*, Longman & Green, Bombay, 1918.
 - 20 For a detailed account of this visit, as well as later visits, of Tagore, to the USA, see Sujit Mukherjee's well-documented work, *A Passage to America*, Bookland, Calcutta, 1964.
 - 21 Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyay, *Rabindra jibani*, Vol. II, Visva-Bharati Granthalay, Calcutta, 1949, p. 311.
 - 22 For a detailed study of the nature of these translations, see Sujit Mukherjee, 'Translation as Perjury', in *Translation as Discovery*, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1981, pp. 101-25. Also see Melvin D. Palmer, 'Tagore's Poetry in English: A Candid View', in *Rabindranath Tagore: American Interpretations*, edited by Ira G. Zepp, Jr., Writers Workshop, Calcutta, 1981, pp. 78-98; and Sisir Kumar Das, 'Tagore: A Victim of Translation?', *The Indian Literary Review*, Vol. IV, i, January 1986, pp. 71-80.
 - 23 For a fine study of the relationship between Thompson and Tagore, see Harish Trivedi's Introduction to Edward Thompson's *Rabindranath Tagore: Poet and Dramatist*, Oxford University Press, 1991.
 - 24 Edward J. Thompson, *Rabindranath Tagore, His Life and Work*, Association Press, YMCA, Calcutta, 1921, reprinted by YMCA Publishing House, Calcutta, 1961, pp. 35-36.
 - 25 Mary M. Lago, *Rabindranath Tagore*, Twayne Publishers, Boston, 1976, p. 61.
 - 26 Thompson, *Rabindranath Tagore, His Life and Work*, p. 38.
 - 27 Victoria Ocampo, 'Tagore on the Banks of the River Plate', *Rabindranath Tagore: A Centenary Volume*, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1916, p. 44.
 - 28 Collected in *Cithipatra*, Vol. II, Visva-Bharati Granthalay, Calcutta, 1974.
 - 29 See Lago, *Imperfect Encounter*, pp. 177-86; also Tagore's letter to Rothenstein (dated 20 August 1913), in *ibid.*, pp. 211-12.
 - 30 In 1928 Macmillan published a small anthology of his prose writings under the title *Lectures and Addresses*, selected by Anthony X. Soares.
 - 31 Thompson, *Rabindranath Tagore, Poet and Dramatist*, p. 158.
 - 32 Krishna Kripalani, *Rabindranath Tagore*, Oxford University Press, London, 1962, p. 177.
 - 33 *Cithipatra*, Vol. II, pp. 122-23 (letter dated 28 November 1934).
 - 34 Thompson, *Rabindranath Tagore, His Life and Work*, p. 38; emphasis in the original.
 - 35 Only four poems written in the last twenty years of his life were included in *Collected Poems and Plays of Rabindranath Tagore*, Macmillan, London, 1936.
 - 36 The only Bengali critic to study Tagore in English seriously is Sankha Ghosh whose seminal work *Nirmān ar Syāi* (1983) develops out of an equally seminal essay of Tagore, 'Construction Versus Creation' (1920).
 - 37 Translated by Kshitir Ray, *Jadavpur Journal of Comparative Literature*, Vol. 9, pp. 125-26.
 - 38 Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, 1946, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund/Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1982, p. 340.
 - 39 'It is the most profitable and most elevating reading (the original text

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excepted) possible in the world. It has been the consolation of my life, and will be the consolation of my death.' Quoted in W. Wallace, *Life of Schopenhauer*, London, 1890, p. 106.

- 40 At a more mundane level some of the western readers were quick to see the western impact on the making of *Gitanjali*. For example, Charles Whibley, reader for the Macmillan, London, who recommended the publication of *Gitanjali*, wrote, 'Rabindranath is a real poet, and he has translated his own poems into beautiful English. *He is obviously a student of the English Bible*, and has modelled his style upon the *Song of Solomon* and other books of the Old Testament. He is also *not without a knowledge of Western poetry*.' Quoted in Lago, *Imperfect Encounter*, p. 21; emphases added.
- 41 Halldor Laxness, 'Gitanjali in Iceland', *Rabindranath Tagore: A Centenary Volume*, p. 332.
- 42 'Tagore: The True and the False', *The Times Literary Supplement*, 27 September 1974, no. 3786.

SISIR KUMAR DAS

SECTION ONE

Gitanjali

The Gardener

The Crescent Moon

Fruit-Gathering

Lover's Gift and Crossing

The Fugitive

Collected Poems and Plays

Poems

Gitanjali

SONG OFFERINGS

INTRODUCTION

A FEW DAYS ago I said to a distinguished Bengali doctor of medicine, 'I know no German, yet if a translation of a German poet had moved me, I would go to the British Museum and find books in English that would tell me something of his life, and of the history of his thought. But though these prose translations from Rabindra Nath Tagore have stirred my blood as nothing has for years, I shall not know anything of his life, and of the movements of thought that have made them possible, if some Indian traveller will not tell me.' It seemed to him natural that I should be moved, for he said, 'I read Rabindra Nath every day, to read one line of his is to forget all the troubles of the world.' I said, 'An Englishman living in London in the reign of Richard the Second, had he been shown translations from Petrarch or from Dante, would have found no books to answer his questions, but would have questioned some Florentine banker or Lombard merchant as I question you. For all I know, so abundant and simple is this poetry, the new renaissance has been born in your country and I shall never know of it except by hearsay.' He answered, 'We have other poets, but none that are his equal; we call this the epoch of Rabindra Nath. No poet seems to me as famous in Europe as he is among us. He is as great in music as in poetry, and his songs are sung from the west of India into Burmah wherever Bengali is spoken. He was already famous at nineteen when he wrote his first novel; and plays, written when he was but little older, are still played in Calcutta. I so much admire the completeness of his life; when he was very young he wrote much of natural objects, he would sit all day in his garden; from his twenty-fifth year or so to his thirty-fifth perhaps, when he had a great sorrow, he wrote the most beautiful love poetry in our language', and then he said with deep emotion, 'words can never express what I owed at seventeen to his love poetry. After that his art grew deeper, it became religious and philosophical; all the aspirations of mankind are in his hymns. He is the first among our saints who has not refused to live, but has spoken out of Life itself, and that is why we give him our love.' I may have changed his well-chosen words in my memory but not his thought. 'A little while ago he was to read divine service in one of our churches—we of the Brahma Samaj use your word "church" in English—it was the largest in Calcutta and not only was it crowded, people even standing in the windows, but the streets were all but impassable because of the people.'

Other Indians came to see me and their reverence for this man sounded strange in our world, where we hide great and little things under the same veil of obvious comedy and half serious depreciation. When we were making the cathedrals had we a like reverence for our great men?

'Every morning at three—I know for I have seen it—one said to me, 'he sits immovable in contemplation, and for two hours does not awake from his reverie upon the nature of God. His father the Maha Rishi would sometimes sit there all through the next day; once, upon a river, he fell into contemplation because of the beauty of the landscape, and the rowers waited for eight hours before they could continue their journey.' He then told me of Mr Tagore's family and how for generations great men have come out of its cradles. 'Today,' he said, 'there are Gogonendranath and Abanindranath Tagore, who are artists; and Dwijendranath, Rabindra Nath's brother, who is a great philosopher. The squirrels come from the boughs and climb on to his knees and the birds alight upon his hands.' I notice in these men's thought a sense of visible beauty and meaning as though they held that doctrine of Nietzsche that we must not believe in the moral or intellectual beauty which does not sooner or later impress itself upon physical things. I said, 'In the East you know how to keep a family illustrious. The other day the curator of a Museum pointed out to me a little dark-skinned man who was arranging their Chinese prints and said, "That is the hereditary connoisseur of the Mikado, he is the fourteenth of his family to hold the post." ' He answered, 'When Rabindra Nath was a boy he had all round him in his home literature and music.' I thought of the abundance, of the simplicity of the poems, and said, 'In your country is there much propagandist writing, much criticism? We have to do so much, especially in my own country, that our minds gradually cease to be creative, and yet we cannot help it. If our life was not a continual warfare, we would not have taste, we would not know what is good, we would not find hearers and readers. Four-fifths of our energy is spent in the quarrel with bad taste, whether in our own minds or in the minds of others.' 'I understand,' he replied, 'we too have our propagandist writing. In the villages they recite long mythological poems adapted from the Sanscrit in the Middle Ages, and they often insert passages telling the people that they must do their duties.'

I have carried the manuscript of these translations about with me for days, reading it in railway trains, or on the top of omnibuses and in restaurants, and I have often had to close it lest some stranger would see how much it moved me. These lyrics—which are in the original, my Indians tell me, full of subtlety of rhythm, of untranslatable delicacies of colour, of metrical invention, display in their thought a world I have dreamed of all my life long. The work of a supreme culture, they yet appear as much the growth of the common soil as the grass and the rushes. A tradition, where poetry and religion are the same thing, has passed through the centuries, gathering from learned and unlearned metaphor and emotion, and car-

ried back again to the multitude the thought of the scholar and of the noble. If the civilization of Bengal remains unbroken, if that common mind which—as one divines—runs through all, is not, as with us, broken into a dozen minds that know nothing of each other, something even of what is most subtle in these verses will have come, in a few generations, to the beggar on the roads. When there was but one mind in England Chaucer wrote his *Troilus and Cressida*, and though he had written to be read, or to be read out—for our time was coming on apace—he was sung by minstrels for a while. Rabindra Nath Tagore, like Chaucer's fore-runners, writes music for his words, and one understands at every moment that he is so abundant, so spontaneous, so daring in his passion, so full of surprise, because he is doing something which has never seemed strange, unnatural, or in need of defence. These verses will not lie in little well-printed books upon ladies' tables, who turn the pages with indolent hands that they may sigh over a life without meaning, which is yet all they can know of life, or be carried about by students at the university to be laid aside when the work of life begins, but as the generations pass, travellers will hum them on the highway and men rowing upon rivers. Lovers, while they await one another, shall find, in murmuring them, this love of God a magic gulf wherein their own more bitter passion may bathe and renew its youth. At every moment the heart of this poet flows outward to these without derogation or condescension, for it has known that they will understand; and it has filled itself with the circumstance of their lives. The traveller in the red-brown clothes that he wears that dust may not show upon him, the girl searching in her bed for the petals fallen from the wreath of her royal lover, the servant or the bride awaiting the master's home-coming in the empty house, are images of the heart turning to God. Flowers and rivers, the blowing of conch shells, the heavy rain of the Indian July, or the parching heat, are images of the moods of that heart in union or in separation; and a man sitting in a boat upon a river playing upon a lute, like one of those figures full of mysterious meaning in a Chinese picture, is God Himself. A whole people, a whole civilization, immeasurably strange to us, seems to have been taken up into this imagination; and yet we are not moved because of its strangeness, but because we have met our own image, as though we had walked in Rossetti's willow wood, or heard, perhaps for the first time in literature, our voice as in a dream.

Since the Renaissance the writing of European saints—however familiar their metaphor and the general structure of their thought—has ceased to hold our attention. We know that we must at last forsake the world, and we are accustomed in moments of weariness or exaltation to consider a voluntary forsaking; but how can we, who have read so much poetry, seen so many paintings, listened to so much music, where the cry of the flesh and the cry of the soul seem one, forsake it harshly and rudely? What

have we in common with St Bernard covering his eyes that they may not dwell upon the beauty of the lakes of Switzerland, or with the violent rhetoric of the Book of Revelations? We would, if we might, find, as in this book, words full of courtesy. 'I have got my leave. Bid me farewell, my brothers. I bow to you all and take my departure. Here I give back the keys of my door, and I give up all claim to my house. I only ask for last kind words from you. We were neighbours for long but I received more than I could give. Now the day has dawned and the lamp that lit my dark corner is out. A summons has come and I am ready for my journey.' And it is our own mood, when it is furthest from A Kempis or John of the Cross, that cries, 'And because I have loved this life I know I shall love death as well.' Yet it is not only in our thoughts of the parting that this book fathoms all. We had not known that we loved God, hardly it may be that we believed in Him; yet looking backward upon our life we discover, in our exploration of the pathways of woods, in our delight in the lonely places of hills, in that mysterious claim that we have made, unavailingly, on the women that we have loved, the emotion that created this insidious sweetness. 'Entering my heart unbidden as one of the common crowd, unknown to me, my king, thou didst press the signet of eternity upon many a fleeting moment.' This is no longer the sanctity of the cell and of the scourge; being but a lifting up, as it were, into a greater intensity of the mood of the painter, painting the dust and the sunlight, and we go for a like voice to St Francis and to William Blake who have seemed so alien in our violent history.

I I I

We write long books where no page perhaps has any quality to make writing a pleasure, being confident in some general design, just as we fight and make money and fill our heads with politics—all dull things in the doing—while Mr Tagore, like the Indian civilization itself, has been content to discover the soul and surrender himself to its spontaneity. He often seems to contrast his life with that of those who have lived more after our fashion, and have more seeming weight in the world, and always humbly as though he were only sure his way is best for him: 'Men going home glance at me and smile and fill me with shame. I sit like a beggar-maid, drawing my skirt over my face, and when they ask me what it is I want I drop my eyes and answer them not.' At another time, remembering how his life had once a different shape, he will say, 'Many an hour have I spent in the strife of the good and the evil, but now it is the pleasure of my playmate of the empty days to draw my heart on to him, and I know not why is this sudden call, to what useless inconsequence.' An innocence, a simplicity that one does not find elsewhere in literature makes the birds and the leaves seem as near to him as they are near to children, and the

changes of the seasons great events as before our thoughts had arisen between them and us. At times I wonder if he has it from the literature of Bengal or from religion, and at other times, remembering the birds alighting on his brother's hands, I find pleasure in thinking it hereditary, a mystery that was growing through the centuries like the courtesy of a Tristan or a Pelanore. Indeed, when he is speaking of children, so much a part of himself this quality seems, one is not certain that he is not also speaking of the saints, 'They build their houses with sand and they play with empty shells. With withered leaves they weave their boats and smilingly float them on the vast deep. Children have their play on the seashore of worlds. They know not how to swim, they know not how to cast nets. Pearl fishers dive for pearls, merchants sail in their ships, while children gather pebbles and scatter them again. They seek not for hidden treasure they know not how to cast nets.'

September 1912

W. B. YEATS



A pencil sketch of Rabindranath Tagore by William Rothenstein

1

THOU HAST made me endless, such is thy pleasure. This frail vessel thou
emptiest again and again, and fillest it ever with fresh life.

This little flute of a reed thou hast carried over hills and dales, and
hast breathed through it melodies eternally new.

At the immortal touch of thy hands my little heart loses its limits in
joy and gives birth to utterance ineffable.

Thy infinite gifts come to me only on these very small hands of mine.
Ages pass, and still thou pourest, and still there is room to fill.

2

WHEN THOU commandest me to sing it seems that my heart would break
with pride; and I look to thy face, and tears come to my eyes.

All that is harsh and dissonant in my life melts into one sweet
harmony—and my adoration spreads wings like a glad bird on its flight
across the sea.

I know thou takest pleasure in my singing. I know that only as a singer
I come before thy presence.

I touch by the edge of the far spreading wing of my song thy feet
which I could never aspire to reach.

Drunk with the joy of singing I forget myself and call thee friend who
art my lord.

3

I KNOW NOT how thou singest, my master! I ever listen in silent amazement.

The light of thy music illumines the world. The life breath of thy
music runs from sky to sky. The holy stream of thy music breaks through
all stony obstacles and rushes on.

My heart longs to join in thy song, but vainly struggles for a voice.
I would speak, but speech breaks not into song, and I cry out baffled. Ah,
thou hast made my heart captive in the endless meshes of thy music, my
master!

4

LIFE OF MY life, I shall ever try to keep my body pure, knowing that thy living touch is upon all my limbs.

I shall ever try to keep all untruths out from my thoughts, knowing that thou art that truth which has kindled the light of reason in my mind.

I shall ever try to drive all evils away from my heart and keep my love in flower, knowing that thou hast thy seat in the inmost shrine of my heart.

And it shall be my endeavour to reveal thee in my actions, knowing it is thy power gives me strength to act.

5

I ASK FOR A moment's indulgence to sit by thy side. The works that I have in hand I will finish afterwards.

Away from the sight of thy face my heart knows no rest nor respite, and my work becomes an endless toil in a shoreless sea of toil.

To-day the summer has come at my window with its sighs and murmurs; and the bees are plying their minstrelsy at the court of the flowering grove.

Now it is time to sit quiet, face to face with thee, and to sing dedication of life in this silent and overflowing leisure.

6

PLUCK THIS little flower and take it, delay not! I fear lest it droop and drop into the dust.

It may not find a place in thy garland, but honour it with a touch of pain from thy hand and pluck it. I fear lest the day end before I am aware, and the time of offering go by.

Though its colour be not deep and its smell be faint, use this flower in thy service and pluck it while there is time.

7

MY SONG HAS put off her adornments. She has no pride of dress and decoration. Ornaments would mar our union; they would come between thee and me; their jingling would drown thy whispers.

My poet's vanity dies in shame before thy sight. O master poet, I have

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sat down at thy feet. Only let me make my life simple and straight, like a flute of reed for thee to fill with music.

8

THE CHILD WHO is decked with prince's robes and who has jewelled chains round his neck loses all pleasure in his play; his dress hampers him at every step.

In fear that it may be frayed, or stained with dust he keeps himself from the world, and is afraid even to move.

Mother, it is no gain, thy bondage of finery, if it keep one shut off from the healthful dust of the earth, if it rob one of the right of entrance to the great fair of common human life.

9

O FOOL, TO TRY to carry thyself upon thy own shoulders! O beggar, to come to beg at thy own door!

Leave all thy burdens on his hands who can bear all, and never look behind in regret.

Thy desire at once puts out the light from the lamp it touches with its breath. It is unholy—take not thy gifts through its unclean hands. Accept only what is offered by sacred love.

10

HERE IS THY footstool and there rest thy feet where live the poorest, and lowliest, and lost.

When I try to bow to thee, my obeisance cannot reach down to the depth where thy feet rest among the poorest, and lowliest, and lost.

Pride can never approach to where thou walkest in the clothes of the humble among the poorest, and lowliest, and lost.

My heart can never find its way to where thou keepest company with the companionless among the poorest, the lowliest, and the lost.

17

I AM ONLY waiting for love to give myself up at last into his hands. That is why it is so late and why I have been guilty of such omissions.

They come with their laws and their codes to bind me fast; but I evade them ever, for I am only waiting for love to give myself up at last into his hands.

People blame me and call me heedless; I doubt not they are right in their blame.

The market day is over and work is all done for the busy. Those who came to call me in vain have gone back in anger. I am only waiting for love to give myself up at last into his hands.

18

CLOUDS HEAP upon clouds and it darkens. Ah, love, why dost thou let me wait outside at the door all alone?

In the busy moments of the noontide work I am with the crowd, but on this dark lonely day it is only for thee that I hope.

If thou showest me not thy face, if thou leavest me wholly aside, I know not how I am to pass these long, rainy hours.

I keep gazing on the far away gloom of the sky, and my heart wanders wailing with the restless wind.

19

IF THOU speakest not I will fill my heart with thy silence and endure it. I will keep still and wait like the night with starry vigil and its head bent low with patience.

The morning will surely come, the darkness will vanish, and thy voice pour down in golden streams breaking through the sky.

Then thy words will take wing in songs from every one of my birds' nests, and thy melodies will break forth in flowers in all my forest groves.

20

ON THE DAY when the lotus bloomed, alas, my mind was straying, and I knew it not. My basket was empty and the flower remained unheeded.

Only now and again a sadness fell upon me, and I started up from

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my dream and felt a sweet trace of a strange fragrance in the south wind.

That vague sweetness made my heart ache with longing and it seemed to me that it was the eager breath of the summer seeking for its completion.

I knew not then that it was so near, that it was mine, and that this perfect sweetness had blossomed in the depth of my own heart.

21

I MUST LAUNCH out my boat. The languid hours pass by on the shore—
Alas for me!

The spring has done its flowering and taken leave. And now with the burden of faded futile flowers I wait and linger.

The waves have become clamorous, and upon the bank in the shady lane the yellow leaves flutter and fall.

What emptiness do you gaze upon! Do you not feel a thrill passing through the air with the notes of the far away song floating from the other shore?

22

IN THE DEEP shadows of the rainy July, with secret steps, thou walkest, silent as night, eluding all watchers.

To-day the morning has closed its eyes, heedless of the insistent calls of the loud east wind, and a thick veil has been drawn over the ever-wakeful blue sky.

The woodlands have hushed their songs, and doors are all shut at every house. Thou art the solitary wayfarer in this deserted street. Oh my only friend, my best beloved, the gates are open in my house—do not pass by like a dream.

23

ART THOU abroad on this stormy night on thy journey of love, my friend? The sky groans like one in despair.

I have no sleep to-night. Ever and again I open my door and look out on the darkness, my friend!

I can see nothing before me. I wonder where lies thy path!

By what dim shore of the ink-black river, by what far edge of the

He is my own little self, my lord,¹ he knows no shame; but I am ashamed to come to thy door in his company.

31

'PRISONER, TELL me, who was it that bound you?'

'It was my master,' said the prisoner. 'I thought I could outdo everybody in the world in wealth and power, and I amassed in my own treasure-house the money due to my king. When sleep overcame me I lay upon the bed that was for my lord, and on waking up I found I was a prisoner in my own treasure-house.'

'Prisoner, tell me who was it that wrought this unbreakable chain?'

'It was I,' said the prisoner, 'who forged this chain very carefully. I thought my invincible power would hold the world captive leaving me in a freedom undisturbed. Thus night and day I worked at the chain with huge fires and cruel hard strokes. When at last the work was done and the links were complete and unbreakable, I found that it held me in its grip.'

32

BY ALL MEANS they try to hold me secure who love me in this world. But it is otherwise with thy love which is greater than theirs, and thou keepest me free.

Lest I forget them they never venture to leave me alone. But day passes by after day and thou art not seen.

If I call not thee in my prayers, if I keep not thee in my heart, thy love for me still waits for my love.

33

WHEN IT WAS day they came into my house and said, 'We shall only take the smallest room here.'

They said, 'We shall help you in the worship of your God and humbly accept only our own share of his grace'; and then they took their seat in a corner and they sat quiet and meek.

But in the darkness of night I find they break into my sacred shrine,

¹ First edition: 'Lord'. See Notes.—Editor

strong and turbulent, and snatch with unholy greed the offerings from God's altar.

34

LET ONLY THAT little be left of me whereby I may name thee my all.

Let only that little be left of my will whereby I may feel thee on every side, and come to thee in everything, and offer to thee my love every moment.

Let only that little be left of me whereby I may never hide thee.

Let only that little of my fetters be left whereby I am bound with thy will, and thy purpose is carried out in my life—and that is the fetter of thy love.

35

WHERE THE mind is without fear and the head is held high;

Where knowledge is free;

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;

Where words come out from the depth of truth;

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;

Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action—

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

36

THIS IS MY prayer to thee, my Lord—strike, strike at the root of penury in my heart.

Give me the strength lightly to bear my joys and sorrows.

Give me the strength to make my love fruitful in service.

Give me the strength never to disown the poor or bend my knees before insolent might.

Give me the strength to raise my mind high above daily trifles.

And give me the strength to surrender my strength to thy will with love.

I THOUGHT that my voyage had come to its end at the last limit of my power,—that the path before me was closed, that provisions were exhausted and the time come to take shelter in a silent obscurity.

But I find that thy will knows no end in me. And when old words die out on the tongue, new melodies break forth from the heart; and where the old tracks are lost, new country is revealed with its wonders.

THAT I WANT thee, only thee—let my heart repeat without end. All desires that distract me, day and night, are false and empty to the core.

As the night keeps hidden in its gloom the petition for light, even thus in the depth of my unconsciousness rings the cry—I want thee, only thee.

As the storm still seeks its end in peace when it strikes against peace with all its might, even thus my rebellion strikes against thy love and still its cry is—I want thee, only thee.

WHEN THE HEART is hard and parched up, come upon me with a shower of mercy.

When grace is lost from life, come with a burst of song.

When tumultuous work raises its din on all sides shutting me out from beyond, come to me, my lord of silence, with thy peace and rest.

When my beggarly heart sits crouched, shut up in a corner, break open the door, my king, and come with the ceremony of a king.

When desire blinds the mind with delusion and dust, O thou holy one, thou wakeful, come with thy light and thy thunder.

THE RAIN HAS held back for days and days, my God, in my arid heart. The horizon is fiercely naked—not the thinnest cover of a soft cloud, not the vaguest hint of a distant cool shower.

Send thy angry storm, dark with death, if it is thy wish, and with lashes of lightning startle the sky from end to end.

But call back, my lord, call back this pervading silent heat, still and keen and cruel, burning the heart with dire despair.

Let the cloud of grace bend low from above like the tearful look of the mother on the day of the father's wrath.

41

WHERE DOST thou stand behind them all, my lover, hiding thyself in the shadows? They push thee and pass thee by on the dusty road, taking thee for naught. I wait here weary hours spreading my offerings for thee, while passers by come and take my flowers, one by one, and my basket is nearly empty.

The morning time is past, and the noon. In the shade of evening my eyes are drowsy with sleep. Men going home glance at me and smile and fill me with shame. I sit like a beggar maid, drawing my skirt over my face, and when they ask me, what it is I want, I drop my eyes and answer them not.

Oh, how, indeed, could I tell them that for thee I wait, and that thou hast promised to come. How could I utter for shame that I keep for my dowry this poverty. Ah, I hug this pride in the secret of my heart.

I sit on the grass and gaze upon the sky and dream of the sudden splendour of thy coming—all the lights ablaze, golden pennons flying over thy car, and they at the roadside standing agape, when they see thee come down from thy seat to raise me from the dust, and set at thy side this ragged beggar girl a-tremble with shame and pride, like a creeper in a summer breeze.

But time glides on and still no sound of the wheels of thy chariot. Many a procession passes by with noise and shouts and glamour of glory. Is it only thou who wouldst stand in the shadow silent and behind them all? And only I who would wait and weep and wear out my heart in vain longing?

42

EARLY IN THE day it was whispered that we should sail in a boat, only thou and I, and never a soul in the world would know of this our pilgrimage to no country and to no end.

In that shoreless ocean, at thy silently listening smile my songs would

swell in melodies, free as waves, free from all bondage of words.

Is the time not come yet? Are there works still to do? Lo, the evening has come down upon the shore and in the fading light the seabirds come flying to their nests.

Who knows when the chains will be off, and the boat, like the last glimmer of sunset, vanish into the night?

43

THE DAY WAS when I did not keep myself in readiness for thee; and entering my heart unbidden even as one of the common crowd, unknown to me, my king, thou didst press the signet of eternity upon many a fleeting moment of my life.

And to-day when by chance I light upon them and see thy signature, I find they have lain scattered in the dust mixed with the memory of joys and sorrows of my trivial days forgotten.

Thou didst not turn in contempt from my childish play among dust, and the steps that I heard in my playroom are the same that are echoing from star to star.

44

THIS IS MY delight, thus to wait and watch at the wayside where shadow chases light and the rain comes in the wake of the summer.

Messengers, with tidings from unknown skies, greet me and speed along the road. My heart is glad within, and the breath of the passing breeze is sweet.

From dawn till dusk I sit here before my door, and I know that of a sudden the happy moment will arrive when I shall see.

In the meanwhile I smile and I sing all alone. In the meanwhile the air is filling with the perfume of promise.

45

HAVE YOU NOT heard his silent steps? He comes, comes, ever comes.

Every moment and every age, every day and every night he comes, comes, ever comes.

Many a song have I sung in many a mood of mind, but all their notes have always proclaimed, 'He comes, comes, ever comes.'

GITANJALI

In the fragrant days of sunny April through the forest path he comes,
comes, ever comes.

In the rainy gloom of July nights on the thundering chariot of clouds
he comes, comes, ever comes.

In sorrow after sorrow it is his steps that press upon my heart, and
it is the golden touch of his feet that makes my joy to shine.

46

I KNOW NOT from what distant time thou art ever coming nearer to meet
me. Thy sun and stars can never keep thee hidden from me for aye.

In many a morning and eve thy footsteps have been heard and thy
messenger has come within my heart and called me in secret.

I know not why to-day my life is all astir, and a feeling of tremulous
joy is passing through my heart.

It is as if the time were come to wind up my work, and I feel in the
air a faint smell of thy sweet presence.

47

THE NIGHT IS nearly spent waiting for him in vain. I fear lest in the morning
he suddenly come to my door when I have fallen asleep wearied out. Oh
friends, leave the way open to him—forbid him not.

If the sound of his steps does not wake me, do not try to rouse me,
I pray. I wish not to be called from my sleep by the clamorous choir of
birds, by the riot of wind at the festival of morning light. Let me sleep
undisturbed even if my lord comes of a sudden to my door.

Ah, my sleep, precious sleep, which only waits for his touch to vanish.
Ah, my closed eyes that would open their lids only to the light of his smile
when he stands before me like a dream emerging from darkness of sleep.

Let him appear before my sight as the first of all lights and all forms.
The first thrill of joy to my awakened soul let it come from his glance.
And let my return to myself be immediate return to him.

48

THE MORNING sea of silence broke into ripples of bird songs; and the flowers
were all merry by the roadside; and the wealth of gold was scattered through
the rift of the clouds while we busily went on our way and paid no heed.

We sang no glad songs nor played; we went not to the village for barter; we spoke not a word nor smiled; we lingered not on the way. We quickened our pace more and more as the time sped by.

The sun rose to the mid sky and doves cooed in the shade. Withered leaves danced and whirled in the hot air of noon. The shepherd boy drowsed and dreamed in the shadow of the banyan tree, and I laid myself down by the water and stretched my tired limbs on the grass.

My companions laughed at me in scorn; they held their heads high and hurried on; they never looked back nor rested; they vanished in the distant blue haze. They crossed many meadows and hills, and passed through strange, far-away countries. All honour to you, heroic host of the interminable path! Mockery and reproach pricked me to rise, but found no response in me. I gave myself up for lost in the depth of a glad humiliation—in the shadow of a dim delight.

The repose of the sun-embroidered green gloom slowly spread over my heart. I forgot for what I had travelled, and I surrendered my mind without struggle to the maze of shadows and songs.

At last, when I woke from my slumber and opened my eyes, I saw thee standing by me, flooding my sleep with thy smile. How I had feared that the path was long and wearisome, and the struggle to reach thee was hard!

49

YOU CAME DOWN from your throne and stood at my cottage door.

I was singing all alone in a corner, and the melody caught your ear. You came down and stood at my cottage door.

Masters are many in your hall, and songs are sung there at all hours. But the simple carol of this novice struck at your love. One plaintive little strain mingled with the great music of the world, and with a flower for a prize you came down and stopped at my cottage door.

50

I HAD GONE a-begging from door to door in the village path, when thy golden chariot appeared in the distance like a gorgeous dream and I wondered who was this King of all kings!

My hopes rose high and methought my evil days were at an end, and

I stood waiting for alms to be given unasked and for wealth scattered on all sides in the dust.

The chariot stopped where I stood. Thy glance fell on me and thou camest down with a smile. I felt that the luck of my life had come at last. Then of a sudden thou didst hold out thy right hand and say 'What hast thou to give to me?'

Ah, what a kingly jest was it to open thy palm to a beggar to beg! I was confused and stood undecided, and then from my wallet I slowly took out the least little grain of corn and gave it to thee.

But how great my surprise when at the day's end I emptied my bag on the floor to find a least little grain of gold among the poor heap. I bitterly wept and wished that I had had the heart to give thee my all.

51

THE NIGHT darkened. Our day's works had been done. We thought that the last guest had arrived for the night and the doors in the village were all shut. Only some said, The king was to come. We laughed and said 'No, it cannot be!'

It seemed there were knocks at the door and we said it was nothing but the wind. We put out the lamps and lay down to sleep. Only some said, 'It is the messenger!' We laughed and said 'No, it must be the wind!'

There came a sound in the dead of the night. We sleepily thought it was the distant thunder. The earth shook, the walls rocked, and it troubled us in our sleep. Only some said, it was the sound of wheels. We said in a drowsy murmur, 'No, it must be the rumbling of clouds!'

The night was still dark when the drum sounded. The voice came 'Wake up! delay not!' We pressed our hands on our hearts and shuddered with fear. Some said, 'Lo, there is the king's flag!' We stood up on our feet and cried 'There is no time for delay!'

The king has come—but where are lights, where are wreaths? Where is the throne to seat him? Oh, shame, Oh utter shame! Where is the hall, the decorations? Some one¹ has said, 'Vain is this cry! Greet him with empty hands, lead him into thy rooms all bare!'

Open the doors, let the conch-shells be sounded! In the depth of the night has come the king of our dark, dreary house. The thunder roars in the sky. The darkness shudders with lightning. Bring out thy tattered

¹ First edition: 'Someone'. See Notes.—Editor

piece of mat and spread it in the courtyard. With the storm has come of a sudden our king of the fearful night.

52

I THOUGHT I should ask of thee—but I dared not—the rose wreath thou hadst on thy neck. Thus I waited for the morning, when thou didst depart, to find a few fragments on the bed. And like a beggar I searched in the dawn only for a stray petal or two.

Ah me, what is it I find? What token left of thy love? It is no flower, no spices, no vase of perfumed water. It is thy mighty sword, flashing as a flame, heavy as a bolt of thunder. The young light of morning comes through the window and spreads itself upon thy bed. The morning bird twitters and asks, 'Woman, what hast thou got?' No, it is no flower, nor spices, nor vase of perfumed water—it is thy dreadful sword.

I sit and muse in wonder, what gift is this of thine. I can find no place where to hide it. I am ashamed to wear it, frail as I am, and it hurts me when I press it to my bosom. Yet shall I bear in my heart this honour of the burden of pain, this gift of thine.

From now there shall be no fear left for me in this world, and thou shalt be victorious in all my strife. Thou hast left death for my companion and I shall crown him with my life. Thy sword is with me to cut asunder my bonds, and there shall be no fear left for me in the world.

From now I leave off all petty decorations. Lord of my heart, no more shall there be for me waiting and weeping in corners, no more coyness and sweetness of demeanour.¹ Thou hast given me thy sword for adornment. No more doll's decorations for me!

53

BEAUTIFUL is thy wristlet, decked with stars and cunningly wrought in myriad-coloured jewels. But more beautiful to me thy sword with its curve of lightning like the outspread wings of the divine bird of Vishnu, perfectly poised in the angry red light of the sunset.

It quivers like the one last response of life in ecstasy of pain at the final stroke of death; it shines like the pure flame of being burning up earthly sense with one fierce flash.

¹ First edition: 'shy and soft demeanour'. See Notes.—Editor

Beautiful is thy wristlet, decked with starry gems; but thy sword, O lord of thunder, is wrought with uttermost beauty, terrible to behold or to think of.

54

I ASKED nothing from thee; I uttered not my name to thine ear. When thou took'st thy leave I stood silent. I was alone by the well where the shadow of the tree fell aslant, and the women had gone home with their brown earthen pitchers full to the brim. They called me and shouted, 'Come with us, the morning is wearing on to noon.' But I languidly lingered awhile lost in the midst of vague musings.

I heard not thy steps as thou camest. Thine eyes were sad when they fell on me; thy voice was tired as thou spokest low—'Ah, I am a thirsty traveller.' I started up from my day-dreams and poured water from my jar on thy joined palms. The leaves rustled overhead; the cuckoo sang from the unseen dark, and perfume of *babla* flowers came from the bend of the road.

I stood speechless with shame when my name thou didst ask. Indeed, what had I done for thee to keep me in remembrance? But the memory that I could give water to thee to allay thy thirst will cling to my heart and enfold it in sweetness. The morning hour is late, the bird sings in weary notes, *neem* leaves rustle overhead and I sit and think and think.

55

LANGUOR IS upon your heart and the slumber is still on your eyes.

Has not the word come to you that the flower is reigning in splendour among thorns? Wake, oh awaken! Let not the time pass in vain!

At the end of the stony path, in the country of virgin solitude my friend is sitting all alone. Deceive him not. Wake, oh awaken!

What if the sky pants and trembles with the heat of the midday sun—what if the burning sand spreads its mantle of thirst—

Is there no joy in the deep of your heart? At every footfall of yours, will not the harp of the road break out in sweet music of pain?

girl it lay pervading her heart in tender and silent mystery of love—the sweet, soft freshness that has bloomed on baby's limbs.

62

WHEN I BRING to you coloured toys, my child, I understand why there is such a play of colours on clouds, on water, and why flowers are painted in tints—when I give coloured toys to you, my child.

When I sing to make you dance I truly know why there is music in leaves, and why waves send their chorus of voices to the heart of the listening earth—when I sing to make you dance.

When I bring sweet things to your greedy hands I know why there is honey in the cup of the flower and why fruits are secretly filled with sweet juice—when I bring sweet things to your greedy hands.

When I kiss your face to make you smile, my darling, I surely understand what the pleasure is that streams from the sky in morning light, and what delight that is which the summer breeze brings to my body—when I kiss you to make you smile.

63

THOU HAST made me known to friends whom I knew not. Thou hast given me seats in homes not my own. Thou hast brought the distant near and made a brother of the stranger.

I am uneasy at heart when I have to leave my accustomed shelter; I forget that there abides the old in the new, and that there also thou abidest.

Through birth and death, in this world or in others, wherever thou leadest me it is thou, the same, the one companion of my endless life who ever linkest my heart with bonds of joy to the unfamiliar.

When one knows thee, then alien there is none, then no door is shut. Oh, grant me my prayer that I may never lose the bliss of the touch of the one in the play of the many.

64

ON THE SLOPE of the desolate river among tall grasses I asked her, 'Maiden, where do you go shading your lamp with your mantle? My house is all

[illegible]

Then, heart made known to me friends when I was not
Then heart gives me seats in homes not my own. Then
last being brought the distant near and made both
of the stranger. I am uneasy at heart when I have
to my accustomed shelter; I forget that there
abides then the changeless old in the changing and
though birth and death, in this world or in others,
wherever then leadest me it is then the same one
companion of my endless life who ever hastest
my heart with bonds of joy to the unfamiliar.
When ^{one} knows thee then alien there is none, then no
door is shut. Oh, grant me this my prayer that
I may never lose the bliss of the touch of One
in the play of the diverse many.

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dark and lonesome—lend me your light!’ She raised her dark eyes for a moment and looked at my face through the dusk. ‘I have come to the river,’ she said, ‘to float my lamp on the stream when the daylight wanes in the west.’ I stood alone among tall grasses and watched the timid flame of her lamp uselessly drifting in the tide.

In the silence of gathering night I asked her, ‘Maiden, your lights are all lit—then where do you go with your lamp? My house is all dark and lonesome,—lend me your light.’ She raised her dark eyes on my face and stood for a moment doubtful. ‘I have come,’ she said at last, ‘to dedicate my lamp to the sky.’ I stood and watched her light uselessly burning in the void.

In the moonless gloom of midnight I asked her, ‘Maiden, what is your quest holding the lamp near your heart? My house is all dark and lonesome,—lend me your light.’ She stopped for a minute and thought and gazed at my face in the dark. ‘I have brought my light,’ she said, ‘to join the carnival of lamps.’ I stood and watched her little lamp uselessly lost among lights.

65

WHAT DIVINE drink wouldst thou have, my God, from this overflowing cup of my life? My poet, is it thy delight to see thy creation through my eyes and to stand at the portals of my ears silently to listen to thine own eternal harmony?

Thy world is weaving words in my mind and thy joy is adding music to them. Thou givest thyself to me in love and then feelest thine own entire sweetness in me.

66

SHE WHO EVER had remained in the depth of my being, in the twilight of gleams and of glimpses; she who never opened her veils in the morning light, will be my last gift to thee, my God, folded in my final song.

Words have wooed yet failed to win her; persuasion has stretched to her its eager arms in vain.

I have roamed from country to country keeping her in the core of my heart, and around her have risen and fallen the growth and decay of my life.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

Over my thoughts and actions, my slumbers and dreams, she reigned
yet dwelled alone and apart.

Many a man knocked at my door and asked for her and turned away
in despair.

There was none in the world who ever saw her face to face, and she
remained in her loneliness waiting for thy recognition.

67

THOU ART THE sky and thou art the nest as well.

O thou beautiful, there in the nest it is thy love that encloses the soul
with colours and sounds and odours.

There comes the morning with the golden basket in her right hand
bearing the wreath of beauty, silently to crown the earth.

And there comes the evening over the lonely meadows deserted by
herds, through trackless paths, carrying cool draughts of peace in her
golden pitcher from the western ocean of rest.

But there, where spreads the infinite sky for the soul to take her flight
in, reigns the stainless white radiance. There is no day nor night, nor form
nor colour, and never, never a word.

68

THY SUNBEAM comes upon this earth of mine with arms outstretched and
stands at my door the livelong day to carry back to thy feet clouds made
of my tears and sighs and songs.

With fond delight thou wrappest about thy starry breast that mantle
of misty cloud, turning it into numberless shapes and folds and colouring
it with hues everchanging.

It is so light and so fleeting, tender and tearful and dark, that is why
thou lovest it, O thou spotless and serene. And that is why it may cover
thy awful white light with its pathetic shadows.

69

THE SAME stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs
through the world and dances in rhythmic measures.

It is the same life that shoots in joy through the dust of the earth

in numberless blades of grass and breaks into tumultuous waves of leaves and flowers.

It is the same life that is rocked in the ocean-cradle of birth and of death, in ebb and in flow.

I feel my limbs are made glorious by the touch of this world of life. And my pride is from the life-throb of ages dancing in my blood this moment.

70

IS IT BEYOND thee to be glad with the gladness of this rhythm? to be tossed and lost and broken in the whirl of this fearful joy?

All things rush on, they stop not, they look not behind, no power can hold them back, they rush on.

Keeping steps with that restless, rapid music, seasons come dancing and pass away—colours, tunes, and perfumes pour in endless cascades in the abounding joy that scatters and gives up and dies every moment.

71

THAT I SHOULD make much of myself and turn it on all sides, thus casting coloured shadows on thy radiance—such is thy *maya*.

Thou settest a barrier in thine own being and then callest thy severed self in myriad notes. This thy self-separation has taken body in me.

The poignant song is echoed through all the sky in many-coloured tears and smiles, alarms and hopes; waves rise up and sink again, dreams break and form. In me is thy own defeat of self.

This screen that thou has raised is painted with innumerable figures with the brush of the night and the day. Behind it thy seat is woven in wondrous mysteries of curves, casting away all barren lines of straightness.

The great pageant of thee and me has overspread the sky. With the tune of thee and me all the air is vibrant, and all ages pass with the hiding and seeking of thee and me.

72

HE IT IS, the innermost one, who awakens my being with his deep hidden touches.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

He it is who puts his enchantment upon these eyes and joyfully plays on the chords of my heart in varied cadence of pleasure and pain.

He it is who weaves the web of this *maya* in evanescent hues of gold and silver, blue and green, and lets peep out through the folds his feet, at whose touch I forget myself.

Days come and ages pass, and it is ever he who moves my heart in many a name, in many a guise, in many a rapture of joy and of sorrow.

73

DELIVERANCE IS NOT for me in renunciation. I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight.

Thou ever pourest for me the fresh draught of thy wine of various colours and fragrance, filling this earthen vessel to the brim.

My world will light its hundred different lamps with thy flame and place them before the altar of thy temple.

No, I will never shut the doors of my senses. The delights of sight and hearing and touch will bear thy delight.

Yes, all my illusions will burn into illumination of joy, and all my desires ripen into fruits of love.

74

THE DAY IS NO more, the shadow is upon the earth. It is time that I go to the stream to fill my pitcher.

The evening air is eager with the sad music of the water. Ah, it calls me out into the dusk. In the lonely lane there is no passer by, the wind is up, the ripples are rampant in the river.

I know not if I shall come back home. I know not whom I shall chance to meet. There at the fording in the little boat the unknown man plays upon his lute.

75

THY GIFTS TO us mortals fulfil all our needs and yet run back to thee undiminished.

The river has its everyday work to do and hastens through fields and hamlets; yet its incessant stream winds towards the washing of thy feet.

The flower sweetens the air with its perfume; yet its last service is to offer itself to thee.

Thy worship does not impoverish the world.

From the words of the poet men take what meanings please them; yet their last meaning points to thee.

76

DAY AFTER DAY, O lord of my life, shall I stand before thee face to face? With folded hands, O lord of all worlds, shall I stand before thee face to face?

Under thy great sky in solitude and silence, with humble heart shall I stand before thee face to face?

In this laborious world of thine, tumultuous with toil and with struggle, among hurrying crowds shall I stand before thee face to face?

And when my work shall be done in this world, O King of kings, alone and speechless shall I stand before thee face to face?

77

I KNOW THEE as my God and stand apart—I do not know thee as my own and come closer. I know thee as my father and bow before thy feet—I do not grasp thy hand as my friend's.

I stand not where thou comest down and ownest thyself as mine, there to clasp thee to my heart and take thee as my comrade.

Thou art the Brother amongst my brothers, but I heed them not, I divide not my earnings with them, thus sharing my all with thee.

In pleasure and in pain I stand not by the side of men, and thus stand by thee. I shrink to give up my life, and thus do not plunge into the great waters of life.

78

WHEN THE creation was new and all the stars shone in their first splendour, the gods held their assembly in the sky and sang 'Oh, the picture of perfection! the joy unalloyed!'

But one cried of a sudden—'It seems that somewhere there is a break in the chain of light and one of the stars has been lost.'

The golden string of their harp snapped, their song stopped, and they cried in dismay—'Yes, that lost star was the best, she was the glory of all heavens!'

From that day the search is unceasing for her, and the cry goes on from one to the other that in her the world has lost its one joy!

Only in the deepest silence of night the stars smile and whisper among themselves—'Vain is this seeking! Unbroken perfection is over all!'

79

IF IT IS NOT my portion to meet thee in this my life then let me ever feel that I have missed thy sight—let me not forget for a moment, let me carry the pangs of this sorrow in my dreams and in my wakeful hours.

As my days pass in the crowded market of this world and my hands grow full with the daily profits, let me ever feel that I have gained nothing—let me not forget for a moment, let me carry the pangs of this sorrow in my dreams and in my wakeful hours.

When I sit by the roadside, tired and panting, when I spread my bed low in the dust, let me ever feel that the long journey is still before me—let me not forget for a moment, let me carry the pangs of this sorrow in my dreams and in my wakeful hours.

When my rooms have been decked out and the flutes sound and the laughter there is loud, let me ever feel that I have not invited thee to my house—let me not forget for a moment, let me carry the pangs of this sorrow in my dreams and in my wakeful hours.

80

I AM LIKE A remnant of a cloud of autumn uselessly roaming in the sky, O my sun ever glorious! Thy touch has not yet melted my vapour, making me one with thy light, and thus I count months and years separated from thee.

If this be thy wish and if this be thy play, then take this fleeting emptiness of mine, paint it with colours, gild it with gold, float it on the wanton wind and spread it in varied wonders.

And again when it shall be thy wish to end this play at night, I shall melt and vanish away in the dark, or it may be in a smile of the white morning, in a coolness of purity transparent.

ON MANY AN idle day have I grieved over lost time. But it is never lost, my lord. Thou hast taken every moment of my life in thine own hands.

Hidden in the heart of things thou art nourishing seeds into sprouts, buds into blossoms, and ripening flowers into fruitfulness.

I was tired and sleeping on my idle bed and imagined all work had ceased. In the morning I woke up and found my garden full with wonders of flowers.

TIME is endless in thy hands, my lord. There is none to count thy minutes.

Days and nights pass and ages bloom and fade like flowers. Thou knowest how to wait.

Thy centuries follow each other perfecting a small wild flower.

We have no time to lose, and having no time we must scramble for our chances. We are too poor to be late.

And thus it is that time goes by while I give it to every querulous man who claims it, and thine altar is empty of all offerings to the last.

At the end of the day I hasten in fear lest thy gate be shut; but I find that yet there is time.

MOTHER, I shall weave a chain of pearls for thy neck with my tears of sorrow.

The stars have wrought their anklets of light to deck thy feet, but mine will hang upon thy breast.

Wealth and fame come from thee and it is for thee to give or to withhold them. But this my sorrow is absolutely mine own, and when I bring it to thee as my offering thou rewardest me with thy grace.

IT IS THE pang of separation that spreads throughout the world and gives birth to shapes innumerable in the infinite sky.

It is this sorrow of separation that gazes in silence all night from star to star and becomes lyric among rustling leaves in rainy darkness of July.

It is this overspreading pain that deepens into loves and desires, into sufferings and joys in human homes; and this it is that ever melts and flows in songs through my poet's heart.

85

WHEN THE warriors came out first from their master's hall, where had they hid their power? Where were their armour and their arms?

They looked poor and helpless, and the arrows were showered upon them on the day they came out from their master's hall.

When the warriors marched back again to their master's hall where did they hide their power?

They had dropped the sword and dropped the bow and the arrow; peace was on their foreheads, and they had left the fruits of their life behind them on the day they marched back again to their master's hall.

86

DEATH, THY servant, is at my door. He has crossed the unknown sea and brought thy call to my home.

The night is dark and my heart is fearful—yet I will take up the lamp, open my gates and bow to him my welcome. It is thy messenger who stands at my door.

I will worship him with folded hands, and with tears. I will worship him placing at his feet the treasure of my heart.

He will go back with his errand done, leaving a dark shadow on my morning; and in my desolate home only my forlorn self will remain as my last offering to thee.

87

IN DESPERATE hope I go and search for her in all the corners of my room; I find her not.

My house is small and what once has gone from it can never be regained.

But infinite is thy mansion, my lord,¹ and seeking her I have come to thy door.

¹ First edition: 'Lord' See Notes.—Editor

I stand under the golden canopy of thine evening sky and I lift my eager eyes to thy face.

I have come to the brink of eternity from which nothing can vanish—no hope, no happiness, no vision of a face seen through tears.

Oh, dip my emptied life into that ocean, plunge it into the deepest fullness. Let me for once feel that lost sweet touch in the allness of the universe.

88

DEITY OF THE ruined temple! The broken strings of *Vina* sing no more your praise. The bells in the evening proclaim not your time of worship. The air is still and silent about you.

In your desolate dwelling comes the vagrant spring breeze. It brings the tidings of flowers—the flowers that for your worship are offered no more.

Your worshipper of old wanders ever longing for favour still refused. In the eventide, when fires and shadows mingle with the gloom of dust, he wearily comes back to the ruined temple with hunger in his heart.

Many a festival day comes to you in silence, deity of the ruined temple. Many a night of worship goes away with lamp unlit.

Many new images are built by masters of cunning art and carried to the holy stream of oblivion when their time is come.

Only the deity of the ruined temple remains unworshipped in deathless neglect.

89

NO MORE NOISY, loud words from me—such is my master's will. Henceforth I deal in whispers. The speech of my heart will be carried on in murmurings of a song.

Men hasten to the King's market. All the buyers and sellers are there. But I have my untimely leave in the middle of the day, in the thick of work.

Let then the flowers come out in my garden, though it is not their time; and let the midday bees strike up their lazy hum.

Full many an hour have I spent in the strife of the good and the evil, but now it is the pleasure of my playmate of the empty days to draw my

heart on to him; and I know not why is this sudden call to what useless in consequence!

90

ON THE DAY when death will knock at thy door what wilt thou offer to him?

Oh, I will set before my guest the full vessel of my life—I will never let him go with empty hands.

All the sweet vintage of all my autumn days and summer nights, all the earnings and gleanings of my busy life will I place before him at the close of my days when death will knock at my door.

91

O THOU THE last fulfilment of life, Death, my death, come and whisper to me!

Day after day have I kept watch for thee; for thee have I borne the joys and pangs of life.

All that I am, that I have, that I hope and all my love have ever flowed towards thee in depth of secrecy. One final glance from thine eyes and my life will be ever thine own.

The flowers have been woven and the garland is ready for the bridegroom. After the wedding the bride shall leave her home and meet her lord alone in the solitude of night.

92

I KNOW THAT the day will come when my sight of this earth shall be lost, and life will take its leave in silence, drawing the last curtain over my eyes.

Yet stars will watch at night, and morning rise as before, and hours heave like sea waves casting up pleasures and pains.

When I think of this end of my moments, the barrier of the moments breaks and I see by the light of death thy world with its careless treasures. Rare is its lowliest seat, rare is its meanest of lives.

Things that I longed for in vain and things that I got—let them pass. Let me but truly possess the things that I ever spurned and overlooked.

I HAVE GOT my leave. Bid me farewell, my brothers! I bow to you all and take my departure.

Here I give back the keys of my door—and I give up all claims to my house, I only ask for last kind words from you.

We were neighbours for long, but I received more than I could give. Now the day has dawned and the lamp that lit my dark corner is out. A summons has come and I am ready for my journey.

AT THIS TIME of my parting, wish me good luck, my friends! The sky is flushed with the dawn and my path lies beautiful.

Ask not what I have with me to take there, I start on my journey with empty hands and expectant heart.

I shall put on my wedding garland. Mine is not the red-brown dress of the traveller, and though there are dangers on the way I have no fear in my mind.

The evening star will come out when my voyage is done and the plaintive notes of the twilight melodies be struck up from the King's gateway.

I WAS NOT aware of the moment when I first crossed the threshold of this life.

What was the power that made me open out into this vast mystery like a bud in the forest at midnight!

When in the morning I looked upon the light I felt in a moment that I was no stranger in this world, that the inscrutable without name and form had taken me in its arms in the form of my own mother.

Even so, in death the same unknown will appear as ever known to me. And because I love this life, I know I shall love death as well.

The child cries out when from the right breast the mother takes it away, in the very next moment to find in the left one its consolation.

WHEN I GO from hence let this be my parting word, that what I have seen is unsurpassable.

I have tasted of the hidden honey of this lotus that expands on the ocean of light, and thus am I blessed—let this be my parting word.

In this playhouse of infinite forms I have had my play and here have I caught sight of him that is formless.

My whole body and my limbs have thrilled with his touch who is beyond touch; and if the end comes here, let it come—let this be my parting word.

WHEN MY play was with thee I never questioned who thou wert. I knew nor shyness nor fear, my life was boisterous.

In the early morning thou wouldst call me from my sleep like my own comrade and lead me running from glade to glade.

On those days I never cared to know the meaning of songs thou sangest to me. Only my voice took up the tunes, and my heart danced in their cadence.

Now, when the playtime is over, what is this sudden sight that is come upon me? The world with eyes bent upon thy feet stands in awe with all its silent stars.

I WILL DECK thee with trophies, garlands of my defeat. It is never in my power to escape unconquered.

I surely know my pride will go to the wall, my life will burst its bonds in exceeding pain, and my empty heart will sob out in music like a hollow reed, and the stone will melt in tears.

I surely know the hundred petals of a lotus will not remain closed for ever and the secret recess of its honey will be bared.

From the blue sky an eye shall gaze upon me and summon me in silence. Nothing will be left for me, nothing whatever and utter death shall I receive at thy feet.

WHEN I GIVE up the helm I know that the time has come for thee to take it. What there is to do will be instantly done. Vain is this struggle.

Then take away your hands and silently put up with your defeat, my heart, and think it your good fortune to sit perfectly still where you are placed.

These my lamps are blown out at every little puff of wind, and trying to light them I forget all else again and again.

But I shall be wise this time and wait in the dark, spreading my mat on the floor; and whenever it is thy pleasure, my lord, come silently and take thy seat here.

I DIVE DOWN into the depth of the ocean of forms, hoping to gain the perfect pearl of the formless.

No more sailing from harbour to harbour with this my weather-beaten boat. The days are long passed when my sport was to be tossed on waves.

And now I am eager to die into the deathless.

Into the audience hall by the fathomless abyss where swells up the music of toneless strings I shall take this harp of my life.

I shall tune it to the notes of for ever, and, when it has sobbed out its last utterance, lay down my silent harp at the feet of the silent.

EVER IN MY life have I sought thee with my songs. It was they who led me from door to door, and with them have I felt about me, searching and touching my world.

It was my songs that taught me all the lessons I ever learnt; they showed me secret paths, they brought before my sight many a star on the horizon of my heart.

They guided me all the day long to the mysteries of the country of pleasure and pain, and, at last, to what palace gate have they brought me in the evening at the end of my journey?

I BOASTED among men that I had known you. They see your pictures in all works of mine. They come and ask me, 'Who is he?' I know not how to answer them. I say, 'Indeed, I cannot tell.' They blame me and they go away in scorn. And you sit there smiling.

I put my tales of you into lasting songs. The secret gushes out from my heart. They come and ask me, 'Tell me all your meanings.' I know not how to answer them. I say, 'Ah, who knows what they mean!' They smile and go away in utter scorn. And you sit there smiling.

IN ONE salutation to thee, my God, let all my senses spread out and touch this world at thy feet.

Like a rain-cloud of July hung low with its burden of unshed showers let all my mind bend down at thy door in one salutation to thee.

Let all my songs gather together their diverse strains into a single current and flow to a sea of silence in one salutation to thee.

Like a flock of homesick cranes flying night and day back to their mountain nests let all my life take its voyage to its eternal home in one salutation to thee.

PREFACE

MOST OF THE lyrics of love and life, the translations of which from Bengali are published in this book, were written much earlier than the series of religious poems contained in the book named *Gitanjali*. The translations are not always literal—the originals being sometimes abridged and sometimes paraphrased.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

SERVANT

HAVE MERCY upon your servant, my queen!

QUEEN

The assembly is over and my servants are all gone. Why do you come at this late hour?

SERVANT

When you have finished with others, that is my time.

I come to ask what remains for your last servant to do.

QUEEN

What can you expect when it is too late?

SERVANT

Make me the gardener of your flower garden.

QUEEN

What folly is this?

SERVANT

I will give up my other work.

I throw my swords and lances down in the dust. Do not send me to distant courts; do not bid me undertake new conquests. But make me the gardener of your flower garden.

QUEEN

What will your duties be?

SERVANT

The service of your idle days.

I will keep fresh the grassy path where you walk in the morning, where your feet will be greeted with praise at every step by the flowers eager for death.

I will swing you in a swing among the branches of the *saptaparna*, where the early evening moon will struggle to kiss your skirt through the leaves.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

I will replenish with scented oil the lamp that burns by your bedside, and decorate your footstool with sandal and saffron paste in wondrous designs.

QUEEN

What will you have for your reward?

SERVANT

To be allowed to hold your little fists like tender lotus-buds and slip flower chains over your wrists; to tinge the soles of your feet with the red juice of *ashoka* petals and kiss away the speck of dust that may chance to linger there.

QUEEN

Your prayers are granted, my servant, you will be the gardener of my flower garden.

2

'Ah, poet, the evening draws near; your hair is turning grey.

'Do you in your lonely musing hear the message of the hereafter?'

'It is evening,' the poet said, 'and I am listening because some one may call from the village, late though it be.

'I watch if young straying hearts meet together, and two pairs of eager eyes beg for music to break their silence and speak for them.

'Who is there to weave their passionate songs, if I sit on the shore of life and contemplate death and the beyond?'

'The early evening star disappears.

'The glow of a funeral pyre slowly dies by the silent river.

'Jackals cry in chorus from the courtyard of the deserted house in the light of the worn-out moon.

'If some wanderer, leaving home, come here to watch the night and with bowed head listen to the murmur of the darkness, who is there to whisper the secrets of life into his ears if I, shutting my doors, should try to free myself from mortal bonds?'

THE GARDENER

'It is a trifle that my hair is turning grey.

I am ever as young or as old as the youngest and the oldest of this village.

'Some have smiles, sweet and simple, and some a sly twinkle in their eyes.

'Some have tears that well up in the daylight, and others tears that are hidden in the gloom.

'They all have need for me, and I have no time to brood over the afterlife.

'I am of an age with each, what matter if my hair turns grey?'

3

IN THE MORNING I cast my net into the sea.

I dragged up from the dark abyss things of strange aspect and strange beauty—some shone like a smile, some glistened like tears, and some were flushed like the cheeks of a bride.

When with the day's burden I went home, my love was sitting in the garden idly tearing the leaves of a flower.

I hesitated for a moment, and then placed at her feet all that I had dragged up, and stood silent.

She glanced at them and said, 'What strange things are these? I know not of what use they are!'

I bowed my head in shame and thought, 'I have not fought for these, I did not buy them in the market; they are not fit gifts for her.'

Then the whole night through I flung them one by one into the street.

In the morning travellers came; they picked them up and carried them into far countries.

4

AH ME, WHY did they build my house by the road to the market town?

They moor their laden boats near my trees.

They come and go and wander at their will.

I sit and watch them; my time wears on.

Turn them away I cannot. And thus my days pass by.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

Night and day their steps sound by my door.

Vainly I cry, 'I do not know you.'

Some of them are known to my fingers, some to my nostrils, the blood in my veins seems to know them, and some are known to my dreams.

Turn them away I cannot. I call them and say, 'Come to my house whoever chooses. Yes, come.'

In the morning the bell rings in the temple.

They come with their baskets in their hands.

Their feet are rosy red. The early light of dawn is on their faces.

Turn them away I cannot. I call them and I say, 'Come to my garden to gather flowers. Come hither.'

In the mid-day the gong sounds at the palace gate.

I know not why they leave their work and linger near my hedge.

The flowers in their hair are pale and faded; the notes are languid in their flutes.

Turn them away I cannot. I call them and say, 'The shade is cool under my trees. Come, friends.'

At night the crickets chirp in the woods.

Who is it that comes slowly to my door and gently knocks?

I vaguely see the face, not a word is spoken, the stillness of the sky is all around.

Turn away my silent guest I cannot. I look at the face through the dark, and hours of dreams pass by.

5

I AM RESTLESS. I am athirst for faraway things.

My soul goes out in a longing to touch the skirt of the dim distance.

O Great Beyond, O the keen call of thy flute!

I forget, I ever forget, that I have no wings to fly, that I am bound in this spot evermore.

I am eager and wakeful, I am a stranger in a strange land.

Thy breath comes to me whispering an impossible hope.

Thy tongue is known to my heart as its very own.

THE GARDENER

O Far-to-seek, O the keen call of thy flute!
I forget, I ever forget, that I know not the way, that I have not the winged horse.

I am listless, I am a wanderer in my heart.
In the sunny haze of the languid hours, what vast vision of thine takes shape in the blue of the sky!
O Farthest end, O the keen call of thy flute!
I forget, I ever forget, that the gates are shut everywhere in the house where I dwell alone!

6

THE TAME BIRD WAS in a cage, the free bird was in the forest.
They met when the time came, it was a decree of fate.
The free bird cries, 'O my love, let us fly to wood.'
The cage bird whispers, 'Come hither, let us both live in the cage.'
Says the free bird, 'Among bars, where is there room to spread one's wings?'
'Alas,' cries the cage bird, 'I should not know where to sit perched in the sky.'

The free bird cries, 'My darling, sing the songs of the woodlands.'
The cage bird says, 'Sit by my side, I'll teach you the speech of the learned.'
The forest bird cries, 'No, ah no! songs can never be taught.'
The cage bird says, 'Alas for me, I know not the songs of the woodlands.'

Their love is intense with longing, but they never can fly wing to wing.
Through the bars of the cage they look, and vain is their wish to know each other.
They flutter their wings in yearning, and sing, 'Come closer, my love!'
The free bird cries, 'It cannot be, I fear the closed doors of the cage.'
The cage bird whispers, 'Alas, my wings are powerless and dead.'

O MOTHER, the young Prince is to pass by our door,—how can I attend to my work this morning?

Show me how to braid up my hair; tell me what garment to put on.

Why do you look at me amazed, mother?

I know well he will not glance up once at my window; I know he will pass out of my sight in the twinkling of an eye; only the vanishing strain of the flute will come sobbing to me from afar.

But the young Prince will pass by our door, and I will put on my best for the moment.

O mother, the young Prince did pass by our door, and the morning sun flashed from his chariot.

I swept aside the veil from my face, I tore the ruby chain from my neck and flung it in his path.

Why do you look at me amazed, mother?

I know well he did not pick up my chain; I know it was crushed under his wheels leaving a red stain upon the dust, and no one knows what my gift was nor to whom.

But the young Prince did pass by our door, and I flung the jewel from my breast before his path.

WHEN THE LAMP went out by my bed I woke up with the early birds.

I sat at my open window with a fresh wreath on my loose hair.

The young traveller came along the road in the rosy mist of the morning.

A pearl chain was on his neck, and the sun's rays fell on his crown. He stopped before my door and asked me with an eager cry, 'Where is she?'

For very shame I could not say, 'She is I, young traveller, she is I.'

It was dusk and the lamp was not lit.

I was listlessly braiding my hair.

The young traveller came on his chariot in the glow of the setting sun.

THE GARDENER

His horses were foaming at the mouth, and there was dust on his garment.

He alighted at my door and asked in a tired voice, 'Where is she?'

For very shame I could not say, 'She is I, weary traveller, she is I.'

It is an April night. The lamp is burning in my room.

The breeze of the south comes gently. The noisy parrot sleeps in its cage.

My bodice is of the colour of the peacock's throat, and my mantle is green as young grass.

I sit upon the floor at the window watching the deserted street.

Through the dark night I keep humming, 'She is I, despairing traveller, she is I.'

9

WHEN I GO ALONE at night to my love-tryst, birds do not sing, the wind does not stir, the houses on both sides of the street stand silent.

It is my own anklets that grow loud at every step and I am ashamed.

When I sit on my balcony and listen for his footsteps, leaves do not rustle on the trees, and the water is still in the river like the sword on the knees of a sentry fallen asleep.

It is my own heart that beats wildly—I do not know how to quiet it.

When my love comes and sits by my side, when my body trembles and my eyelids droop, the night darkens, the wind blows out the lamp, and the clouds draw veils over the stars.

It is the jewel at my own breast that shines and gives light. I do not know how to hide it.

10

LET YOUR WORK be, bride. Listen, the guest has come.

Do you hear, he is gently shaking the chain which fastens the door?

See that your anklets make no loud noise, and that your step is not over-hurried at meeting him.

Let your work be, bride, the guest has come in the evening.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

No, it is not the ghostly wind, bride, do not be frightened.

It is the full moon on a night of April; shadows are pale in the courtyard; the sky overhead is bright.

Draw your veil over your face if you must, carry the lamp to the door if you fear.

No, it is not the ghostly wind, bride, do not be frightened.

Have no word with him if you are shy; stand aside by the door when you meet him.

If he asks you questions, and if you wish to, you can lower your eyes in silence.

Do not let your bracelets jingle when, lamp in hand, you lead him in.

Have no word with him if you are shy.

Have you not finished your work yet, bride? Listen, the guest has come.

Have you not lit the lamp in the cowshed?

Have you not got ready the offering basket for the evening service?

Have you not put the red lucky mark at the parting of your hair, and done your toilet for the night?

O bride, do you hear, the guest has come?

Let your work be!

11

COME AS YOU ARE; do not loiter over your toilet.

If your braided hair has loosened, if the parting of your hair be not straight, if the ribbons of your bodice be not fastened, do not mind.

Come as you are; do not loiter over your toilet.

Come, with quick steps over the grass.

If the rattle come from your feet because of the dew, if the rings of bells upon your feet slacken, if pearls drop out of your chain, do not mind.

Come, with quick steps over the grass.

THE GARDENER

Do you see the clouds wrapping the sky?

Flocks of cranes fly up from the further river-bank and fitful gusts of wind rush over the heath.

The anxious cattle run to their stalls in the village.

Do you see the clouds wrapping the sky?

In vain you light your toilet lamp—it flickers and goes out in the wind.

Who can know that your eyelids have not been touched with lamp-black? For your eyes are darker than rain-clouds.

In vain you light your toilet lamp—it goes out.

Come as you are; do not loiter over your toilet.

If the wreath is not woven, who cares; if the wrist-chain has not been linked, let it be.

The sky is overcast with clouds—it is late.

Come as you are; do not loiter over your toilet.

12

IF YOU WOULD be busy and fill your pitcher, come, O come to my lake.

The water will cling round your feet and babble its secret.

The shadow of the coming rain is on the sands, and the clouds hang low upon the blue lines of the trees like the heavy hair above your eyebrows.

I know well the rhythm of your steps, they are beating in my heart.

Come, O come to my lake, if you must fill your pitcher.

If you would be idle and sit listless and let your pitcher float on the water, come, O come to my lake.

The grassy slope is green, and the wild flowers beyond number.

Your thoughts will stray out of your dark eyes like birds from their nests.

Your veil will drop to your feet.

Come, O come to my lake if you must sit idle.

If you would leave off your play and dive in the water, come, O come to my lake.

Let your blue mantle lie on the shore; the blue water will cover you and hide you.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

The waves will stand a-tiptoe to kiss your neck and whisper in your ears.

Come, O come to my lake, if you would dive in the water.

If you must be mad and leap to your death, come, O come to my lake.

It is cool and fathomlessly deep.

It is dark like a sleep that is dreamless.

There in its depths nights and days are one, and songs are silence.

Come, O come to my lake, if you would plunge to your death.

13

I ASKED NOTHING, only stood at the edge of the wood behind the tree.

Languor was still upon the eyes of the dawn, and the dew in the air.

The lazy smell of the damp grass hung in the thin mist above the earth.

Under the banyan tree you were milking the cow with your hands, tender and fresh as butter.

And I was standing still.

I did not say a word. It was the bird that sang unseen from the thicket.

The mango tree was shedding its flowers upon the village road, and the bees came humming one by one.

On the side of the pond the gate of *Shiva's* temple was opened and the worshipper had begun his chants.

With the vessel on your lap you were milking the cow.

I stood with my empty can.

I did not come near you.

The sky woke with the sound of the gong at the temple.

The dust was raised in the road from the hoofs of the driven cattle.

With the gurgling pitchers at their hips, women came from the river.

Your bracelets were jingling, and foam brimming over the jar.

The morning wore on and I did not come near you.

THE GARDENER

14

I WAS WALKING by the road, I do not know why, when the noonday was past
and bamboo branches rustled in the wind.

The prone shadows with their outstretched arms clung to the feet of
the hurrying light.

The *koels* were weary of their songs.

I was walking by the road, I do not know why.

The hut by the side of the water is shaded by an overhanging tree.

Some one was busy with her work, and her bangles made music in
the corner.

I stood before this hut, I know not why.

The narrow winding road crosses many a mustard field, and many
a mango forest.

It passes by the temple of the village and the market at the river
landing-place.

I stopped by this hut, I do not know why.

Years ago it was a day of breezy March when the murmur of the spring
was languorous, and mango blossoms were dropping on the dust.

The rippling water leapt and licked the brass vessel that stood on the
landing-step.

I think of that day of breezy March, I do not know why.

Shadows are deepening and cattle returning to their folds.

The light is grey upon the lonely meadows, and the villagers are
waiting for the ferry at the bank.

I slowly return upon my steps, I do not know why.

15

I RUN AS A musk-deer runs in the shadow of the forest mad with his own
perfume.

The night is the night of mid-May, the breeze is the breeze of the
south.

I lose my way and I wander, I seek what I cannot get, I get what I
do not seek.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

From my heart comes out and dances the image of my own desire.
The gleaming vision flits on.
I try to clasp it firmly, it eludes me and leads me astray.
I seek what I cannot get, I get what I do not seek.

16

HANDS CLING TO hands and eyes linger on eyes: thus begins the record of our hearts.

It is the moonlit night of March; the sweet smell of *henna* is in the air; my flute lies on the earth neglected and your garland of flowers is unfinished.

This love between you and me is simple as a song.

Your veil of the saffron colour makes my eyes drunk.

The jasmine wreath that you wove me thrills to my heart like praise.
It is a game of giving and with-holding, revealing and screening again; some smiles and some little shyness, and some sweet useless struggles.

This love between you and me is simple as a song.

No mystery beyond the present; no striving for the impossible; no shadow behind the charm; no groping in the depth of the dark.

This love between you and me is simple as a song.

We do not stray out of all words into the ever silent; we do not raise our hands to the void for things beyond hope.

It is enough what we give and we get.

We have not crushed the joy to the utmost to wring from it the wine of pain.

This love between you and me is simple as a song.

17

THE YELLOW BIRD sings in their tree and makes my heart dance with gladness.

We both live in the same village, and that is our one piece of joy.

Her pair of pet lambs come to graze in the shade of our garden trees.

If they stray into our barley field, I take them up in my arms.

The name of our village is Khanjana, and Anjana they call our river.

My name is known to all the village, and her name is Ranjana.

THE GARDENER

Only one field lies between us.

Bees that have hived in our grove go to seek honey in theirs.

Flowers launched from their landing-stairs come floating by the stream where we bathe.

Baskets of dried *kusm* flowers come from their fields to our market.

The name of our village is Khanjana, and Anjana they call our river.

My name is known to all the village, and her name is Ranjana.

The lane that winds to their house is fragrant in the spring with mango flowers.

When their linseed is ripe for harvest the hemp is in bloom in our field.

The stars that smile on their cottage send us the same twinkling look.

The rain that floods their tank makes glad our *kadam* forest.

The name of our village is Khanjana, and Anjana they call our river.

My name is known to all the village, and her name is Ranjana.

18

WHEN THE TWO sisters go to fetch water, they come to this spot and they smile.

They must be aware of somebody who stands behind the trees whenever they go to fetch water.

The two sisters whisper to each other when they pass this spot.

They must have guessed the secret of that somebody who stands behind the trees whenever they go to fetch water.

Their pitchers lurch suddenly, and water spills when they reach this spot.

They must have found out that somebody's heart is beating who stands behind the trees whenever they go to fetch water.

The two sisters glance at each other when they come to this spot, and they smile.

There is a laughter in their swift-stepping feet, which makes confusion in somebody's mind who stands behind the trees whenever they go to fetch water.

YOU WALKED BY the riverside path with the full pitcher upon your hip.
Why did you swiftly turn your face and peep at me through your fluttering veil?

That gleaming look from the dark came upon me like a breeze that sends a shiver through the rippling water and sweeps away to the shadowy shore.

It came to me like the bird of the evening that hurriedly flies across the lampless room from the one open window to the other, and disappears in the night.

You are hidden as a star behind the hills, and I am a passer-by upon the road.

But why did you stop for a moment and glance at my face through your veil while you walked by the riverside path with the full pitcher upon your hip?

DAY AFTER DAY he comes and goes away.

Go, and give him a flower from my hair, my friend.

If he asks who was it that sent it, I entreat you do not tell him my name—for he only comes and goes away.

He sits on the dust under the tree.

Spread there a seat with flowers and leaves, my friend.

His eyes are sad, and they bring sadness to my heart.

He does not speak what he has in mind; he only comes and goes away.

WHY DID HE choose to come to my door, the wandering youth, when the day dawned?

As I come in and out I pass by him every time, and my eyes are caught by his face.

I know not if I should speak to him or keep silent. Why did he choose to come to my door?

THE GARDENER

The cloudy nights in July are dark; the sky is soft blue in the autumn;
the spring days are restless with the south wind.

He weaves his songs with fresh tunes every time.

I turn from my work and my eyes fill with the mist. Why did he choose
to come to my door?

22

WHEN SHE PASSED by me with quick steps, the end of her skirt touched me.
From the unknown island of a heart came a sudden warm breath of
spring.

A flutter of a flitting touch brushed me and vanished in a moment,
like a torn flower petal blown in the breeze.

It fell upon my heart like a sigh of her body and whisper of her heart.

23

WHY DO YOU sit there and jingle your bracelets in mere idle sport?

Fill your pitcher. It is time for you to come home.

Why do you stir the water with your hands and fitfully glance at the road
for some one in mere idle sport?

Fill your pitcher and come home.

The morning hours pass by—the dark water flows on.

The waves are laughing and whispering to each other in mere idle
sport.

The wandering clouds have gathered at the edge of the sky on yonder
rise of the land.

They linger and look at your face and smile in mere idle sport.

Fill your pitcher and come home.

24

DO NOT KEEP TO YOURSELF the secret of your heart, my friend!

Say it to me, only to me, in secret.

You who smile so gently, softly whisper, my heart will hear it, not my
ears.

The night is deep, the house is silent, the birds' nests are shrouded with sleep.

Speak to me through hesitating tears, through faltering smiles, through sweet shame and pain, the secret of your heart!

25

'COME TO US, youth, tell us truly why there is madness in your eyes?'

'I know not what wine of wild poppy I have drunk, that there is this madness in my eyes.'

'Ah, shame!'

'Well, some are wise and some foolish, some are watchful and some careless. There are eyes that smile and eyes that weep—and madness is in my eyes.'

'Youth, why do you stand so still under the shadow of the tree?'

'My feet are languid with the burden of my heart, and I stand still in the shadow.'

'Ah, shame!'

'Well, some march on their way and some linger, some are free and some are fettered—and my feet are languid with the burden of my heart.'

26

'WHAT COMES FROM YOUR willing hands I take. I beg for nothing more.'

'Yes, yes, I know you, modest mendicant, you ask for all that one has.'

'If there be a stray flower for me I will wear it in my heart.'

'But if there be thorns?'

'I will endure them.'

'Yes, yes, I know you, modest mendicant, you ask for all that one has.'

'If but once you should raise your loving eyes to my face it would make my life sweet beyond death.'

'But if there be only cruel glances?'

'I will keep them piercing my heart.'

'Yes, yes, I know you, modest mendicant, you ask for all that one has.'

THE GARDENER

27

'TRUST LOVE EVEN if it brings sorrow. Do not close up your heart.'

'Ah no, my friend, your words are dark, I cannot understand them.'

'The heart is only for giving away with a tear and a song, my love.'

'Ah no, my friend, your words are dark, I cannot understand them.'

'Pleasure is frail like a dewdrop, while it laughs it dies. But sorrow is strong and abiding. Let sorrowful love wake in your eyes.'

'Ah no, my friend, your words are dark, I cannot understand them.'

'The lotus blooms in the sight of the sun, and loses all that it has. It would not remain in bud in the eternal winter mist.'

'Ah no, my friend, your words are dark, I cannot understand them.'

28

YOUR QUESTIONING eyes are sad. They seek to know my meaning as the moon would fathom the sea.

I have bared my life before your eyes from end to end, with nothing hidden or held back. That is why you know me not.

If it were only a gem, I could break it into a hundred pieces and string them into a chain to put on your neck.

If it were only a flower, round and small and sweet, I could pluck it from its stem to set it in your hair.

But it is a heart, my beloved. Where are its shores and its bottom?

You know not the limits of this kingdom, still you are its queen.

If it were only a moment of pleasure it would flower in an easy smile, and you could see it and read it in a moment.

If it were merely a pain it would melt in limpid tears, reflecting its inmost secret without a word.

But it is love, my beloved.

Its pleasure and pain are boundless, and endless its wants and wealth.

It is as near to you as your life, but you can never wholly know it.

SPEAK TO ME, my love! Tell me in words what you sang.

The night is dark. The stars are lost in clouds. The wind is sighing through the leaves.

I will let loose my hair. My blue cloak will cling round me like night. I will clasp your head to my bosom; and there in the sweet loneliness murmur on your heart, I will shut my eyes and listen. I will not look in your face.

When your words are ended, we will sit still and silent. Only the trees will whisper in the dark.

The night will pale. The day will dawn. We shall look at each other's eyes and go on our different paths.

Speak to me, my love! Tell me in words what you sang.

YOU ARE THE evening cloud floating in the sky of my dreams.

I paint you and fashion you ever with my love longings.

You are my own, my own, Dweller in my endless dreams!

Your feet are rosy-red with the glow of my heart's desire; Gleaner of my sunset songs!

Your lips are bitter-sweet with the taste of my wine of pain.

You are my own, my own, Dweller in my lonesome dreams!

With the shadow of my passion have I darkened your eyes, Hunter of the depth of my gaze!

I have caught you and wrapt you, my love, in the net of my music.

You are my own, my own, Dweller in my deathless dreams!

MY HEART, the bird of the wilderness, has found its sky in your eyes.

They are the cradle of the morning, they are the kingdom of the stars.

My songs are lost in their depths.

Let me but soar in that sky, in its lonely immensity.

Let me but cleave its clouds and spread wings in its sunshine.

TELL ME IF THIS be all true, my lover, tell me if this be true.

When these eyes flash their lightning the dark clouds in your breast
make stormy answer.

Is it true that my lips are sweet like the opening bud of the first
conscious love?

Do the memories of vanished months of May linger in my limbs?

Does the earth, like a harp, shiver into songs with the touch of my
feet?

Is it then true that the dewdrops fall from the eyes of night when
I am seen, and the morning light is glad when it wraps my body round?

Is it true, is it true, that your love travelled alone through ages and
worlds in search of me?

That when you found me at last, your age-long desire found utter
peace in my gentle speech and my eyes and lips and flowing hair?

Is it then true that the mystery of the Infinite is written on this little
forehead of mine?

Tell me, my lover, if all this be true.

I LOVE YOU, beloved. Forgive me my love.

Like a bird losing its way I am caught.

When my heart was shaken it lost its veil and was naked. Cover it with
pity, beloved, and forgive me my love.

If you cannot love me, beloved, forgive me my pain.

Do not look askance at me from afar.

I will steal back to my corner and sit in the dark.

With both hands I will cover my naked shame.

Turn your face from me, beloved, and forgive me my pain.

If you love me, beloved, forgive me my joy.

When my heart is borne away by the flood of happiness, do not smile
at my perilous abandonment.

When I sit on my throne and rule you with my tyranny of love, when
like a goddess I grant you my favour, bear with my pride, beloved, and
forgive me my joy.

DO NOT GO, my love, without asking my leave.
 I have watched all night, and now my eyes are heavy with sleep.
 I fear lest I lose you when I am sleeping.
 Do not go, my love, without asking my leave.

I start up and stretch my hands to touch you. I ask myself, 'Is it a dream?'
 Could I but entangle your feet with my heart and hold them fast to
 my breast!
 Do not go, my love, without asking my leave.

LEST I SHOULD know you too easily, you play with me.
 You blind me with flashes of laughter to hide your tears.
 I know, I know your art,
 You never say the word you would.

Lest I should not prize you, you elude me in a thousand ways.
 Lest I should confuse you with the crowd, you stand aside.
 I know, I know your art,
 You never walk the path you would.

Your claim is more than that of others, that is why you are silent.
 With playful carelessness you avoid my gifts.
 I know, I know your art,
 You never will take what you would.

HE WHISPERED, 'My love, raise your eyes.'
 I sharply chid him, and said 'Go!'; but he did not stir.
 He stood before me and held both my hands. I said, 'Leave me!';
 but he did not go.

He brought his face near my ear. I glanced at him and said, 'What a
 shame!'; but he did not move.

THE GARDENER

His lips touched my cheek. I trembled and said, 'You dare too much';
but he had no shame.

He put a flower in my hair. I said, 'It is useless!'; but he stood unmoved.

He took the garland from my neck and went away. I weep and ask
my heart, 'Why does he not come back?'

37

WOULD YOU PUT your wreath of fresh flowers on my neck, fair one?

But you must know that the one wreath that I had woven is for the
many, for those who are seen in glimpses, or dwell in lands unexplored,
or live in poets' songs.

It is too late to ask my heart in return for yours.

There was a time when my life was like a bud, all its perfume was
stored in its core.

Now it is squandered far and wide.

Who knows the enchantment that can gather and shut it up again?

My heart is not mine to give to one only, it is given to the
many.

38

MY LOVE, once upon a time your poet launched a great epic in his mind.

Alas, I was not careful, and it struck your ringing anklets and came
to grief.

It broke up into scraps of songs and lay scattered at your feet.

All my cargo of the stories of old wars was tossed by the laughing
waves and soaked in tears and sank.

You must make this loss good to me, my love.

If my claims to immortal fame after death are shattered, make me
immortal while I live.

And I will not mourn for my loss nor blame you.

39

I TRY TO WEAVE a wreath all the morning, but the flowers slip and they drop
out.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

You sit there watching me in secret through the corner of your prying eyes.

Ask those eyes, darkly planning mischief, whose fault it was.

I try to sing a song, but in vain.

A hidden smile trembles on your lips; ask of it the reason of my failure.

Let your smiling lips say on oath how my voice lost itself in silence like a drunken bee in the lotus.

It is evening, and the time for the flowers to close their petals.

Give me leave to sit by your side, and bid my lips to do the work that can be done in silence and in the dim light of stars.

40

AN UNBELIEVING smile flits on your eyes when I come to you to take my leave.

I have done it so often that you think I will soon return.

To tell you the truth I have the same doubt in my mind.

For the spring days come again time after time; the full moon takes leave and comes on another visit, the flowers come again and blush upon their branches year after year, and it is likely that I take my leave only to come to you again.

But keep the illusion awhile; do not send it away with ungentle haste.

When I say I leave you for all time, accept it as true, and let a mist of tears for one moment deepen the dark rim of your eyes.

Then smile as archly as you like when I come again.

41

I LONG TO SPEAK the deepest words I have to say to you; but I dare not, for fear you should laugh.

That is why I laugh at myself and shatter my secret in jest.

I make light of my pain, afraid you should do so.

I long to tell you the truest words I have to say to you; but I dare not, being afraid that you would not believe them.

THE GARDENER

That is why I disguise them in untruth, saying the contrary of what I mean.

I make my pain appear absurd, afraid that you should do so.

I long to use the most precious words I have for you; but I dare not, fearing I should not be paid with like value.

That is why I give you hard names and boast of my callous strength.

I hurt you, for fear you should never know any pain.

I long to sit silent by you; but I dare not lest my heart come out at my lips.

That is why I prattle and chatter lightly and hide my heart behind words.

I rudely handle my pain, for fear you should do so.

I long to go away from your side; but I dare not, for fear my cowardice should become known to you.

That is why I hold my head high and carelessly come into your presence.

Constant thrusts from your eyes keep my pain fresh for ever.

42

O MAD, superbly drunk;

If you kick open your doors and play the fool in public;

If you empty your bag in a night, and snap your fingers at prudence;

If you walk in curious paths and play with useless things;

Reck not rhyme or reason;

If unfurling your sails before the storm you snap the rudder in two;

Then I will follow you, comrade, and be drunken and go to the dogs.

I have wasted my days and nights in the company of steady wise neighbours.

Much knowing has turned my hair grey, and much watching has made my sight dim.

For years I have gathered and heaped up scraps and fragments of things:

Crush them and dance upon them, and scatter them all to the winds.

For I know 'tis the height of wisdom to be drunken and go to the dogs.

Let all crooked scruples vanish, let me hopelessly lose my way.

Let a gust of wild giddiness come and sweep me away from my anchors.

The world is peopled with worthies, and workers, useful and clever.

There are men who are easily first, and men who come decently after.

Let them be happy and prosper, and let me be foolishly futile.

For I know 'tis the end of all works to be drunken and go to the dogs.

I swear to surrender this moment all claims to the ranks of the decent.

I let go my pride of learning and judgment of right and of wrong.

I'll shatter memory's vessel, scattering the last drop of tears.

With the foam of the berry-red wine I will bathe and brighten my laughter.

The badge of the civil and staid I'll tear into shreds for the nonce.

I'll take the holy vow to be worthless, to be drunken and go to the dogs.

43

NO, MY FRIENDS, I shall never be an ascetic, whatever you may say.

I shall never be an ascetic if she does not take the vow with me.

It is my firm resolve that if I cannot find a shady shelter and a companion for my penance, I shall never turn ascetic.

No, my friends, I shall never leave my hearth and home, and retire into the forest solitude, if rings no merry laughter in its echoing shade and if the end of no saffron mantle flutters in the wind; if its silence is not deepened by soft whispers.

I shall never be an ascetic.

44

REVEREND SIR, forgive this pair of sinners. Spring winds to-day are blowing in wild eddies, driving dust and dead leaves away, and with them your lessons are all lost.

THE GARDENER

Do not say, father, that life is a vanity.

For we have made truce with death for once, and only for a few fragrant hours we two have been made immortal.

Even if the king's army came and fiercely fell upon us we should sadly shake our heads and say, Brothers, you are disturbing us. If you must have this noisy game, go and clatter your arms elsewhere. Since only for a few fleeting moments we have been made immortal.

If friendly people came and flocked around us, we should humbly bow to them and say, This extravagant good fortune is an embarrassment to us. Room is scarce in the infinite sky where we dwell. For in the spring-time flowers come in crowds, and the busy wings of bees jostle each other. Our little heaven, where dwell only we two immortals, is too absurdly narrow.

45

TO THE GUESTS that must go bid God's speed and brush away all traces of their steps.

Take to your bosom with a smile what is easy and simple and near.

To-day is the festival of phantoms that know not when they die.

Let your laughter be but a meaningless mirth like twinkles of light on the ripples.

Let your life lightly dance on the edges of Time like dew on the tip of a leaf.

Strike in chords from your harp fitful momentary rhythms.

46

YOU LEFT ME and went on your way.

I thought I should mourn for you and set your solitary image in my heart wrought in a golden song.

But ah, my evil fortune, time is short.

Youth wanes year after year; the spring days are fugitive; the frail flowers die for nothing, and the wise man warns me that life is but a dewdrop on the lotus leaf.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

Should I neglect all this to gaze after one who has turned her back on me?

That would be rude and foolish, for time is short.

Then, come, my rainy nights with pattering feet; smile, my golden autumn; come, careless April, scattering your kisses abroad.

You come, and you, and you also!

My loves, you know we are mortals. Is it wise to break one's heart for the one who takes her heart away? For time is short.

It is sweet to sit in a corner to muse and write in rhymes that you are all my world.

It is heroic to hug one's sorrow and determine not to be consoled,
But a fresh face peeps across my door and raises its eyes to my eyes.
I cannot but wipe away my tears and change the tune of my song,
For time is short.

47

If YOU WOULD have it so, I will end my singing.

If it sets your heart aflutter, I will take away my eyes from your face.

If it suddenly startles you in your walk, I will step aside and take another path.

If it confuses you in your flower-weaving, I will shun your lonely garden.

If it makes the water wanton and wild, I will not row my boat by your bank.

48

FREE ME FROM the bonds of your sweetness, my love! No more of this wine of kisses.

This mist of heavy incense stifles my heart.

Open the doors, make room for the morning light.

I am lost in you, wrapped in the folds of your caresses.

Free me from your spells, and give me back the manhood to offer you my freed heart.

THE GARDENER

49

I HOLD HER hands and press her to my breast.

I try to fill my arms with her loveliness, to plunder her sweet smile with kisses, to drink her dark glances with my eyes.

Ah, but, where is it? Who can strain the blue from the sky?

I try to grasp the beauty; it eludes me, leaving only the body in my hands.

Baffled and weary I come back.

How can the body touch the flower which only the spirit may touch?

50

LOVE, MY HEART longs day and night for the meeting with you—for the meeting that is like all-devouring death.

Sweep me away like a storm; take everything I have; break open my sleep and plunder my dreams. Rob me of my world.

In that devastation, in the utter nakedness of spirit, let us become one in beauty.

Alas for my vain desire! Where is this hope for union except in thee, my God?

51

THEN FINISH the last song and let us leave.

Forget this night when the night is no more.

Whom do I try to clasp in my arms? Dreams can never be made captive.

My eager hands press emptiness to my heart and it bruises my breast.

52

WHY DID THE lamp go out?

I shaded it with my cloak to save it from the wind, that is why the lamp went out.

Why did the flower fade?

I pressed it to my heart with anxious love, that is why the flower faded.

Why did the stream dry up?

I put a dam across it to have it for my use, that is why the stream dried up.

Why did the harp-string break?

I tried to force a note that was beyond its power, that is why the harp-string is broken.

53

WHY DO YOU put me to shame with a look?

I have not come as a beggar.

Only for a passing hour I stood at the end of your courtyard outside the garden hedge.

Why do you put me to shame with a look?

Not a rose did I gather from your garden, not a fruit did I pluck.

I humbly took my shelter under the wayside shade where every strange traveller may stand.

Not a rose did I pluck.

Yes, my feet were tired, and the shower of rain came down.

The winds cried out among the swaying bamboo branches.

The clouds ran across the sky as though in the flight from defeat.

My feet were tired.

I know not what you thought of me or for whom you were waiting at your door.

Flashes of lightning dazzled your watching eyes.

How could I know that you could see me where I stood in the dark?

I know not what you thought of me.

The day is ended, and the rain has ceased for a moment.

I leave the shadow of the tree at the end of your garden and this seat on the grass.

It has darkened; shut your door; I go my way.

The day is ended.

WHERE DO YOU hurry with your basket this late evening when the marketing is over?

They all have come home with their burdens; the moon peeps from above the village trees.

The echoes of the voices calling for the ferry run across the dark water to the distant swamp where wild ducks sleep.

Where do you hurry with your basket when the marketing is over?

Sleep has laid her fingers upon the eyes of the earth.

The nests of the crows have become silent, and the murmurs of the bamboo leaves are silent.

The labourers home from their fields spread their mats in the court-yards.

Where do you hurry with your basket when the marketing is over?

IT WAS MID-DAY when you went away.

The sun was strong in the sky.

I had done my work and sat alone on my balcony when you went away.

Fitful gusts came winnowing through the smells of many distant fields.

The doves cooed tireless in the shade, and a bee strayed in my room humming the news of many distant fields.

The village slept in the noonday heat. The road lay deserted.

In sudden fits the rustling of the leaves rose and died.

I gazed at the sky and wove in the blue the letters of a name I had known, while the village slept in the noonday heat.

I had forgotten to braid my hair. The languid breeze played with it upon my cheek.

The river ran unruffled under the shady bank.

The lazy white clouds did not move.

I had forgotten to braid my hair.

It was mid-day when you went away,
The dust of the road was hot and the fields panting.
The doves cooed among the dense leaves,
I was alone in my balcony when you went away.

56

I WAS ONE among many women busy with the obscure daily tasks of the household.

Why did you single me out and bring me away from the cool shelter of our common life?

Love unexpressed is sacred. It shines like gems in the gloom of the hidden heart. In the light of the curious day it looks pitifully dark.

Ah, you broke through the cover of my heart and dragged my trembling love into the open place, destroying for ever the shady corner where it hid its nest.

The other women are the same as ever.

No one has peeped into their inmost being, and they themselves know not their own secret.

Lightly they smile, and weep, chatter, and work. Daily they go to the temple, light their lamps, and fetch water from the river.

I hoped my love would be saved from the shivering shame of the shelterless, but you turn your face away.

Yes, your path lies open before you, but you have cut off my return, and left me stripped naked before the world with its lidless eyes staring night and day.

57

I PLUCKED your flower, O world!

I pressed it to my heart and the thorn pricked.

When the day waned and it darkened, I found that the flower had faded, but the pain remained.

More flowers will come to you with perfume and pride, O world!

THE GARDENER

But my time for flower-gathering is over, and through the dark night
I have not my rose, only the pain remains.

58

ONE MORNING in the flower garden a blind girl came to offer me a flower
chain in the cover of a lotus leaf.

I put it round my neck, and tears came to my eyes.
I kissed her and said, 'You are blind even as the flowers are.'
'You yourself know not how beautiful is your gift.'

59

O WOMAN, you are not merely the handiwork of God, but also of men;
these are ever endowing you with beauty from their hearts.

Poets are weaving for you a web with threads of golden imagery;
painters are giving your form ever new immortality.

The sea gives its pearls, the mines their gold, the summer gardens
their flowers to deck you, to cover you, to make you more precious.

The desire of men's hearts has shed its glory over your youth.
You are one half woman and one half dream.

60

AMIDST THE RUSH and roar of life, O Beauty, carved in stone, you stand
mute and still, alone and aloof.

Great Time sits enamoured at your feet and murmurs:
'Speak, speak to me, my love; speak, my bride!'
But your speech is shut up in stone, O Immovable Beauty!

61

PEACE, MY HEART, let the time for the parting be sweet.

Let it not be a death but completeness.
Let love melt into memory and pain into songs.
Let the flight through the sky end in the folding of the wings over
the nest.
Let the last touch of your hands be gentle like the flower of the night.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

Stand still, O Beautiful End, for a moment, and say your last words in silence.

I bow to you and hold up my lamp to light you on your way.

62

IN THE DUSKY PATH of a dream I went to seek the love who was mine in a former life.

Her house stood at the end of a desolate street.

In the evening breeze her pet peacock sat drowsing on its perch, and the pigeons were silent in their corner.

She set her lamp down by the portal and stood before me.

She raised her large eyes to my face and mutely asked, 'Are you well, my friend?'

I tried to answer, but our language had been lost and forgotten.

I thought and thought; our names would not come to my mind.

Tears shone in her eyes. She held up her right hand to me. I took it and stood silent.

Our lamp had flickered in the evening breeze and died.

63

TRAVELLER, MUST you go?

The night is still and the darkness swoons upon the forest.

The lamps are bright in our balcony, the flowers all fresh, and the youthful eyes still awake.

Is the time for your parting come?

Traveller, must you go?

We have not bound your feet with our entreating arms.

Your doors are open. Your horse stands saddled at the gate.

If we have tried to bar your passage it was but with our songs.

Did we ever try to hold you back it was but with our eyes.

Traveller, we are helpless to keep you. We have only our tears.

THE GARDENER

What quenchless fire glows in your eyes?

What restless fever runs in your blood?

What call from the dark urges you?

What awful incantation have you read among the stars in the sky, that with a sealed secret message the night entered your heart, silent and strange?

If you do not care for merry meetings, if you must have peace, weary heart, we shall put our lamps out and silence our harps.

We shall sit still in the dark in the rustle of leaves, and the tired moon will shed pale rays on your window.

O traveller, what sleepless spirit has touched you from the heart of the midnight?

64

I SPENT MY day on the scorching hot dust of the road.

Now, in the cool of the evening, I knock at the door of the inn. It is deserted and in ruins.

A grim *ashath* tree spreads its hungry clutching roots through the gaping fissures of the walls.

Days have been when wayfarers came here to wash their weary feet.

They spread their mats in the courtyard in the dim light of the early moon, and sat and talked of strange lands.

They woke refreshed in the morning when birds made them glad, and friendly flowers nodded their heads at them from the wayside.

But no lighted lamp awaited me when I came here.

The black smudges of smoke left by many a forgotten evening lamp stare, like blind eyes, from the wall.

Fireflies flit in the bush near the dried-up pond, and bamboo branches fling their shadows on the grass-grown path.

I am the guest of no one at the end of my day.

The long night is before me, and I am tired.

IS THAT YOUR call again?

The evening has come. Weariness clings round me like the arms of entreating love.

Do you call me?

I had given all my day to you, cruel mistress, must you also rob me of my night?

Somewhere there is an end to everything, and the loneliness of the dark is one's own.

Must your voice cut through it and smite me?

Has the evening no music of sleep at your gate?

Do the silent-winged stars never climb the sky above your pitiless tower?

Do the flowers never drop on the dust in soft death in your garden?

Must you call me, you unquiet one?

Then let the sad eyes of love vainly watch and weep.

Let the lamp burn in the lonely house.

Let the ferry-boat take the weary labourers to their home.

I leave behind my dreams and I hasten to your call.

A WANDERING madman was seeking the touchstone, with matted locks, tawny and dust-laden, and body worn to a shadow, his lips tight-pressed, like the shut-up doors of his heart, his burning eyes like the lamp of a glow-worm seeking its mate.

Before him the endless ocean roared.

The garrulous waves ceaselessly talked of hidden treasures, mocking the ignorance that knew not their meaning.

Maybe he now had no hope remaining, yet he would not rest, for the search had become his life,—

Just as the ocean for ever lifts its arms to the sky for the unattainable—

THE GARDENER

Just as the stars go in circles, yet seeking a goal that can never be reached—

Even so on the lonely shore the madman with dusty tawny locks still roamed in search of the touchstone.

One day a village boy came up and asked, 'Tell me, where did you come at this golden chain about your waist?'

The madman started—the chain that once was iron was verily gold; it was not a dream, but he did not know when it had changed.

He struck his forehead wildly—where, O where had he without knowing it achieved success?

It had grown into a habit, to pick up pebbles and touch the chain, and to throw them away without looking to see if a change had come; thus the madman found and lost the touchstone.

The sun was sinking low in the west, the sky was of gold.

The madman returned on his footsteps to seek anew the lost treasure, with his strength gone, his body bent, and his heart in the dust, like a tree uprooted.

67

THOUGH THE evening comes with slow steps and has signalled for all songs to cease;

Though your companions have gone to their rest and you are tired;
Though fear broods in the dark and the face of the sky is veiled;
Yet, bird, O my bird, listen to me, do not close your wings.

That is not the gloom of the leaves of the forest, that is the sea swelling like a dark black snake.

That is not the dance of the flowering jasmine, that is flashing foam.
Ah, where is the sunny green shore, where is your nest?
Bird, O my bird, listen to me, do not close your wings.

The lone night lies along your path, the dawn sleeps behind the shadowy hills.

The stars hold their breath counting the hours, the feeble moon swims the deep night.

Bird, O my bird, listen to me, do not close your wings.

There is no hope, no fear for you.
 There is no word, no whisper, no cry.
 There is no home, no bed of rest.
 There is only your own pair of wings and the pathless sky.
 Bird, O my bird, listen to me, do not close your wings.

68

NONE LIVES FOR ever, brother, and nothing lasts for long. Keep that in mind and rejoice.

Our life is not the one old burden, our path is not the one long journey.

One sole poet has not to sing one aged song.

The flower fades and dies; but he who wears the flower has not to mourn for it for ever.

Brother, keep that in mind and rejoice.

There must come a full pause to weave perfection into music.

Life droops toward its sunset to be drowned in the golden shadows.

Love must be called from its play to drink sorrow and be borne to the heaven of tears.

Brother, keep that in mind and rejoice.

We hasten to gather our flowers lest they are plundered by the passing winds.

It quickens our blood and brightens our eyes to snatch kisses that would vanish if we delayed.

Our life is eager, our desires are keen, for time tolls the bell of parting.

Brother, keep that in mind and rejoice.

There is not time for us to clasp a thing and crush it and fling it away to the dust.

The hours trip rapidly away, hiding their dreams in their skirts.

Our life is short; it yields but a few days for love.

Were it for work and drudgery it would be endlessly long.

Brother, keep that in mind and rejoice.

THE GARDENER

Beauty is sweet to us, because she dances to the same fleeting tune with our lives.

Knowledge is precious to us, because we shall never have time to complete it.

All is done and finished in the eternal Heaven.

But earth's flowers of illusion are kept eternally fresh by death.

Brother, keep that in mind and rejoice.

69

I HUNT for the golden stag.

You may smile, my friends, but I pursue the vision that eludes me.

I run across hills and dales, I wander through nameless lands, because I am hunting for the golden stag.

You come and buy in the market and go back to your homes laden with goods, but the spell of the homeless winds has touched me I know not when and where.

I have no care in my heart; all my belongings I have left far behind me.

I run across hills and dales, I wander through nameless lands—because I am hunting for the golden stag.

70

I REMEMBER a day in my childhood I floated a paper boat in the ditch.

It was a wet day of July; I was alone and happy over my play.

I floated my paper boat in the ditch.

Suddenly the storm clouds thickened, winds came in gusts, and rain poured in torrents.

Rills of muddy water rushed and swelled the stream and sunk my boat.

Bitterly I thought in my mind that the storm came on purpose to spoil my happiness; all its malice was against me.

The cloudy day of July is long today, and I have been musing over all those games in life wherein I was loser.

I was blaming my fate for the many tricks it played on me, when suddenly I remembered the paper boat that sank in the ditch.

71

THE DAY IS NOT yet done, the fair is not over, the fair on the river-bank.

I had feared that my time had been squandered and my last penny lost.

But no, my brother, I have still something left. My fate has not cheated me of everything.

The selling and buying are over.

All the dues on both sides have been gathered in, and it is time for me to go home.

But, gatekeeper, do you ask for your toll?

Do not fear, I have still something left. My fate has not cheated me of everything.

The lull in the wind threatens storm, and the lowering clouds in the west bode no good.

The hushed water waits for the wind.

I hurry to cross the river before the night overtakes me.

O ferryman, you want your fee!

Yes, brother, I have still something left. My fate has not cheated me of everything.

In the wayside under the tree sits the beggar. Alas, he looks at my face with a timid hope!

He thinks I am rich with the day's profit.

Yes, brother, I have still something left. My fate has not cheated me of everything.

The night grows dark and the road lonely. Fireflies gleam among the leaves.

Who are you that follow me with stealthy silent steps?

Ah, I know, it is your desire to rob me of all my gains. I will not disappoint you!

THE GARDENER

For I still have something left, and my fate has not cheated me of everything.

At midnight I reach home. My hands are empty.

You are waiting with anxious eyes at my door, sleepless and silent.

Like a timorous bird you fly to my breast with eager love.

Ay, ay, my God, much remains still. My fate has not cheated me of everything.

72

WITH DAYS OF HARD travail I raised a temple. It had no doors or windows, its walls were thickly built with massive stones.

I forgot all else, I shunned all the world, I gazed in rapt contemplation at the image I had set upon the altar.

It was always night inside, and lit by the lamps of perfumed oil.

The ceaseless smoke of incense wound my heart in its heavy coils.

Sleepless, I carved on the walls fantastic figures in mazy bewildering lines—winged horses, flowers with human faces, women with limbs like serpents.

No passage was left anywhere through which could enter the song of birds, the murmur of leaves, or hum of the busy village.

The only sound that echoed in its dark dome was that of incantations which I chanted.

My mind became keen and still like a pointed flame, my senses swooned in ecstasy.

I knew not how time passed till the thunderstone had struck the temple, and a pain stung me through the heart.

The lamp looked pale and ashamed; the carvings on the walls, like chained dreams, stared meaningless in the light as they would fain hide themselves.

I looked at the image on the altar. I saw it smiling and alive with the living touch of God. The night I had imprisoned had spread its wings and vanished.

INFINITE WEALTH is not yours, my patient and dusky mother dust!
 You toil to fill the mouths of your children, but food is scarce.
 The gift of gladness that you have for us is never perfect.
 The toys that you make for your children are fragile.
 You cannot satisfy all our hungry hopes, but should I desert you for that?
 Your smile which is shadowed with pain is sweet to my eyes.
 Your love which knows not fulfilment is dear to my heart.
 From your breast you have fed us with life but not immortality, that is why your eyes are ever wakeful.
 For ages you are working with colour and song, yet your heaven is not built, but only its sad suggestion.
 Over your creations of beauty there is the mist of tears.
 I will pour my songs into your mute heart, and my love into your love.
 I will worship you with labour.
 I have seen your tender face and I love your mournful dust, Mother Earth.

IN THE WORLD'S audience hall, the simple blade of grass sits on the same carpet with the sunbeam and the stars of midnight.
 Thus my songs share their seats in the heart of the world with the music of the clouds and forests.
 But, you man of riches, your wealth has no part in the simple grandeur of the sun's glad gold and the mellow gleam of the musing moon.
 The blessing of the all-embracing sky is not shed upon it.
 And when death appears, it pales and withers and crumbles into dust.

AT MIDNIGHT the would-be ascetic announced:
 'This is the time to give up my home and seek for God. Ah, who has held me so long in delusion here?'
 God whispered, 'I,' but the ears of the man were stopped.
 With a baby asleep at her breast lay his wife, peacefully sleeping on one side of the bed.

THE GARDENER

The man said, 'Who are ye that have fooled me so long?'
The voice said again, 'They are God,' but he heard it not.
The baby cried out in its dream, nestling close to its mother.
God commanded, 'Stop, fool, leave not thy home,' but still he heard
not.

God sighed and complained, 'Why does my servant wander to seek
me, forsaking me?'

76

THE FAIR WAS ON before the temple. It had rained from the early morning
and the day came to its end.

Brighter than all the gladness of the crowd was the bright smile of
a girl who bought for a farthing a whistle of palm leaf.

The shrill joy of that whistle floated above all laughter and noise.
An endless throng of people came and jostled together. The road was
muddy, the river in flood, the field under water in ceaseless rain.

Greater than all the troubles of the crowd was a little boy's trouble—
he had not a farthing to buy a painted stick.

His wistful eyes gazing at the shop made this whole meeting of men
so pitiful.

77

THE WORKMAN and his wife from the west country are busy digging to make
bricks for the kiln.

Their little daughter goes to the landing-place by the river; there she
has no end of scouring and scrubbing of pots and pans.

Her little brother, with shaven head and brown, naked, mud-covered
limbs, follows after her and waits patiently on the high bank at her bidding.

She goes back home with the full pitcher poised on her head, the
shining brass pot in her left hand, holding the child with her right—she
the tiny servant of her mother, grave with the weight of the household
cares.

One day I saw this naked boy sitting with legs outstretched.

In the water his sister sat rubbing a drinking-pot with a handful of
earth, turning it round and round.

Near by a soft-haired lamb stood grazing along the bank.

It came close to where the boy sat and suddenly bleated aloud, and the child started up and screamed.

His sister left off cleaning her pot and ran up.

She took up her brother in one arm and the lamb in the other, and dividing her caresses between them bound in one bond of affection the offspring of beast and man.

78

IT WAS IN May. The sultry noon seemed endlessly long. The dry earth gaped with thirst in the heat.

When I heard from the riverside a voice calling, 'Come, my darling!'

I shut my book and opened the window to look out.

I saw a big buffalo with mud-stained hide standing near the river with placid, patient eyes; and a youth, knee-deep in water, calling it to its bath.

I smiled amused and felt a touch of sweetness in my heart.

79

I OFTEN WONDER where lie hidden the boundaries of recognition between man and the beast whose heart knows no spoken language.

Through what primal paradise in a remote morning of creation ran the simple path by which their hearts visited each other.

Those marks of their constant tread have not been effaced though their kinship has been long forgotten.

Yet suddenly in some wordless music the dim memory wakes up and the beast gazes into the man's face with a tender trust, and the man looks down into its eyes with amused affection.

It seems that the two friends meet masked, and vaguely know each other through the disguise.

80

WITH A GLANCE of your eyes you could plunder all the wealth of songs struck from poets' harps, fair woman!

But for their praises you have no ear, therefore I come to praise you.

THE GARDENER

You could humble at your feet the proudest heads in the world.

But it is your loved ones, unknown to fame, whom you choose to worship, therefore I worship you.

The perfection of your arms would add glory to kingly splendour with their touch.

But you use them to sweep away the dust, and to make clean your humble home, therefore I am filled with awe.

81

WHY DO YOU whisper so faintly in my ears, O Death, my Death?

When the flowers droop in the evening and cattle come back to their stalls, you stealthily come to my side and speak words that I do not understand.

Is this how you must woo and win me with the opiate of drowsy murmur and cold kisses, O Death, my Death?

Will there be no proud ceremony for our wedding?

Will you not tie up with a wreath your tawny coiled locks?

Is there none to carry your banner before you, and will not the night be on fire with your red torch-lights, O Death, my Death?

Come with your conch-shells sounding, come in the sleepless night.

Dress me with a crimson mantle, grasp my hand and take me.

Let your chariot be ready at my door with your horses neighing impatiently.

Raise my veil and look at my face proudly, O Death, my Death!

82

WE ARE TO PLAY the game of death to-night, my bride and I.

The night is black, the clouds in the sky are capricious, and the waves are raving at sea.

We have left our bed of dreams, flung open the door and come out, my bride and I.

We sit upon a swing, and the storm winds give us a wild push from behind.

My bride starts up with fear and delight, she trembles and clings to my breast.

Long have I served her tenderly.

I made for her a bed of flowers and I closed the doors to shut out the rude light from her eyes.

I kissed her gently on her lips and whispered softly in her ears till she half swooned in languor.

She was lost in the endless mist of vague sweetness.

She answered not to my touch, my songs failed to arouse her.

To-night has come to us the call of the storm from the wild.

My bride has shivered and stood up, she has clasped my hand and come out.

Her hair is flying in the wind, her veil is fluttering, her garland rustles over her breast.

The push of death has swung her into life.

We are face to face and heart to heart, my bride and I.

83

SHE DWELT on the hillside by the edge of a maize-field, near the spring that flows in laughing rills through the solemn shadows of ancient trees. The women came there to fill their jars, and travellers would sit there to rest and talk. She worked and dreamed daily to the tune of the bubbling stream.

One evening the stranger came down from the cloud-hidden peak; his locks were tangled like drowsy snakes. We asked in wonder, 'Who are you?' He answered not but sat by the garrulous stream and silently gazed at the hut where she dwelt. Our hearts quaked in fear and we came back home when it was night.

Next morning when the women came to fetch water at the spring by the *deodar* trees, they found the doors open in her hut, but her voice was gone and where was her smiling face? The empty jar lay on the floor and her lamp had burnt itself out in the corner. No one knew where she had fled to before it was morning—and the stranger had gone.

In the month of May the sun grew strong and the snow melted, and we sat by the spring and wept. We wondered in our mind, 'Is there a spring in the land where she has gone and where she can fill her vessel in these hot thirsty days?' And we asked each other in dismay, 'Is there a land beyond these hills where we live?'

THE GARDENER

It was a summer night; the breeze blew from the south; and I sat in her deserted room where the lamp stood still unlit. When suddenly from before my eyes the hills vanished like curtains drawn aside. 'Ah, it is she who comes. How are you, my child? Are you happy? But where can you shelter under this open sky? And, alas! our spring is not here to allay your thirst.'

'Here is the same sky,' she said, 'only free from the fencing hills,—this is the same stream grown into a river,—the same earth widened into a plain.' 'Everything is here,' I sighed, 'only we are not.' She smiled sadly and said, 'You are in my heart.' I woke up and heard the babbling of the stream and the rustling of the *deodars* at night.

84

OVER THE GREEN and yellow rice-fields sweep the shadows of the autumn clouds followed by the swift-chasing sun.

The bees forget to sip their honey; drunken with light they foolishly hover and hum.

The ducks in the islands of the river clamour in joy for mere nothing.
Let none go back home, brothers, this morning, let none go to work.
Let us take the blue sky by storm and plunder space as we run.
Laughter floats in the air like foam on the flood.
Brothers, let us squander our morning in futile songs.

85

WHO ARE YOU, reader, reading my poems an hundred years hence?

I cannot send you one single flower from this wealth of the spring,
one single streak of gold from yonder clouds.

Open your doors and look abroad.

From your blossoming garden gather fragrant memories of the
vanished flowers of an hundred years before.

In the joy of your heart may you feel the living joy that sang one
spring morning, sending its glad voice across an hundred years.



Sketch by William Rothenstein, 1913

The Crescent Moon

The crescent moon, when it is full, is the most beautiful sight in the sky.

It is a sight that is seen by all eyes, and it is a sight that is seen by all hearts.

It is a sight that is seen by all eyes, and it is a sight that is seen by all hearts.

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It is a sight that is seen by all eyes, and it is a sight that is seen by all hearts.

The Home

I PACED ALONE on the road across the field while the sunset was hiding its last gold like a miser.

The daylight sank deeper and deeper into the darkness, and the widowed land, whose harvest had been reaped, lay silent.

Suddenly a boy's shrill voice rose into the sky. He traversed the dark unseen, leaving the track of his song across the hush of the evening.

His village home lay there at the end of the waste land, beyond the sugar-cane field, hidden among the shadows of the banana and the slender areca palm, the cocoa-nut and the dark green jack-fruit trees.

I stopped for a moment in my lonely way under the starlight, and saw spread before me the darkened earth surrounding with her arms countless homes furnished with cradles and beds, mothers' hearts and evening lamps, and young lives glad with a gladness that knows nothing of its value for the world.

On the Seashore

ON THE SEASHORE of endless worlds children meet.

The infinite sky is motionless overhead and the restless water is boisterous. On the seashore of endless worlds the children meet with shouts and dances.

They build their houses with sand, and they play with empty shells. With withered leaves they weave their boats and smilingly float them on the vast deep. Children have their play on the seashore of worlds.

They know not how to swim, they know not how to cast nets. Pearl-fishers dive for pearls, merchants sail in their ships, while children gather pebbles and scatter them again. They seek not for hidden treasures, they know not how to cast nets.

The sea surges up with laughter, and pale gleams the smile of the sea-beach. Death-dealing waves sing meaningless ballads to the children, even like a mother while rocking her baby's cradle. The sea plays with children, and pale gleams the smile of the sea-beach.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

On the seashore of endless worlds children meet. Tempest roams in the pathless sky, ships are wrecked in the trackless water, death is abroad and children play. On the seashore of endless worlds is the great meeting of children.

The Source

THE SLEEP THAT flits on baby's eyes—does anybody know from where it comes? Yes, there is a rumour that it has its dwelling where, in the fairy village among shadows of the forest dimly lit with glow-worms, there hang two shy buds of enchantment. From there it comes to kiss baby's eyes.

The smile that flickers on baby's lips when he sleeps—does anybody know where it was born? Yes, there is a rumour that a young pale beam of a crescent moon touched the edge of a vanishing autumn cloud, and there the smile was first born in the dream of a dew-washed morning—the smile that flickers on baby's lips when he sleeps.

The sweet, soft freshness that blooms on baby's limbs—does anybody know where it was hidden so long? Yes, when the mother was a young girl it lay pervading her heart in tender and silent mystery of love—the sweet, soft freshness that has bloomed on baby's lips.

Baby's Way

IF BABY ONLY wanted to, he could fly up to heaven this moment.

It is not for nothing that he does not leave us.

He loves to rest his head on mother's bosom, and cannot ever bear to lose sight of her.

Baby knows all manner of wise words, though few on earth can understand their meaning.

It is not for nothing that he never wants to speak.

The one thing he wants is to learn mother's words from mother's lips. That is why he looks so innocent.

Baby had a heap of gold and pearls, yet he came like a beggar on to this earth.

It is not for nothing he came in such a disguise.

THE CRESCENT MOON

This dear little naked mendicant pretends to be utterly helpless, so that he may beg for mother's wealth of love.

Baby was so free from every tie in the land of the tiny crescent moon.

It was not for nothing he gave up his freedom.

He knows that there is room for endless joy in mother's little corner of a heart, and it is sweeter far than liberty to be caught and pressed in her dear arms.

Baby never knew how to cry. He dwelt in the land of perfect bliss.

It is not for nothing he has chosen to shed tears.

Though with the smile of his dear face he draws mother's yearning heart to him, yet his little cries over tiny troubles weave the double bond of pity and love.

The Unheeded Pageant

AH, WHO WAS it coloured that little frock, my child, and covered your sweet limbs with that little red tunic?

You have come out in the morning to play in the courtyard, tottering and tumbling as you run.

But who was it coloured that little frock, my child?

What is it makes you laugh, my little life-bud?

Mother smiles at you standing on the threshold.

She claps her hands and her bracelets jingle, and you dance with your bamboo stick in your hand like a tiny little shepherd.

But what is it makes you laugh, my little life-bud?

O beggar, what do you beg for, clinging to your mother's neck with both your hands?

O greedy heart, shall I pluck the world like a fruit from the sky to place it on your little rosy palm?

O beggar, what are you begging for?

The wind carries away in glee the tinkling of your anklet bells.

The sun smiles and watches your toilet.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

The sky watches over you when you sleep in your mother's arms, and
the morning comes tiptoe to your bed and kisses your eyes.

The wind carries away in glee the tinkling of your anklet bells.

The fairy mistress of dreams is coming towards you, flying through the
twilight sky.

The world-mother keeps her seat by you in your mother's heart.

He who plays his music to the stars is standing at your window with
his flute.

And the fairy mistress of dreams is coming towards you, flying through
the twilight sky.

Sleep-Stealer

WHO STOLE sleep from baby's eyes? I must know.

Clasping her pitcher to her waist mother went to fetch water from
the village near by.

It was noon. The children's playtime was over; the ducks in the pond
were silent.

The shepherd boy lay asleep under the shadow of the banyan tree.

The crane stood grave and still in the swamp near the mango grove.

In the meanwhile the Sleep-stealer came and, snatching sleep from
baby's eyes, flew away.

When mother came back she found baby travelling the room over
on all fours.

Who stole sleep from our baby's eyes? I must know. I must find her and
chain her up.

I must look into that dark cave, where, through boulders and scowling
stones, trickles a tiny stream.

I must search in the drowsy shade of the *bakula* grove, where pigeons
coo in their corner, and fairies' anklets tinkle in the stillness of starry
nights.

In the evening I will peep into the whispering silence of the bamboo
forest, where fireflies squander their light, and will ask every creature I
meet, 'Can anybody tell me where the Sleep-stealer lives?'

THE CRESCENT MOON

Who stole sleep from baby's eyes? I must know.

Shouldn't I give her a good lesson if I could only catch her!

I would raid her nest and see where she hoards all her stolen sleep.

I would plunder it all, and carry it home.

I would bind her two wings securely, set her on the bank of the river, and then let her play at fishing with a reed among the rushes and water-lilies.

When the marketing is over in the evening, and the village children sit in their mothers' laps, then the night birds will mockingly din her ears with:

'Whose sleep will you steal now?'

The Beginning

'WHERE HAVE I come from, where did you pick me up?' the baby asked its mother.

She answered half crying, half laughing, and clasping the baby to her breast,—

'You were hidden in my heart as its desire, my darling.

You were in the dolls of my childhood's games; and when with clay I made the image of my god every morning, I made and unmade you then.

You were enshrined with our household deity, in his worship I worshipped you.

In all my hopes and my loves, in my life, in the life of my mother you have lived.

In the lap of the deathless Spirit who rules our home you have been nursed for ages.

When in girlhood my heart was opening its petals, you hovered as a fragrance about it.

Your tender softness bloomed in my youthful limbs, like a glow in the sky before the sunrise.

Heaven's first darling, twin-born with the morning light, you have floated down the stream of the world's life, and at last you have stranded on my heart.

As I gaze on your face, mystery overwhelms me; you who belong to all have become mine.

For fear of losing you I hold you tight to my breast. What magic has snared the world's treasure in these slender arms of mine?'

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

Baby's World

I wish I could take a quiet corner in the heart of my baby's very own world.

I know it has stars that talk to him, and a sky that stoops down to his face to amuse him with its silly clouds and rainbows.

Those who make believe to be dumb, and look as if they never could move, come creeping to his window with their stories and with trays crowded with bright toys.

I wish I could travel by the road that crosses baby's mind, and out beyond all bounds;

Where messengers run errands for no cause between the kingdoms of kings of no history;

Where Reason makes kites of her laws and flies them, and Truth sets Fact free from its fetters.

When and Why¹

WHEN I BRING you² coloured toys, my child, I understand why there is such a play of colours on clouds, on water, and why flowers are painted in tints—when I give coloured toys to you, my child.

When I sing to make you dance, I truly know why there is music in leaves, and why waves send their chorus of voices to the heart of the listening earth—when I sing to make you dance.

When I bring sweet things to your greedy hands, I know why there is honey in the cup of the flower, and why fruits are secretly filled with sweet juice—when I bring sweet things to your greedy hands.

When I kiss your face to make you smile, my darling, I surely understand what pleasure streams³ from the sky in morning light, and what delight the summer breeze brings⁴ to my body—when I kiss you to make you smile.

¹ Also included in *Gitanjali* (no. 62).—Editor

² In *Gitanjali*: 'When I bring to you'.—Editor

³ In *Gitanjali*: 'what the pleasure is that streams'.—Editor

⁴ In *Gitanjali*: 'what delight that is which the summer breeze brings'.—Editor

THE CRESCENT MOON

Defamation

WHY ARE THOSE tears in your eyes, my child?

How horrid of them to be always scolding you for nothing?

You have stained your fingers and face with ink while writing—is that why they call you dirty?

O, fie! Would they dare to call the full moon dirty because it has smudged its face with ink?

For every little trifle they blame you, my child. They are ready to find fault for nothing.

You tore your clothes while playing—is that why they call you untidy?

O, fie! What would they call an autumn morning that smiles through its ragged clouds?

Take no heed of what they say to you, my child.

They make a long list of your misdeeds.

Everybody knows how you love sweet things—is that why they call you greedy?

O, fie! What then would they call us who love you?

The Judge

SAY OF HIM what you please, but I know my child's failings.

I do not love him because he is good, but because he is my little child.

How should you know how dear he can be when you try to weigh his merits against his faults?

When I must punish him he becomes all the more a part of my being.

When I cause his tears to come my heart weeps with him.

I alone have a right to blame and punish, for he only may chastise who loves.

Playthings

CHILD, HOW happy you are sitting in the dust, playing with a broken twig all the morning.

I smile at your play with that little bit of a broken twig.

I am busy with my accounts, adding up figures by the hour.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

Perhaps you glance at me and think, 'What a stupid game to spoil your morning with!'

Child, I have forgotten the art of being absorbed in sticks and mud-pies.

I seek out costly playthings, and gather lumps of gold and silver.

With whatever you find you create your glad games, I spend both my time and my strength over things I never can obtain.

In my frail canoe I struggle to cross the sea of desire, and forget that I too am playing a game.

The Astronomer

I ONLY SAID, 'When in the evening the round full moon gets entangled among the branches of that *Kadam* tree, couldn't somebody catch it?'

But dada¹ laughed at me and said, 'Baby, you are the silliest child I have ever known. The moon is ever so far from us, how could anybody catch it?'

I said, 'Dada, how foolish you are! When mother looks out of her window and smiles down at us playing, would you call her far away?'

Still dada said, 'You are a stupid child! But, baby, where could you find a net big enough to catch the moon with?'

I said, 'Surely you could catch it with your hands.'

But dada laughed and said, 'You are the silliest child I have known. If it came nearer, you would see how big the moon is.'

I said, 'Dada, what nonsense they teach at your school! When mother bends her face down to kiss us does her face look very big?'

But still dada says, 'You are a stupid child.'

Clouds and Waves

MOTHER, THE folk who live up in the clouds call out to me—

'We play from the time we wake till the day ends.

We play with the golden dawn, we play with the silver moon.'

I ask, 'But, how am I to get up to you?'

They answer, 'Come to the edge of the earth, lift up your hands to the sky, and you will be taken up into the clouds.'

¹ Elder brother.

THE CRESCENT MOON

'My mother is waiting for me at home,' I say. 'How can I leave her and come?'

Then they smile and float away.

But I know a nicer game than that, mother.

I shall be the cloud and you the moon.

I shall cover you with both my hands, and our house-top will be the blue sky.

The folk who live in the waves call out to me—

'We sing from morning till night; on and on we travel and know not where we pass.'

I ask, 'But, how am I to join you?'

They tell me, 'Come to the edge of the shore and stand with your eyes tight shut, and you will be carried out upon the waves.'

I say, 'My mother always wants me at home in the evening—how can I leave her and go?'

Then they smile, dance and pass by.

But I know a better game than that.

I will be the waves and you will be a strange shore.

I shall roll on and on and on, and break upon your lap with laughter.

And no one in the world will know where we both are.

The Champa Flower

SUPPOSING I became a *champa* flower, just for fun, and grew on a branch high up that tree, and shook in the wind with laughter and danced upon the newly budded leaves, would you know me, mother?

You would call, 'Baby, where are you?' and I should laugh to myself and keep quite quiet.

I should slyly open my petals and watch you at your work.

When after your bath, with wet hair spread on your shoulders, you walked through the shadow of the *champa* tree to the little court where you say your prayers, you would notice the scent of the flower, but not know that it came from me.

When after the midday meal you sat at the window reading *Ramayana*, and the tree's shadow fell over your hair and your lap, I should fling my wee little shadow on to the page of your book, just where you were reading.

But would you guess that it was the tiny shadow of your little child?

When in the evening you went to the cowshed with the lighted lamp

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

in your hand, I should suddenly drop on to the earth again and be your own baby once more, and beg you to tell me a story.

'Where have you been, you naughty child?'

'I won't tell you, mother.' That's what you and I would say then.

Fairyland

IF PEOPLE came to know where my king's palace is, it would vanish into the air.

The walls are of white silver and the roof of shining gold.

The queen lives in a palace with seven courtyards, and she wears a jewel that cost all the wealth of seven kingdoms.

But let me tell you, mother, in a whisper, where my king's palace is.

It is at the corner of our terrace where the pot of the *tulsi* plant stands.

The princess lies sleeping on the far-away shore of the seven impassable seas.

There is none in the world who can find her but myself.

She has bracelets on her arms and pearl drops in her ears; her hair sweeps down upon the floor.

She will wake when I touch her with my magic wand, and jewels will fall from her lips when she smiles.

But let me whisper in your ear, mother; she is there in the corner of our terrace where the pot of the *tulsi* plant stands.

When it is time for you to go to the river for your bath, step up to that terrace on the roof.

I sit in the corner where the shadows of the walls meet together.

Only puss is allowed to come with me, for she knows where the barber in the story lives.

But let me whisper, mother, in your ear where the barber in the story lives.

It is at the corner of the terrace where the pot of the *tulsi* plant stands.

THE CRESCENT MOON

The Land of the Exile

MOTHER, THE light has grown grey in the sky; I do not know what the time is.

There is no fun in my play, so I have come to you. It is Saturday, our holiday.

Leave off your work, mother; sit here by the window and tell me where the desert of Tepantar in the fairy tale is?

The shadow of the rains has covered the day from end to end.

The fierce lightning is scratching the sky with its nails.

When the clouds rumble and it thunders, I love to be afraid in my heart and cling to you.

When the heavy rain patters for hours on the bamboo leaves, and our windows shake and rattle at the gusts of wind, I like to sit alone in the room, mother, with you, and hear you talk about the desert of Tepantar in the fairy tale.

Where is it, mother, on the shore of what sea, at the foot of what hills, in the kingdom of what king?

There are no hedges there to mark the fields, no footpath across it by which the villagers reach their village in the evening, or the woman who gathers dry sticks in the forest can bring her load to the market. With patches of yellow grass in the sand and only one tree where the pair of wise old birds have their nest, lies the desert of Tepantar.

I can imagine how, on just such a cloudy day, the young son of the king is riding alone on a grey horse through the desert, in search of the princess who lies imprisoned in the giant's palace across that unknown water.

When the haze of the rain comes down in the distant sky, and lightning starts up like a sudden fit of pain, does he remember his unhappy mother, abandoned by the king, sweeping the cow-stall and wiping her eyes, while he rides through the desert of Tepantar in the fairy tale?

See, mother, it is almost dark before the day is over, and there are no travellers yonder on the village road.

The shepherd boy has gone home early from the pasture, and men have left their fields to sit on mats under the eaves of their huts, watching the scowling clouds.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

Mother, I have left all my books on the shelf—do not ask me to do my lessons now.

When I grow up and am big like my father, I shall learn all that must be learnt.

But just for to-day, tell me, mother, where the desert of Tepantar in the fairy tale is?

The Rainy Day

SULLEN CLOUDS are gathering fast over the black fringe of the forest.

O child, do not go out!

The palm trees in a row by the lake are smiting their heads against the dismal sky; the crows with their draggled wings are silent on the tamarind branches, and the eastern bank of the river is haunted by a deepening gloom.

Our cow is lowing loud, tied at the fence.

O child, wait here till I bring her into the stall.

Men have crowded into the flooded field to catch the fishes as they escape from the overflowing ponds; the rain water is running in rills through the narrow lanes like a laughing boy who has run away from his mother to tease her.

Listen, someone is shouting for the boatman at the ford.

O child, the daylight is dim, and the crossing at the ferry is closed.

The sky seems to ride fast upon the madly-rushing rain; the water in the river is loud and impatient; women have hastened home early from the Ganges with their filled pitchers.

The evening lamps must be made ready.

O child, do not go out!

The road to the market is desolate, the lane to the river is slippery. The wind is roaring and struggling among the bamboo branches like a wild beast tangled in a net.

THE CRESCENT MOON

Paper Boats

DAY BY DAY I float my paper boats one by one down the running stream.

In big black letters I write my name on them and the name of the village where I live.

I hope that someone in some strange land will find them and know who I am.

I load my little boats with *shiuli* flowers from our garden, and hope that these blooms of the dawn will be carried safely to land in the night.

I launch my paper boats and look up into the sky and see the little clouds setting their white bulging sails.

I know not what playmate of mine in the sky sends them down the air to race with my boats!

When night comes I bury my face in my arms and dream that my paper boats float on and on under the midnight stars.

The fairies of sleep are sailing in them, and the lading is their baskets full of dreams.

The Sailor

THE BOAT OF THE boatman Madhu is moored at the wharf of Rajgunj.

It is uselessly laden with jute, and has been lying there idle for ever so long.

If he would only lend me his boat, I should man her with a hundred oars, and hoist sails, five or six or seven.

I should never steer her to stupid markets.

I should sail the seven seas and the thirteen rivers of fairyland.

But, mother, you won't weep for me in a corner.

I am not going into the forest like Ramachandra to come back only after fourteen years.

I shall become the prince of the story, and fill my boat with whatever I like.

I shall take my friend Ashu with me, We shall sail merrily across the seven seas and the thirteen rivers of fairyland.

We shall set sail in the early morning light.

When at noontide you are bathing at the pond, we shall be in the land of a strange king.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

We shall pass the ford of Tirpurni, and leave behind us the desert of Tep-ntar.

When we come back it will be getting dark, and I shall tell you of all that we have seen.

I shall cross the seven seas and the thirteen rivers of fairyland.

The Further Bank

I LONG TO GO OVER there to the further bank of the river,

Where those boats are tied to the bamboo poles in a line;

Where men cross over in their boats in the morning with ploughs on their shoulders to till their far-away fields;

Where the cowherds make their lowing cattle swim across to the riverside pasture;

Whence they all come back home in the evening, leaving the jackals to howl in the island overgrown with weeds.

Mother, if you don't mind, I should like to become the boatman of the ferry when I am grown up.

They say there are strange pools hidden behind that high bank,

Where flocks of wild ducks come when the rains are over, and thick reeds grow round the margins where waterbirds lay their eggs;

Where snipes with their dancing tails stamp their tiny footprints upon the clean soft mud;

Where in the evening the tall grasses crested with white flowers invite the moonbeam to float upon their waves.

Mother, if you don't mind, I should like to become the boatman of the ferryboat when I am grown up.

I shall cross and cross back from bank to bank, and all the boys and girls of the village will wonder at me while they are bathing.

When the sun climbs the mid sky and morning wears on to noon, I shall come running to you, saying, 'Mother, I am hungry!'

When the day is done and the shadows cower under the trees, I shall come back in the dusk.

I shall never go away from you into the town to work like father.

Mother, if you don't mind, I should like to become the boatman of the ferryboat when I am grown up.

THE CRESCENT MOON

The Flower-School

WHEN STORM clouds rumble in the sky and June showers come down,

The moist east wind comes marching over the heath to blow its bagpipes among the bamboos.

Then crowds of flowers come out of a sudden, from nobody knows where, and dance upon the grass in wild glee.

Mother, I really think the flowers go to school underground.

They do their lessons with doors shut, and if they want to come out to play before it is time, their master makes them stand in a corner.

When the rains come they have their holidays.

Branches clash together in the forest, and the leaves rustle in the wild wind, the thunder-clouds clap their giant hands and the flower children rush out in dresses of pink and yellow and white.

Do you know, mother, their home is in the sky, where the stars are.

Haven't you seen how eager they are to get there? Don't you know why they are in such a hurry?

Of course, I can guess to whom they raise their arms: they have their mother as I have my own.

The Merchant

IMAGINE, MOTHER, that you are to stay at home and I am to travel into strange lands.

Imagine that my boat is ready at the landing fully laden.

Now think well, mother, before you say what I shall bring for you when I come back.

Mother, do you want heaps and heaps of gold?

There, by the banks of golden streams, fields are full of golden harvest. And in the shade of the forest path the golden *champa* flowers drop on the ground.

I will gather them all for you in many hundred baskets.

Mother, do you want pearls big as the raindrops of autumn?

I shall cross to the pearl island shore.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

There in the early morning light pearls tremble on the meadow flowers,
pearls drop on the grass, and pearls are scattered on the sand in spray
by the wild sea-waves.

My brother shall have a pair of horses with wings to fly among the
clouds.

For father I shall bring a magic pen that, without his knowing, will
write of itself.

For you, mother, I must have the casket and jewel that cost seven
kings their kingdoms.

Sympathy

If I WERE ONLY a little puppy, not your baby, mother dear, would you say
'No' to me if I tried to eat from your dish?

Would you drive me off, saying to me, 'Get away, you naughty little
puppy?'

Then go, mother, go! I will never come to you when you call me,
and never let you feed me any more.

If I were only a little green parrot, and not your baby, mother dear, would
you keep me chained lest I should fly away?

Would you shake your finger at me and say, 'What an ungrateful
wretch of a bird! It is gnawing at its chain day and night?'

Then, go, mother, go! I will run away into the woods; I will never
let you take me in your arms again.

Vocation

WHEN THE GONG sounds ten in the morning and I walk to school by our
lane,

Every day I meet the hawker crying, 'Bangles, crystal bangles!'

There is nothing to hurry him on, there is no road he must take,
no place he must go to, no time when he must come home.

I wish I were a hawker, spending my day in the road, crying, 'Bangles,
crystal bangles!'

When at four in the afternoon I come back from the school,

I can see through the gate of that house the gardener digging the
ground.

THE CRESCENT MOON

He does what he likes with his spade, he soils his clothes with dust,
nobody takes him to task if he gets baked in the sun or gets wet.

I wish I were a gardener digging away at the garden with nobody to
stop me from digging.

Just as it gets dark in the evening and my mother sends me to bed,

I can see through my open window the watchman walking up and
down.

The lane is dark and lonely, and the street-lamp stands like a giant
with one red eye in its head.

The watchman swings his lantern and walks with his shadow at his
side, and never once goes to bed in his life.

I wish I were a watchman walking the streets all night, chasing the
shadows with my lantern.

Superior

MOTHER, YOUR baby is silly! She is so absurdly childish!

She does not know the difference between the lights in the streets
and the stars.

When we play at eating with pebbles, she thinks they are real food,
and tries to put them into her mouth.

When I open a book before her and ask her to learn her a, b, c, she
tears the leaves with her hands and roars for joy at nothing; this is your
baby's way of doing her lesson.

When I shake my head at her in anger and scold her and call her
naughty, she laughs and thinks it great fun.

Everybody knows that father is away, but, if in play I call aloud 'Father,'
she looks about her in excitement and thinks that father is near.

When I hold my class with the donkeys that our washerman brings
to carry away the clothes and I warn her that I am the schoolmaster, she
will scream for no reason and call me dada.¹

Your baby wants to catch the moon. She is so funny; she calls Ganesh²
Ganush.

Mother, your baby is silly, she is so absurdly childish!

¹ Elder brother.

² Ganesh, a common name in India, also that of the god with the elephant's head.

The Little Big Man

I AM SMALL because I am a little child. I shall be big when I am as old as my father is.

My teacher will come and say, 'It is late, bring your slate and your books.'

I shall tell him, 'Do you not know I am as big as father? And I must not have lessons any more.'

My master will wonder and say, 'He can leave his books if he likes, for he is grown up.'

I shall dress myself and walk to the fair where the crowd is thick.

My uncle will come rushing up to me and say, 'You will get lost, my boy; let me carry you.'

I shall answer, 'Can't you see, uncle, I am as big as father. I must go to the fair alone.'

Uncle will say, 'Yes, he can go wherever he likes, for he is grown up.'

Mother will come from her bath when I am giving money to my nurse, for I shall know how to open the box with my key.

Mother will say, 'What are you about, naughty child?'

I shall tell her, 'Mother, don't you know, I am as big as father, and I must give silver to my nurse.'

Mother will say to herself, 'He can give money to whom he likes, for he is grown up.'

In the holiday time in October father will come home and, thinking that I am still a baby, will bring for me from the town little shoes and small silken frocks.

I shall say, 'Father, give them to my dada,¹ for I am as big as you are.'

Father will think and say, 'He can buy his own clothes if he likes, for he is grown up.'

Twelve O'Clock

MOTHER, I do want to leave off my lessons now. I have been at my book all the morning.

¹ Elder brother.

THE CRESCENT MOON

You say it is only twelve o'clock. Suppose it isn't any later; can't you ever think it is afternoon when it is only twelve o'clock?

I am easily imagine now that the sun has reached the edge of that rice-field, and the old fisher-woman is gathering herbs for her supper by the side of the pond.

I can just shut my eyes and think that the shadows are growing darker under the *madar* tree, and the water in the pond looks shiny black.

If twelve o'clock can come in the night, why can't the night come when it is twelve o'clock.

Authorship

YOU SAY THAT father writes a lot of books, but what he writes I don't understand.

He was reading to you all the evening, but could you really make out what he meant?

What nice stories, mother, you can tell us! Why can't father write like that, I wonder?

Did he never hear from his own mother stories of giants and fairies and princesses?

Has he forgotten them all?

Often when he gets late for his bath you have to go and call him an hundred times.

You wait and keep his dishes warm for him, but he goes on writing and forgets.

Father always plays at making books.

If ever I go to play in father's room, you come and call me, 'what a naughty child!'

If I make the slightest noise, you say, 'Don't you see that father's at his work?'

What's the fun of always writing and writing?

When I take up father's pen or pencil and write upon his book just as he does,—a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i,—why do you get cross with me, then, mother?

You never say a word when father writes.

When my father wastes such heaps of paper, mother, you don't seem to mind at all.

But if I take only one sheet to make a boat with, you say, 'Child, how troublesome you are!'

What do you think of father's spoiling sheets and sheets of paper with black marks all over on both sides?

The Wicked Postman

Why do you sit there on the floor so quiet and silent, tell me, mother dear?

The rain is coming in through the open window, making you all wet, and you don't mind it.

Do you hear the gong striking four? It is time for my brother to come home from school.

What has happened to you that you look so strange?

Haven't you got a letter from father to-day?

I saw the postman bringing letters in his bag for almost everybody in the town.

Only, father's letters he keeps to read himself, I am sure the postman is a wicked man.

But don't be unhappy about that, mother dear.

To-morrow is market day in the next village. You ask your maid to buy some pens and papers.

I myself will write all father's letters; you will not find a single mistake.

I shall write from A right up to K.

But, mother, why do you smile?

You don't believe that I can write as nicely as father does!

But I shall rule my paper carefully, and write all the letters beautifully big.

When I finish my writing, do you think I shall be so foolish as father and drop it into the horrid postman's bag?

I shall bring it to you myself without waiting, and letter by letter help you to read my writing.

I know the postman does not like to give you the really nice letters.

THE CRESCENT MOON

The Hero

MOTHER, LET us imagine we are travelling, and passing through a strange and dangerous country.

You are riding in a palanquin and I am trotting by you on a red horse.

It is evening and the sun goes down. The waste of *Joradighi* lies wan and grey before us. The land is desolate and barren.

You are frightened and thinking—'I know not where we have come to.'

I say to you, 'Mother, do not be afraid.'

The meadow is prickly with spiky grass, and through it runs a narrow broken path.

There are no cattle to be seen in the wide field; they have gone to their village stalls.

It grows dark and dim on the land and sky, and we cannot tell where we are going.

Suddenly you call me and ask me in a whisper, 'What light is that near the bank?'

Just then there bursts out a fearful yell, and figures come running towards us.

You sit crouched in your palanquin and repeat the names of the gods in prayer.

The bearers, shaking in terror, hide themselves in the thorny bush.

I shout to you, 'Don't be afraid, mother, I am here.'

With long sticks in their hands and hair all wild about their heads, they come nearer and nearer.

I shout, 'Have a care! you villains! One step more and you are dead men.'

They give another terrible yell and rush forward.

You clutch my hand and say, 'Dear boy, for heaven's sake, keep away from them.'

I say, 'Mother, just you watch me.'

Then I spur my horse for a wild gallop, and my sword and buckler clash against each other.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

The fight becomes so fearful, mother, that it would give you a cold shudder could you see it from your palanquin.

Many of them fly, and a great number are cut to pieces.

I know you are thinking, sitting all by yourself, that your boy must be dead by this time.

But I come to you all stained with blood, and say, 'Mother, the fight is over now.'

You come out and kiss me, pressing me to your heart, and you say to yourself,

'I don't know what I should do if I hadn't my boy to escort me.'

A thousand useless things happen day after day, and why couldn't such a thing come true by chance?

It would be like a story in a book.

My brother would say, 'Is it possible? I always thought he was so delicate!'

Our village people would all say in amazement, 'Was it not lucky that the boy was with his mother?'

The End

IT IS TIME for me to go, mother; I am going. When in the paling darkness of the lonely dawn you stretch out your arms for your baby in the bed, I shall say, 'Baby is not there!'—mother, I am going.

I shall become a delicate draught of air and caress you; and I shall be ripples in the water when you bathe, and kiss you and kiss you again.

In the gusty night when the rain patters on the leaves you will hear my whisper in your bed, and my laughter will flash with the lightning through the open window into your room.

If you lie awake, thinking of your baby till late into the night, I shall sing to you from the stars, 'Sleep, mother, sleep.'

On the straying moonbeams I shall steal over your bed, and lie upon your bosom while you sleep.

I shall become a dream, and through the little opening of your eyelids I shall slip into the depths of your sleep; and when you wake up and look round startled, like a twinkling firefly I shall flit out into the darkness.

When, on the great festival of *pūja*, the neighbours' children come and play about the house, I shall melt into the music of the flute and throb in your heart all day.

THE CRESCENT MOON

Dear auntie will come with *puja*-presents and will ask, 'Where is our baby, sister?' Mother, you will tell her softly, 'He is in the pupils of my eyes, he is in my body and in my soul.'

The Recall

THE NIGHT was dark when she went away, and they slept.

The night is dark now, and I call for her, 'Come back, my darling; the world is asleep; and no one would know, if you came for a moment while stars are gazing at stars.'

She went away when the trees were in bud and the spring was young.

Now the flowers are in high bloom and I call, 'Come back, my darling. The children gather and scatter flowers in reckless sport. And if you come and take one little blossom no one will miss it.'

Those that used to play are playing still, so spendthrift is life.

I listen to their chatter and call, 'Come back, my darling, for mother's heart is full to the brim with love, and if you come to snatch only one little kiss from her no one will grudge it.'

The First Jasmines

AH, THESE jasmines, these white jasmines!

I seem to remember the first day when I filled my hands with these jasmines, these white jasmines.

I have loved the sunlight, the sky and the green earth;

I have heard the liquid murmur of the river through the darkness of midnight;

Autumn sunsets have come to me at the bend of a road in the lonely waste, like a bride raising her veil to accept her lover.

Yet my memory is still sweet with the first white jasmines that I held in my hand when I was a child.

Many a glad day has come in my life, and I have laughed with merry-makers on festival nights.

On grey mornings of rain I have crooned many an idle song.

I have worn round my neck the evening wreath of *bakulas* woven by the hand of love.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

Yet my heart is sweet with the memory of the first fresh jasmines that filled my hands when I was a child.

The Banyan Tree

O YOU shaggy-headed banyan tree standing on the bank of the pond, have you forgotten the little child, like the birds that have nested in your branches and left you?

Do you not remember how he sat at the window and wondered at the tangle of your roots that plunged underground?

The women would come to fill their jars in the pond, and your huge black shadow would wriggle on the water like sleep struggling to wake up.

Sunlight danced on the ripples like restless tiny shuttles weaving golden tapestry.

Two ducks swam by the weedy margin above their shadows, and the child would sit still and think.

He longed to be the wind and blow through your rustling branches, to be your shadow and lengthen with the day on the water, to be a bird and perch on your top-most twig, and to float like those ducks among the weeds and shadows.

Benediction

BLESS THIS little heart, this white soul that has won the kiss of heaven for our earth.

He loves the light of the sun, he loves the sight of his mother's face.
He has not learned to despise the dust, and to hanker after gold.
Clasp him to your heart and bless him.

He has come into this land of an hundred cross-roads.

I know not how he chose you from the crowd, came to your door, and grasped your hand to ask his way.

He will follow you, laughing and talking, and not a doubt in his heart.
Keep his trust, lead him straight and bless him.

Lay your hand on his head, and pray that though the waves underneath grow threatening, yet the breath from above may come and fill his sails and waft him to the haven of peace.

Forget him not in your hurry, let him come to your heart and bless him.

THE CRESCENT MOON

The Gift

I WANT TO give you something, my child, for we are drifting in the stream of the world.

Our lives will be carried apart, and our love forgotten.

But I am not so foolish as to hope that I could buy your heart with my gifts.

Young is your life, your path long, and you drink the love we bring you at one draught and turn and run away from us.

You have your play and your playmates. What harm is there if you have no time or thought for us.

We, indeed, have leisure enough in old age to count the days that are past, to cherish in our hearts what our hands have lost for ever.

The river runs swift with a song, breaking through all barriers, But the mountain stays and remembers, and follows her with his love.

My Song

THIS SONG OF mine will wind its music around you, my child, like the fond arms of love.

This song of mine will touch your forehead like a kiss of blessing.

When you are alone it will sit by your side and whisper in your ear, when you are in the crowd it will fence you about with aloofness.

My song will be like a pair of wings to your dreams, it will transport your heart to the verge of the unknown.

It will be like the faithful star overhead when dark night is over your road.

My song will sit in the pupils of your eyes, and will carry your sight into the heart of things.

And when my voice is silent in death, my song will speak in your living heart.

The Child-Angel

THEY CLAMOUR and fight, they doubt and despair, they know no end to their wranglings.

Let your life come amongst them like a flame of light, my child, unflickering and pure, and delight them into silence.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

They are cruel in their greed and their envy, their words are like hidden knives thirsting for blood.

Go and stand amidst their scowling hearts, my child, and let your gentle eyes fall upon them like the forgiving peace of the evening over the strife of the day.

Let them see your face, my child, and thus know the meaning of all things; let them love you and thus love each other.

Come and take your seat in the bosom of the limitless, my child. At sunrise open and raise your heart like a blossoming flower, and at sunset bend your head and in silence complete the worship of the day.

The Last Bargain

'COME AND HIRE me,' I cried, while in the morning I was walking on the stone-paved road.

Sword in hand, the King came in his chariot.

He held my hand and said, 'I will hire you with my power.'

But his power counted for nought, and he went away in his chariot.

In the heat of the midday the houses stood with shut doors.

I wandered along the crooked lane.

An old man came out with his bag of gold.

He pondered and said, 'I will hire you with my money.'

He weighed his coins one by one, but I turned away.

It was evening. The garden hedge was all aflower.

The fair maid came out and said, 'I will hire you with a smile.'

Her smile paled and melted into tears, and she went back alone into the dark.

The sun glistened on the sand, and the sea waves broke waywardly.

A child sat playing with shells.

He raised his head and seemed to know me, and said, 'I hire you with nothing.'

From thenceforward that bargain struck in child's play made me a free man.

Fruit-Gathering

1

BID ME AND I shall gather my fruits to bring them in full baskets into your courtyard, though some are lost and some not ripe.

For the season grows heavy with its fulness, and there is a plaintive shepherd's pipe in the shade.

Bid me and I shall set sail on the river.

The March wind is fretful, fretting the languid waves into murmurs.

The garden has yielded its all, and in the weary hour of evening the call comes from your house on the shore in the sunset.

2

MY LIFE WHEN young was like a flower—a flower that loosens a petal or two from her abundance and never feels the loss when the spring breeze comes to beg at her door.

Now at the end of youth my life is like a fruit, having nothing to spare, and waiting to offer herself completely with her full burden of sweetness.

3

IS SUMMER'S festival only for fresh blossoms and not also for withered leaves and faded flowers?

Is the song of the sea in tune only with the rising waves?

Does it not also sing with the waves that fall?

Jewels are woven into the carpet where stands my king, but there are patient clods waiting to be touched by his feet.

Few are the wise and the great who sit by my Master, but he has taken the foolish in his arms and made me his servant for ever.

4

I WOKE AND found his letter with the morning.

I do not know what it says, for I cannot read.

I shall leave the wise man alone with his books, I shall not trouble him, for who knows if he can read what the letter says.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

Let me hold it to my forehead and press it to my heart.

When the night grows still and stars come out one by one I will spread it on my lap and stay silent.

The rustling leaves will read it aloud to me, the rushing stream will chant it, and the seven wise stars will sing it to me from the sky.

I cannot find what I seek, I cannot understand what I would learn; but this unread letter has lightened my burdens and turned my thoughts into songs.

5

A HANDFUL OF dust could hide your signal when I did not know its meaning.
Now that I am wiser I read it in all that hid it before.

It is painted in petals of flowers; waves flash it from their foam; hills hold it high on their summits.

I had my face turned from you, therefore I read the letters awry and knew not their meaning.

6

WHERE ROADS are made I lose my way.

In the wide water, in the blue sky there is no line of a track.

The pathway is hidden by the birds' wings, by the star-fires, by the flowers of the wayfaring seasons.

And I ask my heart if its blood carries the wisdom of the unseen way.

7

ALAS, I CANNOT stay in the house, and home has become no home to me, for the eternal Stranger calls, he is going along the road.

The sound of his footfall knocks at my breast; it pains me!

The wind is up, the sea is moaning.

I leave all my cares and doubts to follow the homeless tide, for the Stranger calls me, he is going along the road.

FRUIT-GATHERING

8

BE READY TO launch forth, my heart! and let those linger who must.
For your name has been called in the morning sky.
Wait for none!

The desire of the bud is for the night and dew, but the blown flower cries
for the freedom of light.

Burst your sheath, my heart, and come forth!

9

WHEN I LINGERED among my hoarded treasure I felt like a worm that feeds
in the dark upon the fruit where it was born.

I leave this prison of decay.

I care not to haunt the mouldy stillness, for I go in search of ever-
lasting youth; I throw away all that is not one with my life nor as light
as my laughter.

I run through time and, O my heart, in your chariot dances the poet
who sings while he wanders.

10

YOU TOOK MY hand and drew me to your side, made me sit on the high
seat before all men, till I became timid, unable to stir and walk my own
way; doubting and debating at every step lest I should tread upon any
thorn of their disfavour.

I am freed at last!

The blow has come, the drum of insult sounded, my seat is laid low
in the dust.

My paths are open before me.

My wings are full of the desire of the sky.

I go to join the shooting stars of midnight, to plunge into the profound
shadow.

I am like the storm-driven cloud of summer that, having cast off its
crown of gold, hangs as a sword the thunderbolt upon a chain of
lightning.

In desperate joy I run upon the dusty path of the despised; I draw near to your final welcome.

The child finds its mother when it leaves her womb.

When I am parted from you, thrown out from your household, I am free to see your face.

11

IT DECKS ME only to mock me, this jewelled chain of mine.

It bruises me when on my neck, it strangles me when I struggle to tear it off.

It grips my throat, it chokes my singing.

Could I but offer it to your hand, my Lord, I would be saved.

Take it from me, and in exchange bind me to you with a garland, for I am ashamed to stand before you with this jewelled chain on my neck.

12

FAR BELOW flowed the Jumna, swift and clear, above frowned the jutting bank.

Hills dark with the woods and scarred with the torrents were gathered around.

Govinda, the great Sikh teacher, sat on the rock reading scriptures, when Raghunath, his disciple, proud of his wealth, came and bowed to him and said, 'I have brought my poor present unworthy of your acceptance.'

Thus saying he displayed before the teacher a pair of gold bangles wrought with costly stones.

The master took up one of them, twirling it round his finger, and the diamonds darted shafts of light.

Suddenly it slipped from his hand and rolled down the bank into the water.

'Alas,' screamed Raghunath and jumped into the stream.

The teacher set his eyes upon his book, and the water held and hid what it stole and went its way.

FRUIT-GATHERING

The daylight faded when Raghunath came back to the teacher tired and dripping.

He panted and said, 'I can still get it back if you show me where it fell.'

The teacher took up the remaining bangle and throwing it into the water said, 'It is there.'

13

TO MOVE IS TO meet you every moment, Fellow-traveller!

It is to sing to the falling of your feet.

He whom your breath touches does not glide by the shelter of the bank.

He spreads a reckless sail to the wind and rides the turbulent water.

He who throws his doors open and steps onward receives your greeting.

He does not stay to count his gain or to mourn his loss; his heart beats the drum for his march, for that is to march with you every step, Fellow-traveller!

14

MY PORTION OF THE best in this world will come from your hands: such was your promise.

Therefore your light glistens in my tears.

I fear to be led by others lest I miss you waiting in some road corner to be my guide.

I walk my own wilful way till my very folly tempts you to my door.

For I have your promise that my portion of the best in this world will come from your hands.

15

YOUR SPEECH is simple, my Master, but not theirs who talk of you.

I understand the voice of your stars and the silence of your trees.

I know that my heart would open like a flower; that my life has filled itself at a hidden fountain.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

Your songs, like birds from the lonely land of snow, are winging to build their nests in my heart against the warmth of its April, and I am content to wait for the merry season.

16

THEY KNEW the way and went to seek you along the narrow lane, but I wandered abroad into the night for I was ignorant.

I was not schooled enough to be afraid of you in the dark, therefore I came upon your doorstep unaware.

The wise rebuked me and bade me be gone, for I had not come by the lane.

I turned away in doubt, but you held me fast, and their scolding became louder every day.

17

I BROUGHT out my earthen lamp from my house and cried, 'Come, children, I will light your path!'

The night was still dark when I returned, leaving the road to its silence; crying, 'Light me, O Fire! for my earthen lamp lies broken in the dust!'

18

NO: IT IS NOT yours to open buds into blossoms.

Shake the bud, strike it; it is beyond your power to make it blossom.

Your touch soils it, you tear its petals to pieces and strew them in the dust.

But no colours appear, and no perfume.

Ah! it is not for you to open the bud into a blossom.

He who can open the bud does it so simply.

He gives it a glance, and the life-sap stirs through its veins.

At his breath the flower spreads its wings and flutters in the wind.

Colours flush out like heart-longings, the perfume betrays a sweet secret.

He who can open the bud does it so simply.

SUDAS, THE GARDENER, plucked from his tank the last lotus left by the ravage of winter and went to sell it to the king at the palace gate.

There he met a traveller who said to him, 'Ask your price for the last lotus,—I shall offer it to Lord Buddha.'

Sudas said, 'If you pay one golden *masha* it will be yours.'

The traveller paid it.

At that moment the king came out and he wished to buy the flower, for he was on his way to see Lord Buddha, and he thought, 'It would be a fine thing to lay at his feet the lotus that bloomed in winter.'

When the gardener said he had been offered a golden *masha* the king offered him ten, but the traveller doubled the price.

The gardener, being greedy, imagined a greater gain from him for whose sake they were bidding. He bowed and said, 'I cannot sell this lotus.'

In the hushed shade of the mango grove beyond the city wall Sudas stood before Lord Buddha, on whose lips sat the silence of love and whose eyes beamed peace like the morning star of the dew-washed autumn.

Sudas looked in his face and put the lotus at his feet and bowed his head to the dust.

Buddha smiled and asked, 'What is your wish, my son?'

Sudas cried, 'The least touch of your feet.'

MAKE ME THY poet, O Night, veiled Night!

There are some who have sat speechless for ages in thy shadow; let me utter their songs.

Take me up on thy chariot without wheels, running noiselessly from world to world, thou queen in the palace of time, thou darkly beautiful!

Many a questioning mind has stealthily entered thy courtyard and roamed through thy lampless house seeking for answers.

From many a heart, pierced with the arrow of joy from the hands of the Unknown, have burst forth glad chants, shaking the darkness to its foundation.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

Those wakeful souls gaze in the starlight in wonder at the treasure they have suddenly found.

Make me their poet, O Night, the poet of thy fathomless silence.

21

I WILL MEET one day the Life within me, the joy that hides in my life, though the days perplex my path with their idle dust.

I have known it in glimpses, and its fitful breath has come upon me making my thoughts fragrant for a while.

I will meet one day the Joy without me that dwells behind the screen of light—and will stand in the overflowing solitude where all things are seen as by their creator.

22

THIS AUTUMN morning is tired with excess of light, and if your songs grow fitful and languid give me your flute awhile.

I shall but play with it as the whim takes me,—now take it on my lap, now touch it with my lips, now keep it by my side on the grass.

But in the solemn evening stillness I shall gather flowers, to deck it with wreaths, I shall fill it with fragrance; I shall worship it with the lighted lamp.

Then at night I shall come to you and give you back your flute.

You will play on it the music of midnight when the lonely crescent moon wanders among the stars.

23

THE POET'S MIND floats and dances on the waves of life amidst the voices of wind and water.

Now when the sun has set and the darkened sky draws down upon the sea like drooping lashes upon a weary eye it is time to take away his pen, and let his thoughts sink into the bottom of the deep amid the eternal secret of that silence.

FRUIT-GATHERING

24

THE NIGHT is dark and your slumber is deep in the hush of my being.

Wake, O Pain of Love, for I know not how to open the door, and
I stand outside.

The hours wait, the stars watch, the wind is still, the silence is heavy in
my heart.

Wake, Love, wake! brim my empty cup, and with a breath of song
ruffle the night.

25

THE BIRD OF the morning sings.

Whence has he word of the morning before the morning breaks, and
when the dragon night still holds the sky in its cold black coils?

Tell me, bird of the morning, how, through the twofold night of the sky
and the leaves, he found his way into your dream, the messenger out of
the east?

The world did not believe you when you cried, 'The sun is on his
way, the night is no more.'

O sleeper, awake!

Bare your forehead, waiting for the first blessing of light, and sing
with the bird of the morning in glad faith.

26

THE BEGGAR IN me lifted his lean hands to the starless sky and cried into
night's ear with his hungry voice.

His prayers were to the blind Darkness who lay like a fallen god in
a desolate heaven of lost hopes.

The cry of desire eddied round a chasm of despair, a wailing bird
circling its empty nest.

But when morning dropped anchor at the rim of the East, the beggar
in me leapt and cried:

'Blessed am I that the deaf night denied me—that its coffer was empty.'

He cried, 'O Life, O Light, you are precious! and precious is the joy
that at last has known you!'

SANATAN WAS telling his beads by the Ganges when a Brahmin in rags came to him and said, 'Help me, I am poor!'

'My alms-bowl is all that is my own,' said Sanatan, 'I have given away everything I had.'

'But my lord Shiva came to me in my dreams,' said the Brahmin, 'and counselled me to come to you.'

Sanatan suddenly remembered he had picked up a stone without price among the pebbles on the river-bank, and thinking that some one might need it hid it in the sands.

He pointed out the spot to the Brahmin, who wondering dug up the stone.

The Brahmin sat on the earth and mused alone till the sun went down behind the trees, and cowherds went home with their cattle.

Then he rose and came slowly to Sanatan and said, 'Master, give me the least fraction of the wealth that disdains all the wealth of the world.'

And he threw the precious stone into the water.

TIME AFTER TIME I came to your gate with raised hands, asking for more and yet more.

You gave and gave, now in slow measure, now in sudden excess.

I took some, and some things I let drop; some lay heavy on my hands; some I made into playthings and broke them when tired; till the wrecks and the hoard of your gifts grew immense, hiding you, and the ceaseless expectation wore my heart out.

Take, oh take—has now become my cry.

Shatter all from this beggar's bowl: put out this lamp of the importunate watcher: hold my hands, raise me from the still-gathering heap of your gifts into the bare infinity of your uncrowded presence.

YOU HAVE SET me among those who are defeated.

I know it is not for me to win, nor to leave the game.

FRUIT-GATHERING

I shall plunge into the pool although but to sink to the bottom.
I shall play the game of my undoing.

I shall stake all I have and when I lose my last penny I shall stake myself,
and then I think I shall have won through my utter defeat.

30

A SMILE OF mirth spread over the sky when you dressed my heart in rags
and sent her forth into the road to beg.

She went from door to door, and many a time when her bowl was
nearly full she was robbed.

At the end of the weary day she came to your palace gate holding up her
pitiful bowl, and you came and took her hand and seated her beside you
on your throne.

31

'WHO AMONG you will take up the duty of feeding the hungry?' Lord Buddha
asked his followers when famine raged at Shravasti.

Ratnakar, the banker, hung his head and said, 'Much more is needed
than all my wealth to feed the hungry.'

Jaysen, the chief of the King's army, said, 'I would gladly give my life's
blood, but there is not enough food in my house.'

Dharmapal, who owned broad acres of land, said with a sigh, 'The drought
demon has sucked my fields dry. I know not how to pay King's dues.'

Then rose Supriya, the mendicant's daughter.

She bowed to all and meekly said, 'I will feed the hungry.'

'How!' they cried in surprise. 'How can you hope to fulfil that vow?'

'I am the poorest of you all,' said Supriya, 'that is my strength. I have
my coffer and my store at each of your houses.'

MY KING WAS unknown to me, therefore when he claimed his tribute I was bold to think I would hide myself leaving my debts unpaid.

I fled and fled behind my day's work and my night's dreams.

But his claims followed me at every breath I drew.

Thus I came to know that I am known to him and no place left which is mine.

Now I wish to lay my all before his feet, and gain the right to my place in his kingdom.

WHEN I THOUGHT I would mould you, an image from my life for men to worship, I brought my dust and desires and all my coloured delusions and dreams.

When I asked you to mould with my life an image from your heart for you to love, you brought your fire and force, and truth, loveliness and peace.

'SIRE,' ANNOUNCED the servant to the King, 'the saint Narottam has never deigned to enter your royal temple.

'He is singing God's praise under the trees by the open road. The temple is empty of worshippers.

'They flock round him like bees round the white lotus, leaving the golden jar of honey unheeded.'

The King, vexed at heart, went to the spot where Narottam sat on the grass.

He asked him, 'Father, why leave my temple of the golden dome and sit on the dust outside to preach God's love?'

'Because God is not there in your temple,' said Narottam.

The King frowned and said, 'Do you know, twenty millions of gold went to the making of that marvel of art, and it was consecrated to God with costly rites?'

FRUIT-GATHERING

'Yes, I know it,' answered Narottam. 'It was in that year when thousands of your people whose houses had been burned stood vainly asking for help at your door.

'And God said, "The poor creature who can give no shelter to his brothers would build my house!"

'And he took his place with the shelterless under the trees by the road.

'And that golden bubble is empty of all but hot vapour of pride.'

The King cried in anger, 'Leave my land.'

Calmly said the saint, 'Yes, banish me where you have banished my God.'

35

THE TRUMPET lies in the dust.

The wind is weary, the light is dead.

Ah the evil day!

Come, fighters, carrying your flags, and singers, with your war-songs!

Come, pilgrims of the march, hurrying on your journey!

The trumpet lies in the dust waiting for us.

I was on my way to the temple with my evening offerings, seeking for a place of rest after the day's dusty toil: hoping my hurts would be healed and the stains in my garment washed white, when I found thy trumpet lying in the dust.

Was it not the hour for me to light my evening lamp?

Had not the night sung its lullaby to the stars?

O thou blood-red rose, my poppies of sleep have paled and faded!

I was certain my wanderings were over and my debts all paid when suddenly I came upon thy trumpet lying in the dust.

Strike my drowsy heart with thy spell of youth!

Let my joy in life blaze up in fire.

Let the shafts of awakening fly through the heart of night, and a thrill of dread shake blindness and palsy.

I have come to raise thy trumpet from the dust.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

Sleep is no more for me—my walk shall be through showers of arrows.
Some shall run out of their houses and come to my side—some shall weep.

Some in their beds shall toss and groan in dire dreams.
For to-night thy trumpet shall be sounded.

From thee I have asked peace only to find shame.
Now I stand before thee—help me to put on my armour!
Let hard blows of trouble strike fire into my life.
Let my heart beat in pain, the drum of thy victory.
My hands shall be utterly emptied to take up thy trumpet.

36

WHEN, MAD IN their mirth, they raised dust to soil thy robe, O Beautiful,
it made my heart sick.

I cried to thee and said, 'Take thy rod of punishment and judge them.'

The morning light struck upon those eyes, red with the revel of night;
the place of the white lily greeted their burning breath; the stars through
the depth of the sacred dark stared at their carousing—at those that raised
dust to soil thy robe, O Beautiful!

Thy judgment seat was in the flower garden, in the birds' notes in
springtime: in the shady river-banks, where the trees muttered in answer
to the muttering of the waves.

O my Lover, they were pitiless in their passion.

They prowled in the dark to snatch thy ornaments to deck their own
desires.

When they had struck thee and thou wert pained, it pierced me to
the quick, and I cried to thee and said, 'Take thy sword, O my Lover,
and judge them!'

Ah, but thy justice was vigilant.

A mother's tears were shed on their insolence; the imperishable faith
of a lover hid their spears of rebellion in its own wounds.

Thy judgment was in the mute pain of sleepless love: in the blush
of the chaste: in the tears of the night of the desolate: in the pale morning-
light of forgiveness.

FRUIT-GATHERING

O Terrible, they in their reckless greed climbed thy gate at night, breaking into thy storehouse to rob thee.

But the weight of their plunder grew immense, too heavy to carry or to remove.

Thereupon I cried to thee and said, Forgive them, O Terrible!

Thy forgiveness burst in storms, throwing them down, scattering their thefts in the dust.

Thy forgiveness was in the thunder-stone; in the shower of blood; in the angry red of the sunset.

37

UPAGUPTA, THE disciple of Buddha, lay asleep on the dust by the city wall of Mathura.

Lamps were all out, doors were all shut, and stars were all hidden by the murky sky of August.

Whose feet were those tinkling with anklets, touching his breast of a sudden?

He woke up startled, and the light from a woman's lamp struck his forgiving eyes.

It was the dancing girl, starred with jewels, clouded with a pale-blue mantle, drunk with the wine of her youth.

She lowered her lamp and saw the young face, austere and beautiful.

'Forgive me, young ascetic,' said the woman; 'graciously come to my house. The dusty earth is not a fit bed for you.'

The ascetic answered, 'Woman, go on your way; when the time is ripe I will come to you.'

Suddenly the black night showed its teeth in a flash of lightning.

The storm growled from the corner of the sky, and the woman trembled in fear.

The branches of the wayside trees were aching with blossom.

Gay notes of the flute came floating in the warm spring air from afar.

The citizens had gone to the woods, to the festival of flowers.

From the mid-sky gazed the full moon on the shadows of the silent town.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

The young ascetic was walking in the lonely street, while overhead the lovesick *koels* urged from the mango branches their sleepless plaint.

Upagupta passed through the city gates, and stood at the base of the rampart.

What woman lay in the shadow of the wall at his feet, struck with the black pestilence, her body spotted with sores, hurriedly driven away from the town?

The ascetic sat by her side, taking her head on his knees, and moistened her lips with water and smeared her body with balm.

'Who are you, merciful one?' asked the woman.

'The time, at last, has come to visit you, and I am here,' replied the young ascetic.

38

THIS IS NO MERE dallying of love between us, my lover.

Again and again have swooped down upon me the screaming nights of storm, blowing out my lamp: dark doubts have gathered, blotting out all stars from my sky.

Again and again the banks have burst, letting the flood sweep away my harvest, and wailing and despair have rent my sky from end to end.

This have I learnt that there are blows of pain in your love, never the cold apathy of death.

39

THE WALL BREAKS asunder, light, like divine laughter, bursts in.

Victory, O Light!

The heart of the night is pierced!

With your flashing sword cut in twain the tangle of doubt and feeble desires!

Victory!

Come, Implacable!

Come, you who are terrible in your whiteness.

O Light, your drum sounds in the march of fire, and the red torch is held on high; death dies in a burst of splendour!

FRUIT-GATHERING

40

O FIRE, MY brother, I sing victory to you.

You are the bright red image of fearful freedom.

You swing your arms in the sky, you sweep your impetuous fingers
across the harp-string, your dance music is beautiful.

When my days are ended and the gates are opened you will burn to ashes
this cordage of hands and feet.

My body will be one with you, my heart will be caught in the whirls
of your frenzy, and the burning heat that was my life will flash up and
mingle itself in your flame.

41

THE BOATMAN is out crossing the wild sea at night.

The mast is aching because of its full sails filled with the violent wind.

Stung with the night's fang the sky falls upon the sea, poisoned with
black fear.

The waves dash their heads against the dark unseen, and the Boatman
is out crossing the wild sea.

The Boatman is out, I know not for what tryst, startling the night with
the sudden white of his sails.

I know not at what shore, at last, he lands to reach the silent courtyard
where the lamp is burning and to find her who sits in the dust and waits.

What is the quest that makes his boat care not for storm nor darkness?

Is it heavy with gems and pearls?

Ah, no, the Boatman brings with him no treasure, but only a white
rose in his hand and a song on his lips.

It is for her who watches alone at night with her lamp burning.

She dwells in the wayside hut.

Her loose hair flies in the wind and hides her eyes.

The storm shrieks through her broken doors, the light flickers in her
earthen lamp flinging shadows on the walls.

Through the howl of the winds she hears him call her name, she
whose name is unknown.

It is long since the Boatman sailed.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

It will be long before the day breaks and he knocks at the door.
The drums will not be beaten and none will know.
Only light shall fill the house, blessed shall be the dust, and the heart
glad.
All doubts shall vanish in silence when the Boatman comes to the
shore.

42

I CLING TO THIS living raft, my body, in the narrow stream of my earthly
years. I leave it when the crossing is over.
And then?
I do not know if the light there and the darkness are the same.

The Unknown is the perpetual freedom:
He is pitiless in his love.
He crushes the shell for the pearl, dumb in the prison of the dark.

You muse and weep for the days that are done, poor heart!
Be glad that days are to come!
The hour strikes, O pilgrim!
It is time for you to take the parting of the ways!
His face will be unveiled once again and you shall meet.

43

OVER THE RELIC of Lord Buddha King Bimbisar built a shrine, a salutation
in white marble.

There in the evening would come all the brides and daughters of the
King's house to offer flowers and light lamps.

When the son became king in his time he washed his father's creed away
with blood, and lit sacrificial fires with its sacred books.

The autumn day was dying.

The evening hour of worship was near.

Shrimati, the queen's maid, devoted to Lord Buddha, having bathed
in holy water, and decked the golden tray with lamps and fresh white
blossoms, silently raised her dark eyes to the queen's face.

FRUIT-GATHERING

The queen shuddered in fear and said, 'Do you not know, foolish girl, that death is the penalty for whoever brings worship to Buddha's shrine? Such is the king's will.'

Shrimati bowed to the queen, and turning away from her door came and stood before Amita, the newly wed bride of the king's son.

A mirror of burnished gold on her lap, the newly wed bride was braiding her dark long tresses and painting the red spot of good luck at the parting of her hair.

Her hands trembled when she saw the young maid, and she cried, 'What fearful peril would you bring me! Leave me this instant.'

Princess Shukla sat at the window reading her book of romance by the light of the setting sun.

She started when she saw at her door the maid with the sacred offerings.

Her book fell down from her lap, and she whispered in Shrimati's ears, 'Rush not to death, daring woman!'

Shrimati walked from door to door.

She raised her head and cried, 'O women of the king's house, hasten!

'The time for our Lord's worship is come!'

Some shut their doors in her face and some reviled her.

The last gleam of daylight faded from the bronze dome of the palace tower.

Deep shadows settled in street corners; the bustle of the city was hushed: the gong at the temple of Shiva announced the time of the evening prayer.

In the dark of the autumn evening, deep as a limpid lake, stars throbbed with light, when the guards of the palace garden were startled to see through the trees a row of lamps burning at the shrine of Buddha.

They ran with their swords unsheathed, crying, 'Who are you, foolish one, reckless of death?'

'I am Shrimati,' replied a sweet voice, 'the servant of Lord Buddha.'

The next moment her heart's blood coloured the cold marble with its red.

And in the still hour of stars died the light of the last lamp of worship at the foot of the shrine.

44

THE DAY THAT stands between you and me makes her last bow of farewell.
The night draws her veil over her face, and hides the one lamp burning
in my chamber.

Your dark servant comes noiselessly and spreads the bridal carpet for you
to take your seat there alone with me in the wordless silence till night
is done.

45

MY NIGHT HAS passed on the bed of sorrow, and my eyes are tired. My heavy
heart is not yet ready to meet morning with its crowded joys.

Draw a veil over this naked light, beckon aside from me this glaring flash
and dance of life.

Let thy mantle of tender darkness cover me in its folds, and cover
my pain awhile from the pressure of the world.

46

THE TIME IS past when I could repay her for all that I received.

Her night has found its morning and thou hast taken her to thy arms;
and to thee I bring my gratitude and my gifts that were for her.

For all hurts and offences to her I come to thee for forgiveness.

I offer to thy service those flowers of my love that remained in bud
when she waited for them to open.

47

I FOUND A few old letters of mine carefully hidden in her box—a few small
toys for her memory to play with.

With a timorous heart she tried to steal these trifles from time's
turbulent stream, and said, "These are mine only!"

Ah, there is no one now to claim them, who can pay their price with loving
care, yet here they are still.

Surely there is love in this world to save her from utter loss, even like
this love of hers that saved these letters with such fond care.

FRUIT-GATHERING

48¹

BRING BEAUTY and order into my forlorn life, woman, as you brought them into my house when you lived.

Sweep away the dusty fragments of the hours, fill the empty jars, and mend all that has been neglected.

Then open the inner door of the shrine, light the candle, and let us meet there in silence before our God.

49

THE PAIN WAS great when the strings were being tuned, my Master!

Begin your music, and let me forget the pain; let me feel in beauty what you had in your mind through those pitiless days.

The waning night lingers at my doors, let her take her leave in songs.

Pour your heart into my life strings, my Master, in tunes that descend from your stars.

50

IN THE lightning flash of a moment I have seen the immensity of your creation in my life—creation through many a death from world to world.

I weep at my unworthiness when I see my life in the hands of the unmeaning hours,—but when I see it in your hands I know it is too precious to be squandered among shadows.

51

I KNOW THAT at the dim end of some day the sun will bid me its last farewell.

Shepherds will play their pipes beneath the banyan trees, and cattle graze on the slope by the river, while my days will pass into the dark.

This is my prayer, that I may know before I leave why the earth called me to her arms.

Why her night's silence spoke to me of stars, and her daylight kissed my thoughts into flower.

¹ Also to be found in *Lover's Gift*, no. 45.—Editor

Before I go may I linger over my last refrain, completing its music,
may the lamp be lit to see your face and the wreath woven to crown you.

52

WHAT MUSIC IS that in whose measure the world is rocked?

We laugh when it beats upon the crest of life, we shrink in terror
when it returns into the dark.

But the play is the same that comes and goes with the rhythm of the
endless music.

You hide your treasure in the palm of your hand, and we cry that we are
robbed.

But open and shut your palm as you will, the gain and the loss are
the same.

At the game you play with your own self you lose and win at once.

53

I HAVE KISSED this world with my eyes and my limbs; I have wrapt it within
my heart in numberless folds; I have flooded its days and nights with
thoughts till the world and my life have grown one,—and I love my life
because I love the light of the sky so enwoven with me.

If to leave this world be as real as to love it—then there must be a meaning
in the meeting and the parting of life.

If that love were deceived in death, then the canker of this deceit
would eat into all things, and the stars would shrivel and grow black.

54

THE CLOUD said to me, 'I vanish'; the Night said, 'I plunge into the fiery
dawn.'

The Pain said, 'I remain in deep silence as his footprint.'

'I die into the fulness,' said my life to me.

The Earth said, 'My lights kiss your thoughts every moment.'

'The days pass,' Love said, 'but I wait for you.'

Death said, 'I ply the boat of your life across the sea.'

TULSIDAS, THE poet, was wandering, deep in thought, by the Ganges, in that lonely spot where they burn their dead.

He found a woman sitting at the feet of the corpse of her dead husband, gaily dressed as for a wedding.

She rose as she saw him, bowed to him, and said, 'Permit me, Master, with your blessing, to follow my husband to heaven.'

'Why such hurry, my daughter?' asked Tulsidas. 'Is not this earth also His who made heaven?'

'For heaven I do not long,' said the woman. 'I want my husband.'

Tulsidas smiled and said to her, 'Go back to your home, my child. Before the month is over you will find your husband.'

The woman went back with glad hope. Tulsidas came to her every day and gave her high thoughts to think, till her heart was filled to the brim with divine love.

When the month was scarcely over, her neighbours came to her, asking, 'Woman, have you found your husband?'

The widow smiled and said, 'I have.'

Eagerly they asked, 'Where is he?'

'In my heart is my lord, one with me,' said the woman.

YOU CAME FOR A MOMENT to my side and touched me with the great mystery of the woman that there is in the heart of creation.

She who is ever returning to God his own outflowing of sweetness; she is the ever fresh beauty and youth in nature; she dances in the bubbling streams and sings in the morning light; she with heaving waves suckles the thirsty earth; in her the Eternal One breaks in two in a joy that no longer may contain itself, and overflows in the pain of love.

WHO IS SHE who dwells in my heart, the woman forlorn for ever?

I wooed her and I failed to win her.

I decked her with wreaths and sang in her praise.

A smile shone in her face for a moment, then it faded.

'I have no joy in thee,' she cried, the woman in sorrow.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

I bought her jewelled anklets and fanned her with a fan gem-studded; I made her a bed on a bedstead of gold.

There flickered a gleam of gladness in her eyes, then it died.

'I have no joy in these,' she cried, the woman in sorrow.

I seated her upon a car of triumph and drove her from end to end of the earth.

Conquered hearts bowed down at her feet, and shouts of applause rang in the sky.

Pride shone in her eyes for a moment, then it was dimmed in tears.

'I have no joy in conquest,' she cried, the woman in sorrow.

I asked her, 'Tell me whom do you seek?'

She only said, 'I wait for him of the unknown name.'

Days pass by and she cries, 'When will my beloved come whom I know not, and be known to me for ever?'

58

YOURS IS THE light that breaks forth from the dark, and the good that sprouts from the cleft heart of strife.

Yours is the house that opens upon the world, and the love that calls to the battlefield.

Yours is the gift that still is a gain when everything is a loss, and the life that flows through the caverns of death.

Yours is the heaven that lies in the common dust, and you are there for me, you are there for all.

59

WHEN THE weariness of the road is upon me, and the thirst of the sultry day; when the ghostly hours of the dusk throw their shadows across my life, then I cry not for your voice only, my friend, but for your touch.

There is an anguish in my heart for the burden of its riches not given to you.

Put out your hand through the night, let me hold it and fill it and keep it; let me feel its touch along the lengthening stretch of my loneliness.

THE ODOUR CRIES in the bud, 'Ah me, the day departs, the happy day of spring, and I am a prisoner in petals!'

Do not lose heart, timid thing!

Your bonds will burst, the bud will open into flower, and when you die in the fulness of life, even then the spring will live on.

The odour pants and flutters within the bud, crying, 'Ah me, the hours pass by, yet I do not know where I go, or what it is I seek!'

Do not lose heart, timid thing!

The spring breeze has overheard your desire, the day will not end before you have fulfilled your being.

Dark is the future to her, and the odour cries in despair, 'Ah me, through whose fault is my life so unmeaning?

'Who can tell me, why I am at all?'

Do not lose heart, timid thing!

The perfect dawn is near when you will mingle your life with all life and know at last your purpose.

SHE IS STILL a child, my lord.

She runs about your palace and plays, and tries to make of you a plaything as well.

She heeds not when her hair tumbles down and her careless garment drags in the dust.

She falls asleep when you speak to her and answers not—and the flower you give her in the morning slips to the dust from her hands.

When the storm bursts and darkness is over the sky she is sleepless; her dolls lie scattered on the earth and she clings to you in terror.

She is afraid that she may fail in service to you.

But with a smile you watch her at her game.

You know her.

The child sitting in the dust is your destined bride; her play will be stilled and deepened into love.

'WHAT IS THERE but the sky, O Sun, that can hold thine image?'

'I dream of thee, but to serve thee I can never hope,' the dewdrop wept and said, 'I am too small to take thee unto me, great lord, and my life is all tears.'

'I illumine the limitless sky, yet I can yield myself up to a tiny drop of dew,' thus the Sun said; 'I shall become but a sparkle of light and fill you, and your little life will be a laughing orb.'

NOT FOR ME is the love that knows no restraint, but like the foaming wine that having burst its vessel in a moment would run to waste.

Send me the love which is cool and pure like your rain that blesses the thirsty earth and fills the homely earthen jars.

Send me the love that would soak down into the centre of being, and from there would spread like the unseen sap through the branching tree of life, giving birth to fruits and flowers.

Send me the love that keeps the heart still with the fulness of peace.

THE SUN HAD set on the western margin of the river among the tangle of the forest.

The hermit boys had brought the cattle home, and sat round the fire to listen to the master, Gautama, when a strange boy came, and greeted him with fruits and flowers, and, bowing low at his feet, spoke in a bird-like voice—'Lord, I have come to thee to be taken into the path of the supreme Truth.

'My name is Satyakama.'

'Blessings be on thy head,' said the master.

'Of what clan art thou, my child? It is only fitting for a Brahmin to aspire to the highest wisdom.'

FRUIT-GATHERING

'Master,' answered the boy, 'I know not of what clan I am. I shall go and ask my mother.'

Thus saying, Satyakama took leave, and wading across the shallow stream, came back to his mother's hut, which stood at the end of the sandy waste at the edge of the sleeping village.

The lamp burnt dimly in the room, and the mother stood at the door in the dark waiting for her son's return.

She clasped him to her bosom, kissed him on his hair, and asked him of his errand to the master.

'What is the name of my father, dear mother?' asked the boy.

'It is only fitting for a Brahmin to aspire to the highest wisdom, said Lord Gautama to me.'

The woman lowered her eyes, and spoke in a whisper.

'In my youth I was poor and had many masters. Thou didst come to thy mother Jabala's arms, my darling, who had no husband.'

The early rays of the sun glistened on the tree-tops of the forest hermitage.

The students, with their tangled hair still wet with their morning bath, sat under the ancient tree, before the master.

There came Satyakama.

He bowed low at the feet of the sage, and stood silent.

'Tell me,' the great teacher asked him, 'of what clan art thou?'

'My lord,' he answered, 'I know it not. My mother said when I asked her, "I had served many masters in my youth, and thou hadst come to thy mother Jabala's arms, who had no husband."'

There rose a murmur like the angry hum of bees disturbed in their hive; and the students muttered at the shameless insolence of that outcast.

Master Gautama rose from his seat, stretched out his arms, took the boy to his bosom, and said, 'Best of all Brahmins art thou, my child. Thou hast the noblest heritage of truth.'

MAY BE THERE is one house in this city where the gate opens for ever this morning at the touch of the sunrise, where the errand of the light is fulfilled.

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The flowers have opened in hedges and gardens, and may be there is one heart that has found in them this morning the gift that has been on its voyage from endless time.

66

LISTEN, MY heart, in his flute is the music of the smell of wild flowers, of the glistening leaves and gleaming water, of shadows resonant with bees' wings.

The flute steals his smile from my friend's lips and spreads it over my life.

67

YOU ALWAYS stand alone beyond the stream of my songs.

The waves of my tunes wash your feet but I know not how to reach them.

This play of mine with you is a play from afar.

It is the pain of separation that melts into melody through my flute.

I wait for the time when your boat crosses over to my shore and you take my flute into your own hands.

68

SUDDENLY THE window of my heart flew open this morning, the window that looks out on your heart.

I wondered to see that the name by which you know me is written in April leaves and flowers, and I sat silent.

The curtain was blown away for a moment between my songs and yours.

I found that your morning light was full of my own mute songs unsung; I thought that I would learn them at your feet—and I sat silent.

69

YOU WERE IN THE centre of my heart, therefore when my heart wandered she never found you; you hid yourself from my loves and hopes till the last, for you were always in them.

FRUIT GATHERING

You were the inmost joy in the play of my youth, and when I was too busy with the play the joy was passed by.

You sang to me in the ecstasies of my life and I forgot to sing to you.

70

WHEN YOU HOLD your lamp in the sky it throws its light on my face and its shadow falls over you.

When I hold the lamp of love in my heart its light falls on you and I am left standing behind in the shadow.

71

O THE WAVES, the sky-devouring waves, glistening with light, dancing with life, the waves of eddying joy, rushing for ever.

The stars rock upon them, thoughts of every tint are cast up out of the deep and scattered on the beach of life.

Birth and death rise and fall with their rhythm, and the sea-gull of my heart spreads its wings crying in delight.

72

THE JOY RAN from all the world to build my body.

The lights of the skies kissed and kissed her till she woke.

Flowers of hurrying summers sighed in her breath and voices of winds and water sang in her movements.

The passion of the tide of colours in clouds and in forests flowed into her life, and the music of all things caressed her limbs into shape.

She is my bride,—she has lighted her lamp in my house.

73

THE SPRING with its leaves and flowers has come into my body.

The bees hum there the morning long, and the winds idly play with the shadows.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

A sweet fountain springs up from the heart of my heart.

My eyes are washed with delight like the dew-bathed morning, and life is quivering in all my limbs like the sounding strings of the lute.

Are you wandering alone by the shore of my life, where the tide is in flood,
O lover of my endless days?

Are my dreams flitting round you like the moths with their many-coloured wings?

And are those your songs that are echoing in the dark caves of my being?

Who but you can hear the hum of the crowded hours that sounds in my veins to-day, the glad steps that dance in my breast, the clamour of the restless life beating its wings in my body?

74

MY BONDS ARE CUT, my debts are paid, my door has been opened, I go everywhere.

They crouch in their corner and weave their web of pale hours, they count their coins sitting in the dust and call me back.

But my sword is forged, my armour is put on, my horse is eager to run.
I shall win my kingdom.

75

IT WAS ONLY the other day that I came to your earth, naked and nameless, with a wailing cry.

To-day my voice is glad, while you, my lord, stand aside to make room that I may fill my life.

Even when I bring you my songs for an offering I have the secret hope that men will come and love me for them.

You love to discover that I love this world where you have brought me.

TIMIDLY I cowered in the shadow of safety, but now, when the surge of joy carries my heart upon its crest, my heart clings to the cruel rock of its trouble.

I sat alone in a corner of my house thinking it too narrow for any guest, but now when its door is flung open by an unbidden joy I find there is room for thee and for all the world.

I walked upon tiptoe, careful of my person, perfumed, and adorned—but now when a glad whirlwind has overthrown me in the dust I laugh and roll on the earth at thy feet like a child.

THE WORLD IS YOURS at once and for ever.

And because you have no want, my king, you have no pleasure in your wealth.

It is as though it were naught.

Therefore through slow time you give me what is yours, and ceaselessly win your kingdom in me.

Day after day you buy your sunrise from my heart, and you find your love carven into the image of my life.

TO THE BIRDS you gave songs, the birds gave you songs in return.

You gave me only voice, yet asked for more, and I sing.

You made your winds light and they are fleet in their service. You burdened my hands that I myself may lighten them, and at last, gain unburdened freedom for your service.

You created your Earth filling its shadows with fragments of light.

There you paused; you left me empty-handed in the dust to create your heaven.

To all things else you give; from me you ask.

The harvest of my life ripens in the sun and the shower till I reap more than you sowed, gladdening your heart, O Master of the golden granary.

LET ME NOT pray to be sheltered from dangers but to be fearless in facing them.

Let me not beg for the stilling of my pain but for the heart to conquer it.

Let me not look for allies in life's battlefield but to my own strength.

Let me not crave in anxious fear to be saved but hope for the patience to win my freedom.

Grant me that I may not be a coward, feeling your mercy in my success alone; but let me find the grasp of your hand in my failure.

YOU DID NOT know yourself when you dwelt alone, and there was no crying of an errand when the wind ran from the hither to the farther shore.

I came and you woke, and the skies blossomed with lights.

You made me open in many flowers; rocked me in the cradles of many forms; hid me in death and found me again in life.

I came and your heart heaved; pain came to you and joy.

You touched me and tingled into love.

But in my eyes there is a film of shame and in my breast a flicker of fear; my face is veiled and I weep when I cannot see you.

Yet I know the endless thirst in your heart for sight of me, the thirst that cries at my door in the repeated knockings of sunrise.

YOU, IN YOUR timeless watch, listen to my approaching steps, while your gladness gathers in the morning twilight and breaks in the burst of light.

The nearer I draw to you the deeper grows the fervour in the dance of the sea.

Your world is a branching spray of light filling your hands, but your heaven is in my secret heart; it slowly opens its buds in shy love.

FRUIT-GATHERING

82

I WILL UTTER your name, sitting alone among the shadows of my silent thoughts.

I will utter it without words, I will utter it without purpose.

For I am like a child that calls its mother an hundred times, glad that it can say 'Mother.'

83

I

I FEEL THAT all the stars shine in me.

The world breaks into my life like a flood.

The flowers blossom in my body.

All the youthfulness of land and water smokes like an incense in my heart; and the breath of all things plays on my thoughts as on a flute.

II

When the world sleeps I come to your door.

The stars are silent, and I am afraid to sing.

I wait and watch, till your shadow passes by the balcony of night and I return with a full heart.

Then in the morning I sing by the roadside;

The flowers in the hedge give me answer and the morning air listens,

The travellers suddenly stop and look in my face, thinking I have called them by their names.

III

Keep me at your door ever attending to your wishes, and let me go about in your Kingdom accepting your call.

Let me not sink and disappear in the depth of langour.

Let not my life be worn out to tatters by penury of waste.

Let not those doubts encompass me,—the dust of distractions.

Let me not pursue many paths to gather many things.

Let me not bend my heart to the yoke of the many.

Let me hold my head high in the courage and pride of being your servant.

The Oarsmen

DO YOU HEAR the tumult of death afar,
 The call midst the fire-floods and poisonous clouds.
 —The Captain's call to the steersman to turn the ship to an unnamed
 shore,
 For that time is over—the stagnant time in the port—
 Where the same old merchandise is bought and sold in an endless
 round,
 Where dead things drift in the exhaustion and emptiness of truth.

They wake up in sudden fear and ask,
 'Comrades, what hour has struck?
 When shall the dawn begin?'
 The clouds have blotted away the stars—
 Who is there then can see the beckoning finger of the day?
 They run out with oars in hand, the beds are emptied, the mother
 prays, the wife watches by the door;
 There is a wail of parting that rises to the sky,
 And there is the Captain's voice in the dark:
 'Come, sailors, for the time in the harbour is over!'

All the black evils in the world have overflowed their banks,
 Yet, oarsmen, take your places with the blessing of sorrow in your
 souls!
 Whom do you blame, brothers? Bow your heads down!
 The sin has been yours and ours.
 The heat growing in the heart of God for ages—
 The cowardice of the weak, the arrogance of the strong, the greed
 of fat prosperity, the rancour of the wronged, pride of race, and insult
 to man—
 Has burst God's peace, raging in storm.

Like a ripe pod, let the tempest break its heart into pieces, scattering
 thunders.
 Stop your bluster of dispraise and of self-praise,

FRUIT-GATHERING

And with the calm of silent prayer on your foreheads sail to that unnamed shore.

We have known sins and evils every day and death we have known;

They pass over our world like clouds mocking us with their transient lightning laughter.

Suddenly they have stopped, become a prodigy,

And men must stand before them saying:

'We do not fear you, O Monster! for we have lived every day by conquering you,

'And we die with the faith that Peace is true, and Good is true, and true is the eternal One!'

If the Deathless dwell not in the heart of death,

If glad wisdom bloom not bursting the sheath of sorrow,

If sin do not die of its own revealment,

If pride break not under its load of decorations,

Then whence comes the hope that drives these men from their homes like stars rushing to their death in the morning light?

Shall the value of the martyrs' blood and mothers' tears be utterly lost in the dust of the earth, not buying Heaven with their price?

And when Man bursts his mortal bounds, is not the Boundless revealed that moment?

85

The Song of the Defeated

MY MASTER HAS bid me while I stand at the roadside, to sing the song of Defeat, for that is the bride whom He woos in secret.

She has put on the dark veil, hiding her face from the crowd, but the jewel glows on her breast in the dark.

She is forsaken of the day, and God's night is waiting for her with its lamps lighted and flowers wet with dew.

She is silent with her eyes downcast; she has left her home behind her, from her home has come that wailing in the wind.

But the stars are singing the love-song of the eternal to a face sweet with shame and suffering.

The door has been opened in the lonely chamber, the call has sounded,
and the heart of the darkness throbs with awe because of the coming tryst.

86

Thanksgiving

THOSE WHO walk on the path of pride crushing the lowly life under their
tread, covering the tender green of the earth with their footprints in
blood;

Let them rejoice, and thank thee, Lord, for the day is theirs.

But I am thankful that my lot lies with the humble who suffer and
bear the burden of power, and hide their faces and stifle their sobs in
the dark.

For every throb of their pain has pulsed in the secret depth of thy
night, and every insult has been gathered into thy great silence.

And the morrow is theirs.

O Sun, rise upon the bleeding hearts blossoming in flowers of the
morning, and the torchlight revelry of pride shrunken to ashes.

Lover's Gift

From the first day that you were born, I have been your mother's gift to the world.

I have always been with you, I have always been your mother's gift to the world.

I have always been with you, I have always been your mother's gift to the world.

I have always been with you, I have always been your mother's gift to the world.

I have always been with you, I have always been your mother's gift to the world.

I have always been with you, I have always been your mother's gift to the world.

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I have always been with you, I have always been your mother's gift to the world.

I have always been with you, I have always been your mother's gift to the world.

1

YOU ALLOWED your kingly power to vanish, Shajahan, but your wish was to make imperishable a tear-drop of love.

Time has no pity for the human heart, he laughs at its sad struggle to remember.

You allured him with beauty, made him captive, and crowned the formless death with fadeless form.

The secret whispered in the hush of night to the ear of your love is wrought in the perpetual silence of stone.

Though empires crumble to dust, and centuries are lost in shadows, the marble still sighs to the stars, 'I remember.'

'I remember.'—But life forgets, for she has her call to the Endless; and she goes on her voyage unburdened, leaving her memories to the forlorn forms of beauty.

2

COME TO MY garden walk, my love. Pass by the fervid flowers that press themselves on your sight. Pass them by, stopping at some chance joy, that like a sudden wonder of sunset illumines, yet eludes.

For love's gift is shy, it never tells its name, it flits across the shade, spreading a shiver of joy along the dust. Overtake it or miss it for ever. But a gift that can be grasped is merely a frail flower, or a lamp with a flame that will flicker.

3

THE FRUITS COME in crowds into my orchard, they jostle each other. They surge up in the light in an anguish of fullness.

Proudly step into my orchard, my queen, sit there in the shade, pluck the ripe fruits from their stems, and let them yield, to the utmost, their burden of sweetness at your lips.

In my orchard the butterflies shake their wings in the sun, the leaves tremble, the fruits clamour to come to completion.

4

SHE IS NEAR TO my heart as the meadow-flower to the earth; she is sweet to me as sleep is to tired limbs. My love for her is my life flowing in its

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

fullness, like a river in autumn flood, running with serene abandonment. My songs are one with my love, like the murmur of a stream, that sings with all its waves and currents.

5

I WOULD ASK for still more, if I had the sky with all its stars, and the world with its endless riches; but I would be content with the smallest corner of this earth if only she were mine.

6

IN THE LIGHT of this thriftless day of spring, my poet, sing of those who pass by and do not linger, who laugh as they run and never look back, who blossom in an hour of unreasoning delight, and fade in a moment without regret.

Do not sit down silently, to tell the beads of your past tears and smiles,—do not stop to pick up the dropped petals from the flowers of overnight, do not go to seek things that evade you, to know the meaning that is not plain,—leave the gaps in your life where they are, for the music to come out of their depths.

7

IT IS LITTLE that remains now, the rest was spent in one careless summer. It is just enough to put in a song and sing to you; to weave in a flower-chain gently clasping your wrist; to hang in your ear like a round pink pearl, like a blushing whisper; to risk in a game one evening and utterly lose.

My boat is a frail small thing, not fit for crossing wild waves in the rain. If you but lightly step on it I shall gently row you by the shelter of the shore, where the dark water in ripples are like a dream-ruffled sleep; where the dove's cooing from the drooping branches makes the noon-day shadows plaintive. At the day's end, when you are tired, I shall pluck a dripping lily to put in your hair and take my leave.

LOVER'S GIFT

8

THERE IS ROOM for you. You are alone with your few sheaves of rice. My boat is crowded, it is heavily laden, but how can I turn you away? your young body is slim and swaying; there is a twinkling smile in the edge of your eyes, and your robe is coloured like the rain-cloud.

The travellers will land for different roads and homes. You will sit for a while on the prow of my boat, and at the journey's end none will keep you back.

Where do you go, and to what home, to garner your sheaves? I will not question you, but when I fold my sails and moor my boat, I shall sit and wonder in the evening,—Where do you go, and to what home, to garner your sheaves?

9

WOMAN, YOUR basket is heavy, your limbs are tired. For what distance have you set out, with what hunger of profit? The way is long and the dust is hot in the sun.

See, the lake is deep and full, its water dark like a crow's eye. The banks are sloping and tender with grass.

Dip your tired feet into the water. The noon-tide wind will pass its fingers through your hair; the pigeons will croon their sleep songs, the leaves will murmur the secrets that nestle in the shadows.

What matters it if the hours pass and the sun sets; if the way through the desolate land be lost in the waning light.

Yonder is my house, by the hedge of flowering *henna*; I will guide you. I will make a bed for you, and light a lamp. In the morning when the birds are roused by the stir of milking the cows, I will waken you.

10

WHAT IS IT THAT drives these bees from their home; these followers of unseen trails? What cry is this in their eager wings? How can they hear the music that sleeps in the flower soul? How can they find their way to the chamber where the honey lies shy and silent?

11

IT WAS ONLY the budding of leaves in the summer, the summer that came into the garden by the sea. It was only a stir and rustle in the south wind, a few lazy snatches of songs, and then the day was done.

But let there be flowering of love in the summer to come in the garden by the sea. Let my joy take its birth and clap its hands and dance with the surging songs, and make the morning open its eyes wide in sweet amazement.

12

AGES AGO WHEN you opened the south gate of the garden of gods, and came down upon the first youth of the earth, O Spring; men and women rushed out of their houses, laughing and dancing, and pelting each other with flower-dust in a sudden madness of mirth.

Year after year you bring the same flowers that you scattered in your path in that earliest April. Therefore, to-day, in their pervading perfume, they breathe the sigh of the days that are now dreams—the clinging sadness of vanished worlds. Your breeze is laden with love-legends that have faded from all human language.

One day, with fresh wonder, you came into my life that was fluttered with its first love. Since then the tender timidness of that inexperienced joy comes hidden every year in the early green buds of your lemon flowers; your red roses carry in their burning silence all that was unutterable in me; the memory of lyric hours, those days of May, rustles in the thrill of your new leaves born again and again.

13

LAST NIGHT IN the garden I offered you my youth's foaming wine. You lifted the cup to your lips, you shut your eyes and smiled while I raised your veil, unbound your tresses, drawing down upon my breast your face sweet with its silence, last night when the moon's dream overflowed the world of slumber.

To-day in the dew-cooled calm of the dawn you are walking to God's temple, bathed and robed white, with a basketful of flowers in your hand. I stand aside in the shade under the tree, with my head bent, in the calm of the dawn by the lonely road to the temple.

IF I AM impatient to-day, forgive me, my love. It is the first summer rain, and the riverside forest is aflutter, and the blossoming *kadam* trees, are tempting the passing winds with wine-cups of perfume. See, from all corners of the sky lightnings are darting their glances, and winds are rampant in your hair.

If to-day I bring my homage to you, forgive me, my love. The everyday world is hidden in the dimness of the rain, all work has stopped in the village, the meadows are desolate. In your dark eyes the coming of the rain finds its music, and it is at your door that July waits with jasmines for your hair in its blue skirt.

HER NEIGHBOURS call her dark in the village—but she is a lily to my heart, yes, a lily though not fair. Light came muffled with clouds, when first I saw her in the field; her head was bare, her veil was off, her braided hair hanging loose on her neck. She may be dark as they say in the village, but I have seen her black eyes and am glad.

The pulse of the air boded storm. She rushed out of the hut, when she heard her dappled cow low in dismay. For a moment she turned her large eyes to the clouds, and felt a stir of the coming rain in the sky. I stood at the corner of the ricefield,—if she noticed me, it was known only to her (and perhaps I know it). She is dark as the message of shower in summer, dark as the shade of flowering woodland; she is dark as the longing for unknown love in the wistful night of May.

SHE DWELT HERE by the pool with its landing-stairs in ruins. Many an evening she had watched the moon made dizzy by the shaking of bamboo leaves, and on many a rainy day the smell of the wet earth had come to her over the young shoots of rice.

Her pet name is known here among those date-palm groves, and in the court-years where girls sit and talk, while stitching their winter quilts. The water in this pool keeps in its depth the memory of her swimming

¹ For another version of this poem see 'Krishnakali', included in *Collected Poems and Plays of Rabindranath Tagore*.—Editor

limbs, and her wet feet had left their marks, day after day, on the footpath leading to the village.

The women who come to-day with their vessels to the water, have all seen her smile over simple jests, and the old peasant, taking his bullocks to their bath, used to stop at her door every day to greet her.

Many a sailing boat passes by this village; many a traveller takes rest beneath that banyan tree; the ferry boat crosses to yonder ford carrying crowds to the market; but they never notice this spot by the village road, near the pool with its ruined landing-stairs,—where dwelt she whom I love.

17

WHILE AGES passed and the bees haunted the summer gardens, the moon smiled to the lilies of the night, the lightnings flashed their fiery kisses to the clouds and fled laughing, the poet stood in a corner, one with the trees and clouds. He kept his heart silent, like a flower, watched through his dreams as does the crescent moon; and wandered like the summer breeze for no purpose.

One April evening, when the moon rose up like a bubble from the depth of the sunset; and one maiden was busy watering the plants; and one feeding her doe, and one making her peacock dance, the poet broke out singing,—‘O listen to the secrets of the world. I know that the lily is pale for the moon’s love. The lotus draws her veil aside before the morning sun, and the reason is simple if you think. The meaning of the bee’s hum in the ear of the early jasmine has escaped the learned, but the poet knows.’

The sun went down in a blaze of blush, the moon loitered behind the trees, and the south wind whispered to the lotus, that the poet was not as simple as he seemed. The maidens and youths clapped their hands and cried,—‘The world’s secret is out.’ They looked into each other’s eyes and sang—‘Let our secret as well be flung into the winds.’

18

YOUR DAYS WILL be full of cares, if you must give me your heart. My house by the cross-roads has its doors open and my mind is absent,—for I sing.

I shall never be made to answer for it, if you must give me your heart. If I pledge my word to you in tunes now, and am too much in earnest

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to keep it when music is silent, you must forgive me; for the law laid in May is best broken in December.

Do not always keep remembering it, if you must give me your heart. When your eyes sing with love, and your voice ripples with laughter, my answers to your questions will be wild, and not miserly accurate in facts,—they are to be believed for ever and then forgotten for good.

19

IT IS WRITTEN in the book, that Man, when fifty, must leave the noisy world, to go to the forest seclusion. But the poet proclaims that only for the young is the forest hermitage. For it is the birth-place of flowers, and the haunt of birds and bees; and hidden nooks are waiting there for the thrill of lover's whispers. There the moonlight, that is all one kiss for the *malati* flowers, has its deep message, but those who understand it are far below fifty.

And alas, youth is inexperienced and wilful, therefore it is but meet, that the old should take charge of the household, and the young take to the seclusion of forest shades, and the severe discipline of courting.

20

WHERE IS THE market for you, my song? Is it there where the learned muddle the summer breeze with their snuff; where dispute is unending if the oil depend upon the cask, or the cask upon the oil; where yellow manuscripts frown upon the fleet-footed frivolousness of life? My song cries out, Ah, no, no, no.

Where is the market for you, my song? Is it there where the man of fortune grows enormous in pride and flesh in his marble palace, with his books on the shelves, dressed in leather, painted in gold, dusted by slaves, their virgin pages dedicated to the god obscure? My song gasped and said, Ah, no, no, no.

Where is the market for you, my song? Is it there where the young student sits, with his head bent upon his books, and his mind straying in youth's dream-land; where prose is prowling on the desk, and poetry hiding in the heart? There among that dusty disorder would you care to play hide-and-seek? My song remains silent in shy hesitation.

Where is the market for you, my song? Is it there where the bride is busy in the house, where she runs to her bedroom the moment she

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is free, and snatches, from under her pillows, the book of romance so roughly handled by the baby, so full of the scent of her hair? My song heaves a sigh and trembles with uncertain desire.

Where is the market for you, my song? Is it there where the least of a bird's notes is never missed, where the stream's babbling finds its full wisdom where all the lute-strings of the world shower their music upon two fluttering hearts? My song bursts out and cries, Yes, yes.

21

(From the Bengali of Devendramath Sen)

METHINKS, MY love, before the daybreak of life you stood under some waterfall of happy dreams, filling your blood with its liquid turbulence. Or, perhaps, your path was through the garden of the gods, where the merry multitude of jasmine, lilies, and oleanders fell in your arms in heaps, and entering your heart became boisterous.

Your laughter is a song whose words are drowned in the clamour of tune, a rapture of odour of flowers that are not seen; it is like the moonlight breaking through your lips' window when the moon is hiding in your heart. I ask for no reason, I forget the cause, I only know that your laughter is the tumult of insurgent life.

22

I SHALL GLADLY suffer the pride of culture to die out in my house, if only in some fortunate future I am born a herd boy in the Brinda forest.

The herd boy who grazes his cattle sitting under the banyan tree, and idly weaves *gunja* flowers into garlands, who loves to splash and plunge in the Jamuna's cool deep stream.

He calls his companions to wake up when morning dawns, and all the houses in the lane hum with the sound of the churn, clouds of dust are raised by the cattle, the maidens come out in the courtyard to milk the kine.

As the shadows deepen under the *tomal* trees, and the dusk gathers on the river-banks; when the milkmaids, while crossing the turbulent water tremble with fear; and loud peacocks, with tails outspread, dance in the forest, he watches the summer clouds.

When the April night is sweet as a fresh-blown flower, he disappears

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in the forest with a peacock's plume in his hair; the swing ropes are twined with flowers on the branches; the south wind throbs with music, and the merry shepherd boys crowd on the banks of the blue river.

No, I will never be the leader, brothers, of this new age of new Bengal; I shall not trouble to light the lamp of culture for the benighted. If only I could be born, under the shady Ashoka groves, in some village of Brinda, where milk is churned by the maidens.

23

I LOVED THE sandy bank where, in the lonely pools, ducks clamoured and turtles basked in the sun; where, with evening, stray fishing-boats took shelter in the shadow by the tall grass.

You loved the wooded bank where shadows were gathered in the arms of the bamboo thickets; where women came with their vessels through the winding lane.

The same river flowed between us, singing the same song to both its banks. I listened to it, lying alone on the sand under the stars; and you listened sitting by the edge of the slope in the early morning light. Only the words I heard from it you did not know and the secret it spoke to you was a mystery for ever to me.

24

YOUR WINDOW half opened and veil half raised you stand there waiting for the bangle-seller to come with his tinsel. You idly watch the heavy cart creak on in the dusty road, and the boat-mast crawling along the horizon across the far-off river.

The world to you is like an old woman's chant at her spinning-wheel, unmeaning rhymes crowded with random images.

But who knows if he is on his way this lazy sultry noon, the Stranger, carrying his basket of strange wares. He will pass by your door with his clear cry, and you shall fling open your window, cast off your veil, come out of the dusk of your dreams and meet your destiny.

I CLASP YOUR hands, and my heart plunges into the dark of your eyes, seeking you, who ever evade me behind words and silence.

Yet I know that I must be content in my love, with what is fitful and fugitive. For we have met for a moment in the crossing of the roads. Have I the power to carry you through this crowd of worlds, through this maze of paths? Have I the food that can sustain you, across the dark passage gaping with arches of death?

If, by chance you think of me, I shall sing to you when the rainy evening loosens her shadows upon the river, slowly trailing her dim light towards the west,—when the day's remnant is too narrow for work or for play.

You will sit alone in the balcony of the south, and I shall sing from the darkened room. In the growing dusk, the smell of the wet leaves will come through the window; and the stormy winds will become clamorous in the coconut grove.

When the lighted lamp is brought into the room I shall go. And then, perhaps, you will listen to the night, and hear my song when I am silent.

I FILLED MY tray with whatever I had, and gave it to you. What shall I bring to your feet tomorrow, I wonder. I am like the tree that, at the end of the flowering summer, gazes at the sky with its lifted branches bare of their blossoms.

But in all my past offerings is there not a single flower made fadeless by the eternity of tears?

Will you remember it and thank me with your eyes when I stand before you with empty hands at the leave-taking of my summer days?

I DREAMT THAT she sat by my head, tenderly ruffling my hair with her fingers, playing the melody of her touch. I looked at her face and struggled

¹ For a fuller text see *Poems*, no. 3.—Editor

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with my tears, till the agony of unspoken words burst my sleep like a bubble.

I sat up and saw the glow of the milky way above my window, like a world of silence on fire, and I wondered if at this moment she had a dream that rhymed with mine.

29

I THOUGHT I had something to say to her when our eyes met across the hedge. But she passed away. And it rocks day and night, like a boat, on every wave of the hours the word that I had to say to her. It seems to sail in the autumn clouds in an endless quest and to bloom into evening flowers seeking its lost moment in the sunset. It twinkles like fireflies in my heart to find its meaning in the dusk of despair the word that I had to say to her.

30¹

THE SPRING flowers break out like the passionate pain of unspoken love. With their breath comes the memory of my old day songs. My heart of a sudden has put on green leaves of desire. My love came not but her touch is in my limbs, and her voice comes across the fragrant fields. Her gaze is in the sad depth of the sky, but where are her eyes? Her kisses flit in the air, but where are her lips?

31

A Posy

(From the Bengali of Satyendranath Datta)

MY FLOWERS were like milk and honey and wine; I bound them into a posy with a golden ribbon, but they escaped my watchful care and fled away and only the ribbon remains.

My songs were like milk and honey and wine, they were held in the rhythm of my beating heart, but they spread their wings and fled away, the darlings of the idle hours, and my heart beats in silence.

The beauty I loved was like milk and honey and wine, her lips like the rose of the dawn, her eyes bee-black. I kept my heart silent lest it

¹ For a different version see *Poems*, no. 2.—Editor

should startle her, but she eluded me like my flowers and like my songs, and my love remains alone.

32

MANY A TIME when the spring day knocked at our door I kept busy with my work and you did not answer. Now when I am left alone and heart-sick the spring day comes once again, but I know not how to turn him away from the door. When he came to crown us with joy the gate was shut, but now when he comes with his gift of sorrow his path must be open.

33

THE BOISTEROUS spring, who once came into my life with its lavish laughter, burdening her hours with improvident roses, setting skies aflame with the red kisses of new-born *ashoka* leaves, now comes stealing into my solitude through the lonely lanes along the brooding shadows heavy with silence, and sits still in my balcony gazing across the fields, where the green of the earth swoons exhausted in the utter paleness of the sky.

34

WHEN OUR farewell moment came, like a low-hanging rain cloud, I had only time to tie a red ribbon on your wrist, while my hands trembled. To-day I sit alone on the grass in the season of *mahua* flowers, with one quivering question in my mind, 'Do you still keep the little red ribbon tied on your wrist?'

You went by the narrow road that skirted the blossoming field of flax. I saw that my garland of overnight was still hanging loose from your hair. But why did you not wait till I could gather, in the morning, new flowers for my final gift? I wonder if unaware it dropped on your way,—the garland hanging loose from your hair.

Many a song I had sung to you, morning and evening, and the last one you carried in your voice when you went away. You never tarried to hear the one song unsung I had for you alone and for ever. I wonder if, at last, you are tired of my song that you hummed to yourself while walking through the field.

LOVER'S GIFT

35

LAST NIGHT clouds were threatening and *amlak* branches struggled in the grips of the gusty wind. I hoped, if dreams came to me, they would come in the shape of my beloved, in the lonely night loud with rain.

The winds still moan through the fields, and the tear-stained cheeks of dawn are pale. My dreams have been in vain, for truth is hard, and dreams, too, have their own ways.

Last night when the darkness was drunken with storm, and the rain, like night's veil, was torn by the winds into shreds, would it make truth jealous, if untruth came to me in the shape of my beloved, in the starless night loud with rain?

36

MY FETTERS, you made music in my heart. I played with you all day long and made you my ornament. We were the best of friends, my fetters. There were times when I was afraid of you, but my fear made me love you the more. You were companions of my long dark night, and I make my bow to you, before I bid you good-bye, my fetters.

37

YOU HAD YOUR rudder broken many a time, my boat, and your sails torn to tatters. Often had you drifted towards the sea, dragging anchor and heeded not. But now there has spread a crack in your hull and your hold is heavy. Now is the time for you to end your voyage, to be rocked into sleep by the lapping of the water by the beach.

Alas, I know all warning is vain. The veiled face of dark doom lures you. The madness of the storm and the waves is upon you. The music of the tide is rising high. You are shaken by the fever of that dance.

Then break your chain, my boat, and be free, and fearlessly rush to your wreck.

38

THE CURRENT in which I drifted ran rapid and strong when I was young. The spring breeze was spendthrift of itself, the trees were on fire with flowers; and the birds never slept from singing.

I sailed with giddy speed, carried away by the flood of passion; I had no time to see and feel and take the world into my being.

Now that youth has ebbed and I am stranded on the bank, I can hear the deep music of all things, and the sky opens to me its heart of stars.

39

THERE IS A looker-on who sits behind my eyes. It seems he has seen things in ages and worlds beyond memory's shore, and those forgotten sights glisten on the grass, and shiver on the leaves. He has seen under new veils the face of the one beloved, in twilight hours of many a nameless star. Therefore his sky seems to ache with the pain of countless meetings and partings, and a longing pervades this spring breeze,—the longing that is full of the whisper of ages without beginning.

40

A MESSAGE CAME from my youth of vanished days, saying, 'I wait for you among the quiverings of unborn May, where smiles ripen for tears and hours ache with songs unsung.'

It says, 'Come to me across the worn-out track of age, through the gates of death. For dreams fade, hopes fail, the gathered fruits of the year decay, but I am the eternal truth, and you shall meet me again and again in your voyage of life from shore to shore.'

41

THE GIRLS ARE OUT to fetch water from the river—their laughter comes through the trees, I long to join them in the lane, where goats graze in the shade, and squirrels flit from sun to shadow, across the fallen leaves.

But my day's task is already done, my jars are filled. I stand at my door to watch the glistening green of the *areca* leaves, and hear the laughing women going to fetch water from the river.

It has ever been dear to me to carry the burden of my full vessel day after day, in the dew-dipped morning freshness and in the tired glimmer of the dayfall.

Its gurgling water babbled to me when my mind was idle, it laughed with the silent laughter of my joyous thoughts—it spoke to my heart with

tearful sobs when I was sad. I have carried it in stormy days, when the loud rain drowned the anxious cooing of doves.

My day's task is done, my jars are filled, the light wanes in the west, and shadows gather beneath the trees; a sigh comes from the flowering linseed field, and my wistful eyes follow the lane, that runs through the village to the bank of the dark water.

42

ARE YOU A MERE picture, and not as true as those stars, true as this dust? They throb with the pulse of things, but you are immensely aloof in your stillness, painted form.

The day was when you walked with me, your breath warm, your limbs singing of life. My world found its speech in your voice, and touched my heart with your face. You suddenly stopped in your walk, in the shadow-side of the Forever, and I went on alone.

Life, like a child, laughs, shaking its rattle of death as it runs; it beckons me on, I follow the unseen; but you stand there, where you stopped behind that dust and those stars; and you are a mere picture.

No, it cannot be. Had the lifeflood utterly stopped in you, it would stop the river in its flow, and the footfall of dawn in her cadence of colours. Had the glimmering dusk of your hair vanished in the hopeless dark, the woodland shade of summer would die with its dreams.

Can it be true that I forgot you? We haste on without heed, forgetting the flowers on the roadside hedge. Yet they breathe unaware into our forgetfulness, filling it with music. You have moved from my world, to take seat at the root of my life, and therefore is this forgetting—remembrance lost in its own depth.

You are no longer before my songs, but one with them. You came to me with the first ray of dawn. I lost you with the last gold of evening. Ever since I am always finding you through the dark. No, you are no mere picture.

43

DYING, YOU have left behind you the great sadness of the Eternal in my life. You have painted my thought's horizon with the sunset colours of your departure, leaving a track of tears across the earth to love's heaven.

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Clasped in your dear arms, life and death united in me in a marriage bond.

I think I can see you watching there in the balcony with your lamp lighted, where the end and the beginning of all things meet. My world went hence through the doors that you opened—you holding the cup of death to my lips, filling it with life from your own.

44

WHEN IN YOUR death you died to all that was outside me, vanishing from the thousand things of the world, to be fully reborn in my sorrow, I felt that my life had grown perfect, the man and the woman becoming one in me for ever.

45¹

BRING BEAUTY and order into my forlorn life, woman, as you brought them into my house when you lived. Sweep away the dusty fragments of the hours, fill the empty jars and mend all neglects. Then open the inner door of the shrine, light the candle, and let us meet there in silence before our God.

46

THE SKY GAZES on its own endless blue and dreams. We clouds are its whims, we have no home. The stars shine on the crown of Eternity. Their records are permanent, while ours are penciled, to be rubbed off the next moment. Our part is to appear on the stage of the air to sound our tambourines and fling flashes of laughter. But from our laughter comes the rain, which is real enough, and thunder which is no jest. Yet we have no claim upon Time for wages, and the breath that blew us into being blows us away before we are given a name.

47

THE ROAD IS my wedded companion. She speaks to me under my feet all day, she sings to my dreams all night.

¹ Also included in *Fruit-Gathering*, no. 48.—Editor

My meeting with her had no beginning, it begins endlessly at each daybreak, renewing its summer in fresh flowers and songs, and her every new kiss is the first kiss to me.

The road and I are lovers. I change my dress for her night after night, leaving the tattered cumber of the old in the wayside inns when the day dawns.

48

I TRAVELLED the old road every day, I took my fruits to the market, my cattle to the meadows, I ferried my boat across the stream and all the ways were well known to me.

One morning my basket was heavy with wares. Men were busy in the fields, the pastures crowded with cattle; the breast of earth heaved with the mirth of ripening rice.

Suddenly there was a tremor in the air, and the sky seemed to kiss me on my forehead. My mind started up like the morning out of mist.

I forgot to follow the track. I stepped a few paces from the path, and my familiar world appeared strange to me, like a flower I had only known in bud.

My everyday wisdom was ashamed. I went astray in the fairyland of things. It was the best luck of my life, that I lost my path that morning, and found my eternal childhood.

49

WHERE IS heaven? you ask me, my child,—the sages tell us it is beyond the limits of birth and death, unswayed by the rhythm of day and night; it is not of this earth.

But your poet knows that its eternal hunger is for time and space, and it strives evermore to be born in the fruitful dust. Heaven is fulfilled in your sweet body, my child, in your palpitating heart.

The sea is beating its drums in joy, the flowers are a-tiptoe to kiss you. For heaven is born in you, in the arms of the mother-dust.

The Child

(Translated from the Bengali of Dwijendralal Roy)

'COME, MOON, come down, kiss my darling on the forehead,' cries the mother as she holds the baby girl in her lap while the moon smiles as it dreams. There come stealing in the dark the vague fragrance of the summer and the night-bird's songs from the shadow-laden solitude of the mango-grove. At a far-away village rises from a peasant's flute a fountain of plaintive notes, and the young mother, sitting on the terrace, baby in her lap, croons sweetly, 'Come, moon, come down, kiss my darling on the forehead.' Once she looks up at the light of the sky, and then at the light of the earth in her arms, and I wonder at the placid silence of the moon.

The baby laughs and repeats her mother's call, 'Come, moon, come down.' The mother smiles, and smiles the moonlit night, and I, the poet, the husband of the baby's mother, watch this picture from behind, unseen.

THE EARLY autumn day is cloudless. The river is full to the brim, washing the naked roots of the tottering tree by the ford. The long narrow path, like the thirsty tongue of the village, dips down into the stream.

My heart is full, as I look around me and see the silent sky and the flowing water, and feel that happiness is spread abroad, as simply as a smile on a child's face.

TIRED OF waiting, you burst your bonds, impatient flowers, before the winter had gone. Glimpses of the unseen comer reached your wayside watch, and you rushed out running and panting, impulsive jasmynes, troops of riotous roses.

You were the first to march to the breach of death, your clamour of colour and perfume troubled the air. You laughed and pressed and pushed each other, bared your breast and dropped in heaps.

The Summer will come in its time, sailing in the floodtide of the south wind. But you never counted slow moments to be sure of him. You recklessly spent your all in the road, in the terrible joy of faith.

You heard his footsteps from afar, and flung your mantle of death
for him to tread upon. Your bonds break even before the rescuer is seen,
you make him your own ere he can come and claim you.

53

Champa

(Translated from the Bengali of Satyendranath Datta)

I OPENED MY bud when April breathed her last and the summer scorched
with kisses the unwilling earth. I came half afraid and half curious, like
a mischievous imp peeping at a hermit's cell.

I heard the frightened whispers of the despoiled woodland, and the
Kokil gave voice to the languor of the summer; through the fluttering leaf
curtain of my birth-chamber I saw the world grim, grey, and haggard.

Yet boldly I came out strong with the faith of youth, quaffed the fiery
wine from the glowing bowl of the sky, and proudly saluted the morning,
I, the champa flower, who carry the perfume of the sun in my heart.

54

IN THE beginning of time, there rose from the churning of God's dream
two women. One is the dancer at the court of paradise, the desired of
men, she who laughs and plucks the minds of the wise from their cold
meditations and of fools from their emptiness; and scatters them like seeds
with careless hands in the extravagant winds of March, in the flowering
frenzy of May.

The other is the crowned queen of heaven, the mother, throned on
the fullness of golden autumn; she who in the harvest-time brings straying
hearts to the smile sweet as tears, the beauty deep as the sea of silence,—
brings them to the temple of the Unknown, at the holy confluence of Life
and Death.

55

THE NOONDAY air is quivering, like gauzy wings of a dragon-fly. Roofs of
the village huts brood birdlike over the drowsy households, while a *Kokil*
sings unseen from its leafy loneliness.

The fresh liquid notes drop upon the tuneless toil of the human crowd, adding music to lovers' whispers, to mothers' kisses, to children's laughter. They flow over our thoughts, like a stream over pebbles, rounding them in beauty every unconscious moment.

56

THE EVENING was lonely for me, and I was reading a book till my heart became dry, and it seemed to me that beauty was a thing fashioned by the traders in words. Tired I shut the book and snuffed the candle. In a moment the room was flooded with moonlight.

Spirit of Beauty, how could you, whose radiance overbrims the sky, stand hidden behind a candle's tiny flame? How could a few vain words from a book rise like a mist, and veil her whose voice has hushed the heart of earth into ineffable calm?

57

THIS AUTUMN is mine, for she was rocked in my heart. The glistening bells of her anklets rang in my blood, and her misty veil fluttered in my breath. I know the touch of her blown hair in all my dreams. She is abroad in the trembling leaves that danced in my life-throbs, and her eyes that smile from the blue sky drank their light from me.

58

THINGS THRONG and laugh loud in the sky; the sands and dust dance and whirl like children. Man's mind is aroused by their shouts; his thoughts long to be the playmates of things.

Our dreams, drifting in the stream of the vague, stretch their arms to clutch the earth,—their efforts stiffen into bricks and stones, and thus the city of man is built.

Voices come swarming from the past,—seeking answers from the living moments. Beats of their wings fill the air with tremulous shadows, and sleepless thoughts in our minds leave their nests to take flight across the desert of dimness, in the passionate thirst for forms. They are lampless pilgrims, seeking the shore of light, to find themselves in things. They will be lured into poet's rhymes, they will be housed in the towers of the town

not yet planned, they have their call to arms from the battlefields of the future, they are bidden to join hands in the strifes of peace yet to come.

59

THEY DO NOT build high towers in the Land of All-I-Have-Found. A grassy lawn runs by the road, with a stream of fugitive water at its side. The bees haunt the cottage porches abloom with passion flowers. The men set out on their errands with a smile, and in the evening they come home with a song, with no wages, in the Land of All-I-Have-Found.

In the midday, sitting in the cool of their courtyards, the women hum and spin at their wheels, while over the waving harvest comes wafted the music of shepherds' flutes. It rejoices the wayfarers' hearts who walk singing through the shimmering shadows of the fragrant forest in the Land of All-I-Have-Found.

The traders sail with their merchandise down the river, but they do not moor their boats in this land; soldiers march with banners flying, but the king never stops his chariot. Travellers who come from afar to rest here awhile, go away without knowing what there is in the Land of All-I-Have-Found.

Here crowds do not jostle each other in the roads. O poet, set up your house in this land. Wash from your feet the dust of distant wanderings, tune your lute, and at the day's end stretch yourself on the cool grass under the evening star in the Land of All-I-Have-Found.

60

TAKE BACK your coins, King's Councillor. I am of those women you sent to the forest shrine to decoy the young ascetic who had never seen a woman. I failed in your bidding.

Dimly day was breaking when the hermit boy came to bathe in the stream, his tawny locks crowded on his shoulders, like a cluster of morning clouds, and his limbs shining like a streak of sunbeam. We laughed and sang as we rowed in our boat; we jumped into the river in a mad frolic, and danced around him, when the sun rose staring at us from the water's edge in a flush of divine anger.

Like a child-god, the boy opened his eyes and watched our movements, the wonder deepening till his eyes shone like morning stars. He

lifted his clasped hands and chanted a hymn of praise in his bird-like young voice, thrilling every leaf of the forest. Never such words were sung to a mortal woman before; they were like the silent hymn to the dawn which rises from the hushed hills. The women hid their mouths with their hands, their bodies swaying with laughter, and a spasm of doubt ran across his face. Quickly came I to his side, sorely pained, and, bowing to his feet, I said, 'Lord, accept my service.'

I led him to the grassy bank, wiped his body with the end of my silken mantle, and, kneeling on the ground, I dried his feet with my trailing hair. When I raised my face and looked into his eyes, I thought I felt the world's first kiss to the first woman,—Blessed am I, blessed is

God, who made me a woman. I heard him say to me, 'What God unknown are you? Your touch is the touch of the Immortal, your eyes have the mystery of the midnight.'

Ah, no, not that smile, King's Councillor,—the dust of worldly wisdom has covered your sight, old man. But this boy's innocence pierced the mist and saw the shining truth, the woman divine.

Ah, how the goddess wakened in me, at the awful light of that first adoration. Tears filled my eyes, the morning ray caressed my hair like a sister, and the woodland breeze kissed my forehead as it kisses the flowers.

The women clapped their hands, and laughed their obscene laugh, and with veils dragging on the dust and hair hanging loose, they began to pelt him with flowers.

Alas, my spotless sun, could not my shame weave fiery mist to cover you in its folds? I fell at his feet and cried, 'Forgive me.' I fled like a stricken deer through shade and sun, and cried as I fled, 'Forgive me.' The women's foul laughter pressed me like a crackling fire, but the words ever rang in my ears, 'What God unknown are you?'

1

THE SUN breaks out from the clouds on the day when I must go.
 And the sky gazes upon the earth like God's wonder.
 My heart is sad, for it knows not from where comes its call.
 Does the breeze bring the whisper of the world which I leave behind
 with its music of tears melting in the sunny silence? or the breath of the
 island in the faraway sea basking in the Summer of the unknown flowers?

2

WHEN THE market is over and they return homewards through the dusk,
 I sit at the wayside to watch thee plying thy boat,
 Crossing the dark water with the sunset gleam upon thy sail;
 I see thy silent figure standing at the helm and suddenly catch thy
 eyes gazing upon me;
 I leave my song; and cry to thee to take me across.

3

THE WIND is up, I set my sail of songs,
 Steersman, sit at the helm.
 For my boat is fretting to be free, to dance in the rhythm of the wind
 and water.
 The day is spent, it is evening.
 My friends of the shore have taken leave.
 Loose the chain and heave the anchor, we sail by the starlight.
 The wind is stirred into the murmur of music at this time of my
 departure.
 Steersman, sit at the helm.

4

ACCEPT ME, my lord, accept me for this while.
 Let those orphaned days that passed without thee be forgotten.
 Only spread this little moment wide across thy lap, holding it under
 thy light.
 I have wandered in pursuit of voices that drew me yet led me nowhere.
 Now let me sit in peace and listen to thy words in the soul of my
 silence.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

Do not turn away thy face from my heart's dark secrets, but burn them till they are alight with thy fire.

5

THE SCOUTS OF a distant storm have pitched their cloud-tents in the sky; the light has paled; the air is damp with tears in the voiceless shadows of the forest.

The peace of sadness is in my heart like the brooding silence upon the master's lute before the music begins.

My world is still with the expectation of the great pain of thy coming into my life.

6

THOU HAST done well, my lover, thou hast done well to send me thy fire of pain.

For my incense never yields its perfume till it burns, and my lamp is blind till it is lighted.

When my mind is numb its torpor must be stricken by thy love's lightning; and the very darkness that blots my world burns like a torch when set afire by thy thunder.

7

DELIVER ME from my own shadows, my lord, from the wrecks and confusion of my days.

For the night is dark and thy pilgrim is blinded.

Hold thou my hand.

Deliver me from despair.

Touch with thy flame the lightless lamp of my sorrow.

Waken my tired strength from its sleep.

Do not let me linger behind counting my losses.

Let the road sing to me of the house at every step.

For the night is dark, and thy pilgrim is blinded.

Hold thou my hand.

CROSSING

8

THE LANTERN which I carry in my hand makes enemy of the darkness of the farther road.

And this wayside becomes a terror to me, where even the flowering tree frowns like a spectre of scowling menace; and the sound of my own steps comes back to me in the echo of muffled suspicion.

Therefore I pray for thy own morning light, when the far and the near will kiss each other and death and life will be one in love.

9

WHEN THOU savest me the steps are lighter in the march of thy worlds.

When stains are washed away from my heart it brightens the light of thy sun.

That the bud has not blossomed in beauty in my life spreads sadness in the heart of creation.

When the shroud of darkness will be lifted from my soul it will bring music to thy smile.

10

THOU HAST given me thy love, filling the world with thy gifts.

They are showered upon me when I do not know them, for my heart is asleep and dark is the night.

Yet though lost in the cavern of my dreams I have been thrilled with fitful gladness;

And I know that in return for the treasure of thy great worlds thou wilt receive from me one little flower of love in the morning when my heart awakes.

11

MY EYES HAVE lost their sleep in watching; yet if I do not meet thee still it is sweet to watch.

My heart sits in the shadow of the rains waiting for thy love; if she is deprived still it is sweet to hope.

They walk away in their different paths leaving me behind; if I am alone still it is sweet to listen for thy footsteps.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

The wistful face of the earth weaving its autumn mists wakens longing
in my heart; if it is in vain still it is sweet to feel the pain of longing.

12

HOLD THY FAITH firm, my heart, the day will dawn,
The seed of promise is deep in the soil, it will sprout.
Sleep, like a bud, will open its heart to the light, and the silence will
find its voice.
The day is near when thy burden will become thy gift, and thy sufferings
will light up thy path.

13

THE WEDDING hour is in the twilight, when the birds have sung their last
and the winds are at rest on the waters, when the sunset spreads the carpet
in the bridal chamber and the lamp is made ready to burn through the
night.

Behind the silent dark walks the Unseen Comer and my heart trembles.
All songs are hushed, for the service will be read under the evening
star.

14

IN THE NIGHT when noise is tired the murmur of the sea fills the air.
The vagrant desires of the day come back to their rest round the
lighted lamp.
Love's play is stilled into worship, life's stream touches the deep, and
the world of forms comes to its nest in the beauty beyond all forms.

15

WHO IS AWAKE all alone in this sleeping earth, in the air drowsing among
the moveless leaves? awake in the silent birds' nests, in the secret centres
of the flower buds? awake in the throbbing stars of the night, in the depth
of the pain of my being?

16

YOU CAME TO my door in the dawn and sang; it angered me to be awakened from sleep, and you went away unheeded.

You came in the noon and asked for water; it vexed me in my work, and you were sent away with reproaches.

You came in the evening with your flaming torches.

You seemed to me like a terror and I shut my door.

Now in the midnight I sit alone in my lampless room and call you back whom I turned away in insult.

17

PICK UP THIS life of mine from the dust.

Keep it under your eyes, in the palm of your right hand.

Hold it up in the light, hide it under the shadow of death; keep it in the casket of the night with your stars, and then in the morning let it find itself among flowers that blossom in worship.

18

I KNOW THAT this life, missing its ripeness in love, is not altogether lost.

I know that the flowers that fade in the dawn, the streams that strayed in the desert, are not altogether lost.

I know that whatever lags behind in this life laden with slowness is not altogether lost.

I know that my dreams that are still unfulfilled, and my melodies still unstruck, are clinging to some lute-strings of thine, and they are not altogether lost.

19

YOU CAME TO me in the wayward hours of spring with flute songs and flowers.

You troubled my heart from ripples into waves, rocking the red lotus of love.

You asked me to come out with you into the secret of life.

But I fell asleep among the murmurous leaves of May.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

When I woke the cloud gathered in the sky and the dead leaves flitted
in the wind.

Through the patter of rain I hear your nearing footsteps and the cry
to come out with you into the secret of death.

I walk to your side and put my hand into yours, while your eyes burn
and water drips from your hair.

20

THE DAY IS dim with rain.

Angry lightnings glance through the tattered cloud-veils.

And the forest is like a caged lion shaking its mane in despair.

On such a day amidst the winds beating their wings, let me find my
peace in thy presence.

For the sorrowing sky has shadowed my solitude, to deepen the
meaning of thy touch about my heart.

21

ON THAT NIGHT when the storm broke open my door,

I did not know that you entered my room through the ruins,

For the lamp was blown out, and it became dark;

I stretched my arms to the sky in search of help.

I lay on the dust waiting in the tumultuous dark and I knew not that
storm was your own banner.

When the morning came I saw you standing upon the emptiness that
was spread over my house.

22

IS IT THE Destroyer who comes?

For the boisterous sea of tears heaves in the flood-tide of pain.

The crimson clouds run wild in the wind lashed by lightning, and
the thundering laughter of the Mad is over the sky.

Life sits in the chariot crowned by Death.

Bring out your tribute to him of all that you have.

Do not hug your savings to your heart, do not look behind,

Bend your head at his feet, trailing your hair in the dust.

Take to the road from this moment.

CROSSING

For the lamp is blown out and the house is desolate.

The storm winds scream through your doors, the walls are rocking,
and the call comes from the land of dimness beyond your ken.

Hide not your face in terror; tears are in vain; your door chains have
snapped.

Run out for your voyage to the end of all joys and sorrows.

Let your steps be the steps of a desperate dance.

Sing 'Victory to Life in Death.'

Accept your destiny, O Bride!

Put on your red robe to follow through the darkness the torchlight
of the Bridegroom!

23

I CAME NEAREST to you, though I did not know it,—when I came to hurt
you.

I owned you at last as my master when I fought against you to be
defeated.

I merely made my debt to you burdensome when I robbed you in
secret.

I struggled in my pride against your current only to feel all your force
in my breast.

Rebelliously I put out the light in my house and your sky surprised
me with its stars.

24

HAVE YOU COME to me as my sorrow? All the more I must cling to you.

Your face is veiled in the dark, all the more I must see you.

At the blow of death from your hand let my life leap up in a flame.

Tears flow from my eyes,—let them flow round your feet in worship.

And let the pain in my breast speak to me that you are still mine.

25

I HID MYSELF to evade you,

Now that I am caught at last, strike me, see if I flinch.

Finish the game for good.

If you win in the end, strip me of all that I have.

I have had my laughter and songs in wayside booths and stately halls,—
now that you have come into my life, make me weep, see if you can break
my heart.

26

WHEN I AWAKE in thy love my night of ease will be ended.

Thy sunrise will touch my heart with its touch-stone of fire, and my
voyage will begin in its orbit of triumphant suffering.

I shall dare to take up death's challenge and carry thy voice in the
heart of mockery and menace.

I shall bare my breast against the wrongs hurled at thy children, and
take the risk of standing by thy side where none but thee remains.

27

I AM THE weary earth of summer bare of life and parched.

I wait for thy shower to come down in the night when I open my
breast and receive it in silence.

I long to give thee in return my songs and flowers.

But empty is my store, and only the deep sigh rises from my heart
through the withered grass.

But I know that thou wilt wait for the morning when my hours will
brim with their riches.

28

COME TO ME like summer cloud, spreading thy showers from sky to sky.

Deepen the purple of the hills with thy majestic shadows, quicken the
languid forests into flowers, and awaken in the hill-streams the fervour
of the far-away quest.

Come to me like summer cloud, stirring my heart with the promise
of hidden life, and the gladness of the green.

29

I HAVE MET THEE where the night touches the edge of the day; where the
light startles the darkness into dawn, and the waves carry the kiss of the
one shore to the other.

56

YOU HIDE yourself in your own glory, my King.

The sand-grain and the dew-drop are more proudly apparent than yourself.

The world unabashed calls all things its own that are yours—yet it is never brought to shame.

You make room for us while standing aside in silence; therefore love lights her own lamp to seek you and comes to your worship unbidden.

57

WHEN FROM THE house of feast I came back home, the spell of the midnight quieted the dance in my blood.

My heart became silent at once like a deserted theatre with its lamps out.

My mind crossed the dark and stood among the stars, and I saw that we were playing unafraid in the silent courtyard of our King's palace.

58

I WAS Musing last night on my spendthrift days, when I thought you spoke to me—

'In youth's careless career you kept all the doors open in your house.

The world went in and out as it pleased—the world with its dust, doubts, and disorder—and with its music.

With the wild crowd I came to you again and again unknown and unbidden.

Had you kept shut your doors in wise seclusion how could I have found my way into your house?'

59

NONE NEEDS BE thrust aside to make room for you.

When love prepares your seat she prepares it for all.

Where the earthly King appears, guards keep out the crowd, but when you come, my King, the whole world comes in your wake.

WITH HIS morning songs he knocks at our door bringing his greetings of sunrise.

With him we take our cattle to the fields and play our flute in the shade.

We lose him to find him again and again in the market crowd.

In the busy hour of the day we come upon him of a sudden, sitting on the wayside grass.

We march when he beats his drum,

We dance when he sings.

We stake our joys and sorrows to play his game to the end

He stands at the helm of our boat,

With him we rock on the perilous waves.

For him we light our lamp and wait when our day is done.

RUN TO HIS side as his comrades where he works with all workers.

Sit around him as his partners where he plays his games.

Follow him where he marches, keeping step to the rhythm of his drumbeats.

Rush into the thick of the fair—the fair of life and death—

For there he is with the crowd in the heart of its tumult.

Do not falter in your journey across the lonely hills over the thorns.

For his call sounds at every step and we know that it is love's voice.

WHEN BELLS sounded in your temple in the morning, men and women hastened down the woodland path with their offerings of fresh flowers.

But I lay on the grass in the shade and let them pass by.

I think it was well that I was idle, for then my flowers were in bud.

At the end of the day they have bloomed, and I go to my evening worship.

CROSSING

From the heart of the fathomless blue comes one golden call, and
across the dusk of tears I try to gaze at thy face and know not for certain
if thou art seen.

30

IF LOVE BE denied me then why does the morning break its heart in songs,
and why are these whispers that the south wind scatters among the new-
born leaves?

If love be denied me then why does the midnight bear in yearning
silence the pain of the stars?

And why does this foolish heart recklessly launch its hope on the sea
whose end it does not know?

31

ONLY A PORTION of my gift is in this world, the rest of it is in my dreams.

You, who ever elude my touch, come there in secret silence, hiding
your lamp.

I shall know you by the thrill in the darkness, by the whisper of the
unseen worlds, by the breath of the unknown shore;—

I shall know you by the sudden delight of my heart melting into
sadness of tears.

32

I KNOW YOU will win my heart some day, my lover.

Through your stars you gaze deep into my dreams;

You send your secrets in your moonbeams to me, and I muse and
my eyes dim with tears.

Your wooing is in the sunny sky thrilling in the tremulous leaves, in
the idle hours overflowing with shepherds' piping, in the rain-dimmed
dusk when the heart aches with its loneliness.

33

SOME ONE HAS secretly left in my hand a flower of love.

Some one has stolen my heart and scattered it abroad in the sky.

I know not if I have found him or I am seeking him everywhere, if it is a pang of bliss or of pain.

34

THE RAINS sweep the sky from end to end.

In the wild wet wind the jasmynes revel in their own perfume.

There is a secret joy in the bosom of the night, it is the joy of the veiled sky in its hidden stars, the joy of the midnight forest in its hoarded bird-songs.

Let me fill my heart with it and carry it in secret through the day.

35

WHEN I travelled in the day I felt secure, and I did not heed the wonder of thy road, for I was proud of my speed; thy own light stood between me and thy presence.

Now it is night, and I feel thy road at every step in the dark and the scent of flowers filling the silence—like mother's whisper to the child when the light is out.

I hold tight thy hand and thy touch is with me in my loneliness.

36

SAILING THROUGH the night I came to life's feast, and the morning's golden goblet was filled with light for me.

I sang in joy,

I knew not who was the giver,

And I forgot to ask his name.

In the midday the dust grew hot under my feet and the sun overhead.

Overcome by thirst I reached the well.

Water was poured to me.

I drank it.

And while I loved the ruby cup that was sweet as a kiss,

I did not see him who held it and forgot to ask his name.

In the weary evening I seek my way home.

My guide comes with a lamp and beckons me.

I ask his name,

CROSSING

But I only see his light through the silence and feel his smile filling
the darkness.

37

DO NOT LEAVE me and go, for it is night.

The road through the wilderness is lonely and dark and lost in tangles:

The tired earth lies still, like one blind and without a staff.

I seem to have waited for this moment for ages to light my lamp and
cull my flowers.

I have reached the brink of the shoreless sea to take my plunge and
lose myself for ever.

38

I DID NOT know that I had thy touch before it was dawn.

The news has slowly reached me through my sleep, and I open my
eyes with its surprise of tears.

The sky seems full of whispers for me and my limbs are bathed with
songs.

My heart bends in worship like a dewladen flower, and I feel the flood
of my life rushing to the endless.

39

NO GUEST HAD come to my house for long, my doors were locked, my
windows barred; I thought my night would be lonely.

When I opened my eyes I found the darkness had vanished.

I rose up and ran and saw the bolts of my gates all broken, and
through the open door your wind and light waved their banner.

When I was a prisoner in my own house, and the doors were shut,
my heart ever planned to escape and to wander.

Now at my broken gate, I sit still and wait for your coming,

You keep me bound by my freedom.

40

PUT OUT THE lamps, my heart, the lamps of your lonely night.

The call comes to you to open your doors, for the morning light is abroad.

Leave your lute in the corner, my heart, the lute of your lonely life.

The call comes to you to come out in silence, for the morning sings your own songs.

41

THY GIFT OF THE earliest flower came to me this morning, and came the faint tuning of thy light.

I am a bee that has wallowed in the heart of thy golden dawn,

My wings are radiant with its pollen.

I have found my place in the feast of songs in thy April, and I am freed of my fetters like the morning of its mist in a mere play.

42

FREE ME AS free are the birds of the wilds, the wanderers of unseen paths.

Free me as free are the deluge of rain, and as the storm that shakes its locks and rushes on to its unknown end.

Free me as free is the forest fire, as is the thunder that laughs aloud and hurls defiance to darkness.

43

WHEN YOU called me I was asleep under the shadows of my walls and I did not hear you.

Then you struck me with your own hands and wakened me in tears.

I started up to see that the sun had risen, that the floodtide had brought the call of the deep, and my boat was ready rocking on the dancing water.

44

REJOICE!

For Night's fetters have broken, the dreams have vanished.

CROSSING

Thy word has rent its veils, the buds of morning are opened; awake,
O sleeper!

Light's greetings spread from the East to the West,
And at the ramparts of the ruined prison rise the paeans of Victory!

45

IN THIS moment I see you seated upon the morning's golden carpet.

The sun shines in your crown, the stars drop at your feet, the crowds
come and bow to you and go, and the poet sits speechless in the corner.

46

MY GUEST HAS come to my door in this autumn morning.

Sing, my heart, sing thy welcome!

Make thy song the song of the sunlit blue, of the dew-damp air, of
the lavish gold of harvest fields, of the laughter of the loud water.

Or stand mute before him for awhile gazing at his face;

Then leave thy house and go out with him in silence.

47

I LIVED ON THE shady side of the road and watched my neighbours' gardens
across the way revelling in the sunshine.

I felt I was poor, and from door to door went with my hunger.

The more they gave me from their careless abundance the more I
became aware of my beggar's bowl.

Till one morning I awoke from my sleep at the sudden opening of
my door, and you came and asked for alms.

In despair I broke the lid of my chest open and was startled into
finding my own wealth.

48

THOU HAST taken him to thine arms and crowned him with death, him
who ever waited outside like a beggar at life's feast.

Thou hast put thy right hand on his failures and kissed him with
peace that stills life's turbulent thirst.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

Thou hast made him one with all kings and with the ancient world
of wisdom.

49

IN THE WORLD'S dusty road I lost my heart, but you picked it up in your
hand.

I gleaned sorrow while seeking for joy, but the sorrow which you sent
to me has turned to joy in my life.

My desires were scattered in pieces, you gathered them and strung
them in your love.

And while I wandered from door to door, every step led me to your
gate.

50

I WAS WITH THE crowd when I was in the road;

Where the road ends I find myself alone with you.

I knew not when my day dimmed into dusk and my companions left
me.

I knew not when your doors opened and I stood surprised at my own
heart's music.

But are there still traces of tears in my eyes though the bed is made,
the lamp is lit, and we are alone, you and I?

51

WHEN THEY came and clamoured and surrounded me they hid thee from
my sight.

I thought I would bring to thee my gifts last of all.

Now that the day has waned, and they have taken their dues and left
me alone,

I see thee standing at the door.

But I find I have no gift remaining to give, and I hold both my hands
up to thee.

52

MUCH HAVE you given to me,
 Yet I ask for more—
 I come to you not merely for the draught of water, but for the spring;
 Not for guidance to the door alone, but to the Master's hall; not only
 for the gift of love, but for the lover himself.

53

I HAVE COME TO thee to take thy touch before I begin my day.
 Let thy eyes rest upon my eyes for awhile.
 Let me take to my work the assurance of thy comradeship, my friend.
 Fill my mind with thy music to last through the desert of noise!
 Let thy Love's sunshine kiss the peaks of my thoughts and linger in
 my life's valley where the harvest ripens.

54

STAND BEFORE my eyes, and let thy glance touch my songs into a flame.
 Stand among thy stars and let me find kindled in their lights my own
 fire of worship.
 The earth is waiting at the world's wayside;
 Stand upon the green mantle she has flung upon thy path; and let
 me feel in her grass and meadow flowers the spread of my own salutation.
 Stand in my lonely evening where my heart watches alone; fill her
 cup of solitude, and let me feel in me the infinity of thy love.

55

LET THY LOVE play upon my voice and rest on my silence.
 Let it pass through my heart into all my movements.
 Let thy love like stars shine in the darkness of my sleep and dawn
 in my awakening.
 Let it burn in the flame of my desires
 And flow in all currents of my own love.
 Let me carry thy love in my life as a harp does its music, and give
 it back to thee at last with my life.

63

MY KING'S road that lies still before my house makes my heart wistful.
 It stretches its beckoning hand towards me; its silence calls me out
 of my home; with dumb entreaties it kisses my feet at every step.
 It leads me on I know not to what abandonment, to what sudden gain
 or surprises of distress.
 I know not where its windings end—
 But my King's road that lies still before my house makes my heart
 wistful.

64

WHILE I WALK to my King's house at the end of the day the travellers come
 to ask me—
 'What hast thou for King's tribute?'
 I do not know what to show them or how to answer, for I have merely
 this song.
 My preparation is large in my house, where the claim is much and
 many are the claimants.
 But when I come to my King's house I have only this single song to
 offer it for his wreath.

65

MY SONGS ARE the same as are the spring flowers, they come from you.
 Yet I bring these to you as my own.
 You smile and accept them, and you are glad at my joy of pride.
 If my song flowers are frail and they fade and drop in the dust, I shall
 never grieve.
 For absence is not loss in your hand, and the fugitive moments that
 blossom in beauty are kept ever fresh in your wreath.

66

MY KING, thou hast called me to play my flute at the roadside, that they
 who bear the burden of voiceless life may stop in their errands for a
 moment and sit and wonder before the balcony of thy palace gate; that

CROSSING

they may see anew the ever old and find afresh what is ever about them,
and say, 'The flowers are in bloom, and the birds sing.'

67

WHEN MY first early songs woke in my heart I thought they were the
playmates of the morning flowers.

When they shook their wings and flew into the wilderness it seemed
to me that they had the spirit of the summer which comes down with a
sudden thunder roar to spend its all in laughter.

I thought that they had the mad call of the storm to rush and lose
their way beyond the sunset land.

But now when in the evening light I see the blue line of the shore,

I know my songs are the boat that has brought me to the harbour
across the wild sea.

68

THERE ARE numerous strings in your lute, let me add my own among them.

Then when you smite your chords my heart will break its silence and
my life will be one with your song.

Amidst your numberless stars let me place my own little lamp.

In the dance of your festival of lights my heart will throb and my life
will be one with your smile.

69

LET MY SONG be simple as the waking in the morning, as the dripping of
dew from the leaves,

Simple as the colours in clouds and showers of rain in the midnight.

But my lute strings are newly strung and they dart their notes like
spears sharp in their newness.

Thus they miss the spirit of the wind and hurt the light of the sky;
and these strains of my songs fight hard to push back thy own music.

70

I HAVE SEEN thee play thy music in life's dancing hall; in the sudden leaf-burst of spring thy laughter has come to greet me; and lying among field flowers I have heard in the grass thy whisper.

The child has brought to my house the message of thy hope, and the woman the music of thy love.

Now I am waiting on the seashore to feel thee in death, to find life's refrain back again in the star songs of the night.

71

I REMEMBER my childhood when the sunrise, like my play-fellow, would burst in to my bedside with its daily surprise of morning; when the faith in the marvellous bloomed like fresh flowers in my heart every day, looking into the face of the world in simple gladness; when insects, birds and beasts, the common weeds, grass and the clouds had their fullest value of wonder; when the patter of rain at night brought dreams from the fairyland, and mother's voice in the evening gave meaning to the stars.

And then I think of death, and the rise of the curtain and the new morning and my life awakened in its fresh surprise of love.

72

WHEN MY HEART did not kiss thee in love, O world, thy light missed its full splendour and thy sky watched through the long night with its lighted lamp.

My heart came with her songs to thy side, whispers were exchanged, and she put her wreath on thy neck.

I know she has given thee something which will be treasured with thy stars.

73

THOU HAST given me thy seat at thy window from the early hour.

I have spoken to thy silent servants of the road running on thy errands, and have sung with thy choir of the sky.

I have seen the sea in calm bearing its immeasurable silence, and in storm struggling to break open its own mystery of depth.

CROSSING

I have watched the earth in its prodigal feast of youth, and in its slow hours of brooding shadows.

Those who went to sow seeds have heard my greetings, and those who brought their harvest home or their empty baskets have passed by my songs.

Thus at last my day has ended and now in the evening I sing my last song to say that I have loved thy world.

74

IT HAS FALLEN upon me, the service of thy singer.

In my songs I have voiced thy spring flowers, and given rhythm to thy rustling leaves.

I have sung into the hush of thy night and peace of thy morning. The thrill of the first summer rains has passed into my tunes, and the waving of the autumn harvest.

Let not my song cease at last, my Master, when thou breakest my heart to come into my house, but let it burst into thy welcome.

75

GUESTS OF my life,

You came in the early dawn, and you in the night,
Your name was uttered by the Spring flowers and yours by the showers of rain.

You brought the harp into my house and you brought the lamp.
After you had taken your leave I found God's footprints on my floor.
Now when I am at the end of my pilgrimage I leave in the evening flowers of worship my salutations to you all.

76

I FELT I SAW your face, and I launched my boat in the dark.

Now the morning breaks in smiles and the spring flowers are in bloom.
Yet should the light fail and the flowers fade I will sail onward.
When you made mute signal to me the world slumbered and the darkness was bare.

Now the bells ring loud and the boat is laden with gold.

Yet should the bells become silent and my boat be empty I will sail onward.

Some boats have gone away and some are not ready, but I will not tarry behind.

The sails have filled, the birds come from the other shore.

Yet, if the sails droop, if the message of the shore be lost, I will sail onward.

77

'TRAVELLER, WHERE do you go?'

'I go to bathe in the sea in the redd'ning dawn, along the tree-bordered path.'

'Traveller, where is that sea?'

'There where this river ends its course, where the dawn opens into morning, where the day droops to the dusk.'

'Traveller, how many are they who come with you?'

'I know not how to count them.

They are travelling all night with their lamps lit, they are singing all day through land and water.'

'Traveller, how far is the sea?'

'How far is it we all ask?

The rolling roar of its water swells to the sky when we hush our talk. It ever seems near yet far.'

'Traveller, the sun is waxing strong.'

'Yes, our journey is long and grievous.

Sing who are weary in spirit, sing who are timid of heart.'

'Traveller, what if the night overtakes you?'

'We shall lie down to sleep till the new morning dawns with its songs, and the call of the sea floats in the air.'

78

COMRADE OF the road,

Here are my traveller's greetings to thee.

O Lord of my broken heart, of leave taking and loss, of the grey silence of the dayfall,

My greetings of the ruined house to thee!

CROSSING

O Light of the new-born morning,
Sun of the everlasting day,
My greetings of the undying hope to thee!
My guide,
I am a wayfarer of an endless road,
My greetings of a wanderer to thee.

The Fugitive

The Fugitive I

1

DARKLY YOU sweep on, Eternal Fugitive, round whose bodiless rush stagnant space frets into eddying bubbles of light.

Is your heart lost to the Lover calling you across his immeasurable loneliness?

Is the aching urgency of your haste the sole reason why your tangled tresses break into stormy riot and pearls of fire roll along your path as from a broken necklace?

Your fleeting steps kiss the dust of this world into sweetness, sweeping aside all waste; the storm centred with your dancing limbs shakes the sacred shower of death over life and freshens her growth.

Should you in sudden weariness stop for a moment, the world would rumble into a heap, an encumbrance, barring its own progress, and even the least speck of dust would pierce the sky throughout its infinity with an unbearable pressure.

My thoughts are quickened by this rhythm of unseen feet round which the anklets of light are shaken.

They echo in the pulse of my heart, and through my blood surges the psalm of the ancient sea.

I hear the thundering flood tumbling my life from world to world and form to form, scattering my being in an endless spray of gifts, in sorrowings and songs.

The tide runs high, the wind blows, the boat dances like thine own desire, my heart!

Leave the hoard on the shore and sail over the unfathomed dark towards limitless light.

2

WE CAME hither together, friend, and now at the cross-roads I stop to bid you farewell.

Your path is wide and straight before you, but my call comes up by ways from the unknown.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

I shall follow wind and cloud; I shall follow the stars to where day breaks behind the hills; I shall follow lovers who, as they walk, twine their days into a wreath on a single thread of song, 'I love.'

3

IT WAS GROWING dark when I asked her, 'What strange land have I come to?'

She only lowered her eyes, and the water gurgled in the throat of her jar, as she walked away.

The trees hang vaguely over the bank, and the land appears as though it already belonged to the past.

The water is dumb, the bamboos are darkly still, a wristlet tinkles against the water-jar from down the lane.

Row no more, but fasten the boat to this tree,—for I love the look of this land.

The evening star goes down behind the temple dome, and the pallor of the marble landing haunts the dark water.

Belated wayfarers sigh; for light from hidden windows is splintered into the darkness by intervening wayside trees and bushes. Still that wristlet tinkles against the water-jar, and retreating steps rustle from down the lane littered with leaves.

The night deepens, the palace towers loom spectre-like, and the town hums wearily.

Row no more, but fasten the boat to a tree.

Let me seek rest in this strange land, dimly lying under the stars, where darkness tingles with the tinkle of a wristlet knocking against a water-jar.

4

O THAT I were stored with a secret, like unshed rain in summer clouds—a secret, folded up in silence, that I could wander away with.

O that I had some one to whisper to, where slow waters lap under trees that doze in the sun.

The hush this evening seems to expect a footfall, and you ask me for the cause of my tears.

THE FUGITIVE

I cannot give a reason why I weep, for that is a secret still withheld from me.

5

FOR ONCE BE careless, timid traveller, and utterly lose your way; wide-awake though you are, be like broad daylight enticed by and netted in mist.

Do not shun the garden of Lost Hearts waiting at the end of the wrong road, where the grass is strewn with wrecked red flowers, and disconsolate water heaves in the troubled sea.

Long have you watched over the store gathered by weary years. Let it be stripped, with nothing remaining but the desolate triumph of losing all.

6

TWO LITTLE bare feet flit over the ground, and seem to embody that metaphor, 'Flowers are the footprints of summer.'

They lightly impress on the dust the chronicle of their adventure, to be erased by a passing breeze.

Come, stray into my heart, you tender little feet, and leave the everlasting print of songs on my dreamland path.

7

I AM LIKE the night to you, little flower.

I can only give you peace and a wakeful silence hidden in the dark.

When in the morning you open your eyes, I shall leave you to a world a-hum with bees, and songful with birds.

My last gift to you will be a tear dropped into the depth of your youth; it will make your smile all the sweeter, and bemist your outlook on the pitiless mirth of day.

8

DO NOT STAND before my window with those hungry eyes and beg for my secret. It is but a tiny stone of glistening pain streaked with blood-red by passion.

What gifts have you brought in both hands to fling before me in the dust?

I fear, if I accept, to create a debt that can never be paid even by the loss of all I have.

Do not stand before my window with your youth and flowers to shame my destitute life.

9

IF I WERE living in the royal town of Ujjain, when Kalidas was the king's poet, I should know some Malwa girl and fill my thoughts with the music of her name. She would glance at me through the slanting shadow of her eyelids, and allow her veil to catch in the jasmine as an excuse for lingering near me.

This very thing happened in some past whose track is lost under time's dead leaves.

The scholars fight to-day about dates that play hide-and-seek.

I do not break my heart dreaming over flown and vanished ages; but alas and alas again, that those Malwa girls have followed them!

To what heaven, I wonder, have they carried in their flower-baskets those days that tingled to the lyrics of the king's poet?

This morning, separation from those whom I was born too late to meet weighs on and saddens my heart.

Yet April carries the same flowers with which they decked their hair, and the same south breeze fluttered their veils as whispers over modern roses.

And, to tell the truth, joys are not lacking to this spring, though Kalidas sing no more; and I know, if he can watch me from the Poets' Paradise, he has reasons to be envious.

10

BE NOT concerned about her heart, my heart: leave it in the dark.

What if her beauty be of the figure and her smile merely of the face? Let me take without question the simple meaning of her glances and be happy.

I care not if it be a web of delusion that her arms wind about me, for the web itself is rich and rare, and the deceit can be smiled at and forgotten.

THE FUGITIVE

Be not concerned about her heart, my heart: be content if the music is true, though the words are not to be believed; enjoy the grace that dances like a lily on the rippling, deceiving surface, whatever may lie beneath.

II

NEITHER MOTHER nor daughter are you, nor bride, Urvashi.¹ Woman you are, to ravish the soul of Paradise.

When weary-footed evening comes down to the folds whither the cattle have returned, you never trim the house lamps nor walk to the bridal bed with a tremulous heart and a wavering smile on your lips, glad that the dark hours are so secret.

Like the dawn you are without veil, Urvashi, and without shame.

Who can imagine that aching overflow of splendour which created you!

You rose from the churned ocean on the first day of the first spring, with the cup of life in your right hand and poison in your left. The monster sea, lulled like an enchanted snake, laid down its thousand hoods at your feet.

Your unblemished radiance rose from the foam, white and naked as a jasmine.

Were you ever small, timid or in bud, Urvashi, O Youth everlasting?

Did you sleep, cradled in the deep blue night where the strange light of gems plays over coral, shells and moving creatures of dreamlike form, till day revealed your awful fulness of bloom?

Adored are you of all men in all ages, Urvashi, O endless wonder!

The world throbs with youthful pain at the glance of your eyes, the ascetic lays the fruit of his austerities at your feet, the songs of poets hum and swarm round the perfume of your presence. Your feet, as in careless joy they flit on, wound even the heart of the hollow wind with the tinkle of golden bells.

When you dance before the gods, flinging orbits of novel rhythm into space, Urvashi, the earth shivers, leaf and grass, and autumn fields heave

¹ The dancing girl of Paradise who rose from the sea.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

and sway; the sea surges into a frenzy of rhyming waves; the stars drop into the sky—beads from the chain that leaps till it breaks on your breast; and the blood dances in men's hearts with sudden turmoil.

You are the first break on the crest of heaven's slumber; Urvashi, you thrill the air with unrest. The world bathes your limbs in her tears; with colour of her heart's blood are your feet red; lightly you poise on the wave-tossed lotus of desire, Urvashi; you play forever in that limitless mind wherein labours God's tumultuous dream.

12

YOU, LIKE A RIVULET swift and sinuous, laugh and dance, and your steps sing as you trip along.

I, like a bank rugged and steep, stand speechless and stock-still and darkly gaze at you.

I, like a big, foolish storm, of a sudden come rushing on and try to rend my being and scatter it parcelled in a whirl of passion.

You, like the lightning's flash slender and keen, pierce the heart of the turbulent darkness, to disappear in a vivid streak of laughter.

13

YOU DESIRED my love and yet you did not love me.

Therefore my life clings to you like a chain of which clank and grip grow harsher the more you struggle to be free.

My despair has become your deadly companion, clutching at the faintest of your favours, trying to drag you away into the cavern of tears.

You have shattered my freedom, and with its wreck built your own prison.

14

I AM GLAD you will not wait for me with that lingering pity in your look.

It is only the spell of the night and my farewell words, startled at their own tune of despair, which bring these tears to my eyes. But day will dawn, my eyes will dry and my heart; and there will be no time for weeping.

THE FUGITIVE

Who says it is hard to forget?

The mercy of death works at life's core, bringing it respite from its own foolish persistence.

The stormy sea is lulled at last in its rocking cradle; the forest fire falls to sleep on its bed of ashes.

You and I shall part, and the cleavage will be hidden under living grass and flowers that laugh in the sun.

15

OF ALL DAYS you have chosen this one to visit my garden.

But the storm passed over my roses last night and the grass is strewn with torn leaves.

I do not know what has brought you, now that the hedges are laid low and rills run in the walks; the prodigal wealth of spring is scattered and the scent and song of yesterday are wrecked.

Yet stay a while, let me find some remnant flowers, though I doubt if your skirt can be filled.

The time will be short, for the clouds thicken and here comes the rain again!

16

I FORGOT myself for a moment, and I came.

But raise your eyes, and let me know if there still linger some shadow of other days, like a pale cloud on the horizon that has been robbed of its rain.

For a moment bear with me if I forget myself.

The roses are still in bud; they do not yet know how we neglect to gather flowers this summer.

The morning star has the same palpitating hush; the early light is enmeshed in the branches that overbrow your window, as in those other days.

That times are changed I forget for a little, and have come.

I forget if you ever shamed me by looking away when I bared my heart.

I only remember the words that stranded on the tremor of your lips;

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

I remember in your dark eyes sweeping shadows of passion, like the wings
of a home-seeking bird in the dusk.

I forget that you do not remember, and I come.

17

THE RAIN FELL fast. The river rushed and hissed. It licked up and swallowed
the island, while I waited alone on the lessening bank with my sheaves
of corn in a heap.

From the shadows of the opposite shore the boat crosses with a woman
at the helm.

I cry to her, 'Come to my island coiled round with hungry water, and
take away my year's harvest.'

She comes, and takes all that I have to the last grain; I ask her to take
me.

But she says, 'No'—the boat is laden with my gift and no room is
left for me.

18

THE EVENING beckons, and I would fain follow the travellers who sailed in
the last ferry of the ebb-tide to cross the dark.

Some were for home, some for the farther shore, yet all have ventured
to sail.

But I sit alone at the landing, having left my home and missed the
boat: summer is gone and my winter harvest is lost.

I wait for that love which gathers failures to sow them in tears on
the dark, that they may bear fruit when day rises anew.

19

ON THIS SIDE of the water there is no landing; the girls do not come here
to fetch water; the land along its edge is shaggy with stunted shrubs; a
noisy flock of *saliks* dig their nests in the steep bank under whose frown
the fisher-boats find no shelter.

You sit there on the unfrequented grass, and the morning wears on.

THE FUGITIVE

Tell me what you do on this bank so dry that it is agape with cracks?
She looks in my face and says, 'Nothing, nothing whatsoever.'

On this side of the river the bank is deserted, and no cattle come to water.
Only some stray goats from the village browse the scanty grass all day,
and the solitary water-hawk watches from an uprooted *peepal* aslant over
the mud.

You sit there alone in the miserly shade of a *shimool*, and the morning
wears on.

Tell me, for whom do you wait?

She looks in my face and says, 'No one, no one at all!'

20

Kacha and Devayani

*Young Kacha came from Paradise to learn the secret of immortality from
a Sage who taught the Titans, and whose daughter Devayani fell in love
with him.*

KACHA

The time has come for me to take leave, Devayani; I have long sat at your
father's feet, but to-day he completed his teaching. Graciously allow me
to go back to the land of the Gods whence I came.

DEVAYANI

You have, as you desired, won that rare knowledge coveted by the Gods:—
but think, do you aspire after nothing further?

KACHA

Nothing.

DEVAYANI

Nothing at all! Dive into the bottom of your heart; does no timid wish
lurk there, fearful lest it be blighted?

KACHA

For me the sun of fulfilment has risen, and the stars have faded in its
light. I have mastered the knowledge which gives life.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

DEVAYANI

Then you must be the one happy being in creation. Alas! now for the first time I feel what torture these days spent in an alien land have been to you, though we offered you our best.

KACHA

Not so much bitterness! Smile, and give me leave to go.

DEVAYANI

Smile! But, my friend, this is not your native Paradise. Smiles are not so cheap in this world, where thirst, like a worm in the flower, gnaws at the heart's core; where baffled desire hovers round the desired, and memory never ceases to sigh foolishly after vanished joy.

KACHA

Devayani, tell me how I have offended?

DEVAYANI

Is it so easy for you to leave this forest, which through long years has lavished on you shade and song? Do you not feel how the wind wails through these glimmering shadows, and dry leaves whirl in the air, like ghosts of lost hope;—while you alone, who part from us, have a smile on your lips?

KACHA

This forest has been a second mother to me, for here I have been born again. My love for it shall never dwindle.

DEVAYANI

When you had driven the cattle to graze on the lawn, yonder banyan tree spread a hospitable shade for your tired limbs against the mid-day heat.

KACHA

I bow to thee, Lord of the Forest! Remember me, when under thy shade other students chant their lessons to an accompaniment of bees humming and leaves rustling.

THE FUGITIVE

DEVAYANI

And do not forget our Venumati, whose swift water is one stream of singing love.

KACHA

I shall ever remember her, the dear companion of my exile, who, like a busy village girl, smiles on her errand of ceaseless service and croons a simple song.

DEVAYANI

But, friend, let me also remind you that you had another companion whose thoughts were vainly busy to make you forget an exile's cares.

KACHA

The memory of her has become a part of my life.

DEVAYANI

I recall the day when, little more than a boy, you first arrived. You stood there, near the hedge of the garden, a smile in your eyes.

KACHA

And I saw you gathering flowers—clad in white, like the dawn bathed in radiance. And I said, 'Make me proud by allowing me to help you!'

DEVAYANI

I asked in surprise who you were, and you meekly answered that you were the son of Vrihaspati, a divine sage at the court of the God Indra, and desired to learn from my father that secret spell which can revive the dead.

KACHA

I feared lest the Master, the teacher of the Titans, those rivals of the Gods, should refuse to accept me for a disciple.

DEVAYANI

But he could not refuse me when I pleaded your cause, so greatly he loves his daughter.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

KACHA

Thrice had the jealous Titans slain me, and thrice you prevailed on your father to bring me back to life; therefore my gratitude can never die.

DEVAYANI

Gratitude! Forget all—I shall not grieve. Do you only remember benefits? Let them perish! If after the day's lessons, in the evening solitude, some strange tremor of joy shook your heart, remember that—but not gratitude. If, as some one passed, a snatch of song got tangled among your texts or the swing of a robe fluttered your studies with delight, remember that when at leisure in your Paradise. What, benefits only!—and neither beauty nor love nor . . . ?

KACHA

Some things are beyond the power of words.

DEVAYANI

Yes, yes, I know. My love has sounded your heart's deepest, and makes me bold to speak in defiance of your reserve. Never leave me! remain here! fame gives no happiness. Friend, you cannot now escape, for your secret is mine!

KACHA

No, no, Devayani.

DEVAYANI

How 'No'? Do not lie to me! Love's insight is divine. Day after day, in raising your head, in a glance, in the motion of your hands, your love spoke as the sea speaks through its waves. On a sudden my voice would send your heart quivering through your limbs—have I never witnessed it? I know you, and therefore you are my captive for ever. The very king of your Gods shall not sever this bond.

KACHA

Was it for this, Devayani, that I toiled, away from home and kindred, all these years?

THE FUGITIVE

DEVAYANI

Why not? Is only knowledge precious? Is love cheap? Lay hold on this moment. Have the courage to own that a woman's heart is worth all as much penance as men undergo for the sake of power, knowledge, or reputation.

KACHA

I gave my solemn promise to the Gods that I would bring them this lore of deathless life.

DEVAYANI

But is it true you had eyes for nothing save your books? That you never broke off your studies to pay me homage with flowers, never lay in wait for a chance, of an evening, to help me water my flower-beds? What made you sit by me on the grass and sing songs you brought hither from the assembly of the stars, while darkness stooped over the river bank as love droops over its own sad silence? Were these parts of a cruel conspiracy plotted in your Paradise? Was all for the sake of access to my father's heart?—and after success, were you, departing, to throw some cheap gratitude, like small coins, to the deluded door-keeper?

KACHA

What profit were there, proud woman, in knowing the truth? If I did wrong to serve you with a passionate devotion cherished in secret, I have had ample punishment. This is no time to question whether my love be true or not; my life's work awaits me. Though my heart must henceforth enclose a red flame vainly striving to devour emptiness, still I must go back to that Paradise which will nevermore be Paradise to me. I owe the Gods a new divinity, hard won by my studies, before I may think of happiness. Forgive me, Devayani, and know that my suffering is doubled by the pain I unwillingly inflict on you.

DEVAYANI

Forgiveness! You have angered my heart till it is hard and burning like a thunderbolt! You can go back to your work and your glory, but what is left for me? Memory is a bed of thorns, and secret shame will gnaw at the roots of my life. You came like a wayfarer, sat through the sunny hours in the shade of my garden, and to while time away you plucked

all its flowers and wove them into a chain. And now, parting, you snap the thread and let the flowers drop on the dust! Accursed be that great knowledge you have earned!—a burden that, though others share equally with you, will never be lightened. For lack of love may it ever remain as foreign to your life as the cold stars are to the unespoused darkness of virgin Night!

21

I

'WHY THESE preparations without end?'—I said to Mind—'Is some one to come?'

Mind replied, 'I am enormously busy gathering things and building towers. I have no time to answer such questions.'

Meekly I went back to my work.

When things were grown to a pile, when seven wings of his palace were complete, I said to Mind, 'Is it not enough?'

Mind began to say, 'Not enough to contain—' and then stopped. 'Contain what?' I asked.

Mind affected not to hear.

I suspected that Mind did not know, and with ceaseless work smothered the question.

His one refrain was, 'I must have more.'

'Why must you?'

'Because it is great.'

'What is great?'

Mind remained silent. I pressed for an answer.

In contempt and anger, Mind said, 'Why ask about things that are not? Take notice of those that are hugely before you,—the struggle and the fight, the army and armaments, the bricks and mortar, and labourers without number.'

I thought 'Possibly Mind is wise.'

II

DAYS PASSED. More wings were added to his palace—more lands to his domain.

The season of rains came to an end. The dark clouds became white and thin, and in the rain-washed sky the sunny hours hovered like butterflies

THE FUGITIVE

over an unseen flower. I was bewildered and asked everybody I met, 'What is that music in the breeze?'

A tramp walked the road whose dress was wild as his manner; he said, 'Hark to the music of the Coming!'

I cannot tell why I was convinced, but the words broke from me, 'We have not much longer to wait.'

'It is close at hand,' said the mad man.

I went to the office and boldly said to Mind, 'Stop all work!'

Mind asked, 'Have you any news?'

'Yes,' I answered, 'News of the Coming.' But I could not explain.

Mind shook his head and said, 'There are neither banners nor pageantry!'

III

THE NIGHT waned, the stars paled in the sky. Suddenly the touchstone of the morning light tinged everything with gold. A cry spread from mouth to mouth—

'Here is the herald!'

I bowed my head and asked, 'Is he coming?'

The answer seemed to burst from all sides, 'Yes.'

Mind grew troubled and said, 'The dome of my building is not yet finished, nothing is in order.'

A voice came from the sky, 'Pull down your building!'

'But why?' asked Mind.

'Because to-day is the day of the Coming, and your building is in the way.'

IV

THE LOFTY building lies in the dust and all is scattered and broken.

Mind looked about. But what was there to see?

Only the morning star and the lily washed in dew.

And what else? A child running laughing from its mother's arms into the open light.

'Was it only for this that they said it was the day of the Coming?'

'Yes, this was why they said there was music in the air and light in the sky.'

'And did they claim all the earth only for this?'

'Yes,' came the answer. 'Mind, you build walls to imprison yourself.'

Your servants toil to enslave themselves; but the whole earth and infinite space are for the child, for the New Life.'

'What does that child bring you?'

'Hope for all the world and its joy.'

Mind asked me, 'Poet, do you understand?'

'I lay my work aside,' I said, 'for I must have time to understand.'

22

Translations: Vaishnava Songs

I

OH SAKHI,¹ my sorrow knows no bounds.

August comes laden with rain clouds and my house is desolate.

The stormy sky growls, the earth is flooded with rain, my love is far away, and my heart is torn with anguish.

The peacocks dance, for the clouds rumble and frogs croak.

The night brims with darkness flicked with lightning.

Vidyapati² asks, 'Maiden, how are you to spend your days and nights without your lord?'

II

LUCKY WAS MY awakening this morning, for I saw my beloved.

The sky was one piece of joy, and my life and youth were fulfilled.

To-day my house becomes my house in truth, and my body my body.

Fortune has proved a friend, and my doubts are dispelled.

Birds, sing your best; moon, shed your fairest light!

Let fly your darts, Love-God, in millions!

I wait for the moment when my body will grow golden at his touch.

Vidyapati says, 'Immense is your good fortune, and blessed is your love.'

III

I FEEL MY body vanishing into the dust whereon my beloved walks.

I feel one with the water of the lake where he bathes.

Oh Sakhi, my love crosses death's boundary when I meet him.

¹ The woman friend of a woman.

² The name of the poet.

THE FUGITIVE

My heart melts in the light and merges in the mirror whereby he views his face.

I move with the air to kiss him when he waves his fan, and wherever he wanders I enclose him like the sky.

Govindadas says, 'You are the gold-setting, fair maiden, he is the emerald.'

IV

MY LOVE, I will keep you hidden in my eyes; I will thread your image like a gem on my joy and hang it on my bosom.

You have been in my heart ever since I was a child, throughout my youth, throughout my life, even through all my dreams.

You dwell in my being when I sleep and when I wake.

Know that I am a woman, and bear with me when you find me wanting.

For I have thought and thought and know for certain that all that is left for me in this world is your love, and if I lose you for a moment I die.

Chandidas says, 'Be tender to her who is yours in life and death.'

V

'FRUIT TO sell, Fruit to sell,' cried the woman at the door.

The Child came out of the house.

'Give me some fruit,' said he, putting a handful of rice in her basket.

The fruit-seller gazed at his face and her eyes swam with tears.

'Who is the fortunate mother,' she cried, 'that has clasped you in her arms and fed you at her breast, and whom your dear voice called "Mother"?''

'Offer your fruit to him,' says the poet, 'and with it your life.'

The Fugitive II

I

ENDLESSLY VARIED art thou in the exuberant world, Lady of Manifold Magnificence. Thy path is strewn with lights, thy touch thrills into flowers; that trailing skirt of thine sweeps the whirl of a dance among the stars, and thy many-toned music is echoed from innumerable worlds through signs and colours.

Single and alone in the unfathomed stillness of the soul, art thou,

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

Lady of Silence and Solitude, a vision thrilled with light, a lonely lotus blossoming on the stem of love.

2

BEHIND THE rusty iron gratings of the opposite window sits a girl, dark and plain of face, like a boat stranded on a sand-bank when the river is shallow in the summer.

I come back to my room after my day's work, and my tired eyes are lured to her.

She seems to me like a lake with its dark lonely waters edged by moonlight.

She has only her window for freedom: there the morning light meets her musings, and through it her dark eyes like lost stars travel back to their sky.

3

I REMEMBER the day.

The heavy shower of rain is slackening into fitful pauses, renewed gusts of wind startle it from a first lull.

I take up my instrument. Idly I touch the strings, till, without my knowing, the music borrows the mad cadence of that storm.

I see her figure as she steals from her work, stops at my door, and retreats with hesitating steps. She comes again, stands outside leaning against the wall, then slowly enters the room and sits down. With head bent, she plies her needle in silence; but soon stops her work, and looks out of the window through the rain at the blurred line of trees.

Only this—one hour of a rainy noon filled with shadows and song and silence.

4

WHILE STEPPING into the carriage she turned her head and threw me a swift glance of farewell.

This was her last gift to me. But where can I keep it safe from the trampling hours?

Must evening sweep this gleam of anguish away, as it will the last flicker of fire from the sunset?

THE FUGITIVE

Ought it to be washed off by the rain, as treasured pollens are from heart-broken flowers?

Leave kingly glory and the wealth of the rich to death. But may not tears keep ever fresh the memory of a glance flung through a passionate moment?

'Give it to me to keep,' said my song; 'I never touch kings' glory or the wealth of the rich, but these small things are mine for ever.'

5

YOU GIVE yourself to me, like a flower that blossoms at night, whose presence is known by the dew that drips from it, by the odour shed through the darkness, as the first steps of Spring are by the buds that thicken the twigs.

You break upon my thought like waves at the high tide, and my heart is drowned under surging songs.

My heart knew of your coming, as the night feels the approach of dawn. The clouds are aflame and my sky fills with a great revealing flood.

6

I WAS TO GO away; still she did not speak. But I felt, from a slight quiver, her yearning arms would say: 'Ah no, not yet.'

I have often heard her pleading hands vocal in a touch, though they knew not what they said.

I have known those arms to stammer when, had they not, they would have become youth's garland round my neck.

Their little gestures return to remembrance in the covert of still hours, like truants they playfully reveal things she had kept secret from me.

7

MY SONGS ARE like bees; they follow through the air some fragrant trace—some memory—of you, to hum around your shyness, eager for its hidden store.

When the freshness of dawn droops in the sun, when in the noon the air hangs low with heaviness and the forest is silent, my songs return home, their languid wings dusted with gold.

I BELIEVE YOU had visited me in a vision before we ever met, like some foretaste of April before the spring broke into flower.

That vision must have come when all was bathed in the odour of *sal* blossom; when the twilight twinkle of the river fringed its yellow sands, and the vague sounds of a summer afternoon were blended; yes, and had it not laughed and evaded me in many a nameless gleam at other moments?

I THINK I shall stop startled if ever we meet after our next birth, walking in the light of a far-away world.

I shall know those dark eyes then as morning stars, and yet feel that they have belonged to some unremembered evening sky of a former life.

I shall know that the magic of your face is not all its own, but has stolen the passionate light that was in my eyes at some immemorial meeting, and then gathered from my love a mystery that has now forgotten its origin.

LAY DOWN your lute, my love, leave your arms free to embrace me.

Let your touch bring my overflowing heart to my body's utmost brink.

Do not bend your neck and turn away your face, but offer up a kiss to me, which has been like some perfume long closed in a bud.

Do not smother this moment under vain words, but let our hearts quake in a rush of silence sweeping all thoughts to the shoreless delight.

YOU HAVE made me great with your love, though I am but one among the many, drifting in the common tide, rocking in the fluctuant favour of the world.

You have given me a seat where poets of all time bring their tribute, and lovers with deathless names greet one another across the ages.

Men hastily pass me in the market,—never nothing how my body has grown precious with your caress, how I carry your kiss within, as the sun carries in its orb the fire of the divine touch and shines for ever.

THE FUGITIVE

12

LIKE A CHILD that frets and pushes away its toys, my heart to-day shakes its head at every phrase I suggest, and says, 'No, not this.'

Yet words, in the agony of their vagueness, haunt my mind, like vagrant clouds hovering over hills, waiting for some chance wind to relieve them of their rain.

But leave these vain efforts, my soul, for the stillness will ripen its own music in the dark.

My life to-day is like a cloister during some penance, where the spring is afraid to stir or to whisper.

This is not the time, my love, for you to pass the gate; at the mere thought of your anklet bells tinkling down the path, the garden echoes are ashamed.

Know that to-morrow's songs are in bud to-day, and should they see you walk by they would strain to breaking their immature hearts.

13

WHENCE DO YOU bring this disquiet, my love?

Let my heart touch yours and kiss the pain out of your silence.

The night has thrown up from its depth this little hour, that love may build a new world within these shut doors, to be lighted by this solitary lamp.

We have for music but a single reed which our two pairs of lips must play on by turns—for crown, only one garland to bind my hair after I have put it on your forehead.

Tearing the veil from my breast I shall make our bed on the floor; and one kiss and one sleep of delight shall fill our small boundless world.

14

ALL THAT I had I gave to you, keeping but the barest veil of reserve.

It is so thin that you secretly smile at it and I feel ashamed.

The gust of the spring breeze sweeps it away unawares, and the flutter of my own heart moves it as the waves move their foam.

My love, do not grieve if I keep this flimsy mist of distance round me.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

This frail reserve of mine is no mere woman's coyness, but a slender stem on which the flower of my self-surrender bends towards you with reticent grace.

15

I HAVE donned this new robe to-day because my body feels like singing.

It is not enough that I am given to my love once and for ever, but out of that I must fashion new gifts every day; and shall I not seem a fresh offering, dressed in a new robe?

My heart, like the evening sky, has its endless passion for colour, and therefore I change my veils, which have now the green of the cool young grass and now that of the winter rice.

To-day my robe is tinted with the rain-rimmed blue of the sky. It brings to my limbs the colour of the boundless, the colour of the oversea hills; and it carries in its folds the delight of summer clouds flying in the wind.

16

I THOUGHT I would write love's words in their own colour; but that lies deep in the heart, and tears are pale.

Would you know them, friend, if the words were colourless?

I thought I would sing love's words to their own tune, but that sounds only in my heart, and my eyes are silent.

Would you know them, friend, if there were no tune?

17

IN THE NIGHT the song came to me; but you were not there.

It found the words for which I had been seeking all day. Yes, in the stillness a moment after dark they throbbed into music, even as the stars then began to pulse with light; but you were not there. My hope was to sing it to you in the morning; but, try as I might, though the music came, the words hung back, when you were beside me.

THE NIGHT deepens and the dying flame flickers in the lamp.

I forgot to notice when the evening—like a village girl who has filled her pitcher at the river a last time for that day—closed the door on her cabin.

I was speaking to you, my love, with mind barely conscious of my voice—tell me, had it any meaning? Did it bring you any message from beyond life's borders?

For now, since my voice has ceased, I feel the night throbbing with thoughts that gaze in awe at the abyss of their dumbness.

WHEN WE two first met my heart rang out in music, 'She who is eternally afar is beside you for ever.'

That music is silent, because I have grown to believe that my love is only near, and have forgotten that she is also far, far away.

Music fills the infinite between two souls. This has been muffled by the mist of our daily habits.

On shy summer nights, when the breeze brings a vast murmur out of the silence, I sit up in my bed and mourn the great loss of her who is beside me. I ask myself, 'When shall I have another chance to whisper to her words with the rhythm of eternity in them?'

Wake up, my song, from thy languor, rend this screen of the familiar, and fly to my beloved there, in the endless surprise of our first meeting!

LOVERS COME to you, my Queen, and proudly lay their riches at your feet: but my tribute is made up of unfulfilled hopes.

Shadows have stolen across the heart of my world and the best in me has lost light.

While the fortunate laugh at my penury, I ask you to lend my failings your tears, and so make them precious.

I bring you a voiceless instrument.

I strained to reach a note which was too high in my heart, and the string broke.

While masters laugh at the snapped cord, I ask you to take my lute
in your hands and fill its hollowness with your songs.

21

THE FATHER came back from the funeral rites.

His boy of seven stood at the window, with eyes wide open and a
golden amulet hanging from his neck, full of thoughts too difficult for
his age.

His father took him in his arms and the boy asked him, 'Where is
mother?'

'In heaven,' answered his father, pointing to the sky.

At night the father groaned in slumber, weary with grief.

A lamp dimly burned near the bedroom door, and a lizard chased
moths on the wall.

The boy woke up from sleep, felt with his hands the emptiness in
the bed, and stole out to the open terrace.

The boy raised his eyes to the sky and long gazed in silence. His
bewildered mind sent abroad into the night the question, 'Where is
heaven?'

No answer came: and the stars seemed like the burning tears of that
ignorant darkness.

22

SHE WENT away when the night was about to wane.

My mind tried to console me by saying, 'All is vanity.'

I felt angry and said, 'That unopened letter with her name on it, and
this palm-leaf fan bordered with red silk by her own hands, are they not
real?'

The day passed, and my friend came and said to me, 'Whatever is
good is true, and can never perish.'

'How do you know?' I asked impatiently; 'was not this body good
which is now lost to the world?'

As a fretful child hurting its own mother, I tried to wreck all the shelters
that ever I had, in and about me, and cried, 'This world is treacherous.'

Suddenly I felt a voice saying—'Ungrateful!'

I looked out of the window, and a reproach seemed to come from the star-sprinkled night,—'You pour out into the void of my absence your faith in the truth that I came!'

23

THE RIVER IS grey and the air dazed with blown sand.

On a morning of dark disquiet, when the birds are mute and their nests shake in the gust, I sit alone and ask myself, 'Where is she?'

The days have flown wherein we sat too near each other; we laughed and jested, and the awe of love's majesty found no words at our meetings.

I made myself small, and she trifled away every moment with pelting talk.

To-day I wish in vain that she were by me, in the gloom of the coming storm, to sit in the soul's solitude.

24

THE NAME SHE called me by, like a flourishing jasmine, covered the whole seventeen years of our love. With its sound mingled the quiver of the light through the leaves, the scent of the grass in the rainy night, and the sad silence of the last hour of many an idle day.

Not the work of God alone was he who answered to that name; she created him again for herself during those seventeen swift years.

Other years were to follow, but their vagrant days, no longer gathered within the fold of that name uttered in her voice, stray and are scattered.

They ask me, 'Who should fold us?'

I find no answer and sit silent, and they cry to me while dispersing, 'We seek a shepherdess!'

Whom should they seek?

That they do not know. And like derelict evening clouds they drift in the trackless dark, and are lost and forgotten.

25

I FEEL THAT YOUR brief days of love have not been left behind in those scanty years of your life.

I seek to know in what place, away from the slow-thieving dust, you

keep them now. I find in my solitude some song of your evening that died, yet left a deathless echo; and the sighs of your unsatisfied hours I find nestled in the warm quiet of the autumn noon.

Your desires come from the hive of the past to haunt my heart, and I sit still to listen to their wings.

26

YOU HAVE taken a bath in the dark sea. You are once again veiled in a bride's robe, and through death's arch you come back to repeat our wedding in the soul.

Neither lute nor drum is struck, no crowd has gathered, not a wreath is hung on the gate.

Your unuttered words meet mine in a ritual unilluminated by lamps.

27

I WAS WALKING along a path overgrown with grass, when suddenly I heard from some one behind, 'See if you know me?'

I turned round and looked at her and said, 'I cannot remember your name.'

She said, 'I am that first great Sorrow whom you met when you were young.'

Her eyes looked like a morning whose dew is still in the air.

I stood silent for some time till I said, 'Have you lost all the great burden of your tears?'

She smiled and said nothing. I felt that her tears had had time to learn the language of smiles.

'Once you said,' she whispered, 'that you would cherish your grief for ever.'

I blushed and said, 'Yes, but years have passed and I forget.'

Then I took her hand in mine and said, 'But you have changed.'

'What was sorrow once has now become peace,' she said.

28

OUR LIFE SAILS on the uncrossed sea whose waves chase each other in an eternal hide-and-seek.

It is the restless sea of change, feeding its foaming flocks to lose them

THE FUGITIVE

over and over again, beating its hands against the calm of the sky.

Love, in the centre of this circling war-dance of light and dark, yours is that green island, where the sun kisses the shy forest shade and silence is wooed by birds' singing.

29

Ama and Vinayaka

Night on the battlefield: Ama meets her father Vinayaka.

AMA

Father!

VINAYAKA

Shameless wanton, you call me 'Father'! you who did not shrink from a Mussulman husband!

AMA

Though you have treacherously killed my husband, yet you are my father; and I hold back a widow's tears, lest they bring God's curse on you. Since we have met on this battlefield after years of separation, let me bow to your feet and take my last leave!

VINAYAKA

Where will you go, Ama? The tree on which you built your impious nest is hewn down. Where will you take shelter?

AMA

I have my son.

VINAYAKA

Leave him! Cast never a fond look back on the result of a sin expiated with blood! Think where to go.

AMA

Death's open gates are wider than a father's love!

VINAYAKA

Death indeed swallows sins as the sea swallows the mud of rivers. But you are to die neither to-night nor here. Seek some solitary shrine of holy Shiva far from shamed kindred and all neighbours; bathe three times a day in sacred Ganges, and, while reciting God's name, listen to the last bell of evening worship, that Death may look tenderly upon you, as a father on his sleeping child whose eyes are still wet with tears. Let him gently carry you into his own great silence, as the Ganges carries a fallen flower on its stream, washing every stain away to render it, a fit offering, to the sea.

AMA

But my son—

VINAYAKA

Again I bid you not to speak of him. Lay yourself once more in a father's arms, my child, like a babe fresh from the womb of Oblivion, your second mother.

AMA

To me the world has become a shadow. Your words I hear, but cannot take to heart. Leave me, father, leave me alone! Do not try to bind me with your love, for its bands are red with my husband's blood.

VINAYAKA

Alas! no flower ever returns to the parent branch it dropped from. How can you call him *husband* who forcibly snatched you from Jivaji to whom you had been sacredly affianced? I shall never forget that night! In the wedding hall we sat anxiously expecting the bridegroom, for the auspicious hour was dwindling away. Then in the distance appeared the glare of torches, and bridal strains came floating up the air. We shouted for joy; women blew their conch-shells. A procession of palanquins entered the courtyard: but while we were asking, 'Where is Jivaji?' armed men burst out of the litters like a storm, and bore you off before we knew what had happened. Shortly after, Jivaji came to tell us he had been waylaid and captured by a Mussulman noble of the Vijapur court. That night Jivaji and I touched the nuptial fire and swore bloody death to this villain. After waiting long, we have been freed from our solemn pledge to-night; and

THE FUGITIVE

the spirit of Jivaji, who lost his life in this battle, lawfully claims you for wife.

AMA

Father, it may be that I have disgraced the rites of your house, but my honour is unsullied; I loved him to whom I bore a son. I remember the night when I received two secret messages, one from you, one from my mother; yours said: 'I send you the knife; kill him!' My mother's: 'I send you the poison; end your life!' Had unholy force dishonoured me, your double bidding had been obeyed. But my body was yielded only after love had given *me*—love all the greater, all the purer, in that it overcame the hereditary recoil of our blood from the Mussulman.

Enter Rama, Ama's mother.

AMA

Mother mine, I had not hoped to see you again. Let me take dust from your feet.

RAMA

Touch me not with impure hands!

AMA

I am as pure as yourself.

RAMA

To whom have you surrendered your honour?

AMA

To my husband.

RAMA

Husband? A Mussulman the husband of a Brahmin woman?

AMA

I do not merit contempt: I am proud to say I never despised my husband though a Mussulman. If Paradise will reward your devotion to your husband, then the same Paradise waits for your daughter, who has been as true a wife.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

RAMA

Are you indeed a true wife?

AMA

Yes.

RAMA

Do you know how to die without flinching?

AMA

I do.

RAMA

Then let the funeral fire be lighted for you! See, there lies the body of your husband.

AMA

Jivaji?

RAMA

Yes, Jivaji. He was your husband by plighted troth. The baffled fire of the nuptial God has raged into the hungry fire of death, and the interrupted wedding shall be completed now.

VINAYAKA

Do not listen, my child. Go back to your son, to your own nest darkened with sorrow. My duty has been performed to its extreme cruel end, and nothing now remains for you to do.—Wife, your grief is fruitless. Were the branch dead which was violently snapped from our tree, I should give it to the fire. But it has sent living roots into a new soil and is bearing flowers and fruits. Allow her, without regret, to obey the laws of those among whom she has loved. Come, wife, it is time we cut all worldly ties and spent our remainder lives in the seclusion of some peaceful pilgrim shrine.

RAMA

I am ready: but first must tread into dust every sprout of sin and shame that has sprung from the soil of our life. A daughter's infamy stains her

ACT IV THE FUGITIVE

mother's honour. That black shame shall feed glowing fire to-night, and raise a true wife's memorial over the ashes of my daughter.

AMA

Mother, if by force you unite me in death with one who was not my husband, then will you bring a curse upon yourself for desecrating the shrine of the Eternal Lord of Death.

RAMA

Soldiers, light the fire; surround the woman!

AMA

Father!

VINAYAKA

Do not fear. Alas, my child, that you should ever have to call your father to save you from your mother's hands!

AMA

Father!

VINAYAKA

Come to me, my darling child! Mere vanity are these man-made laws splashing like spray against the rock of heaven's ordinance. Bring your son to me, and we will live together, my daughter. A father's love, like God's rain, does not judge but is poured forth from an abounding source.

RAMA

Where would you go? Turn back!—Soldiers, stand firm in your loyalty to your master Jivaji! do your last sacred duty by him!

AMA

Father!

VINAYAKA

Free her, soldiers! She is my daughter.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

SOLDIERS

She is the widow of our master.

VINAYAKA

Her husband, though a Mussulman, was staunch in his own faith.

RAMA

Soldiers, keep this old man under control!

AMA

I defy you, mother!—You, soldiers, I defy!—for through death and love
I win to freedom.

30

A PAINTER was selling pictures at the fair; followed by servants, there passed
the son of a minister who in youth had cheated this painter's father so
that he had died of a broken heart.

The boy lingered before the pictures and chose one for himself. The
painter flung a cloth over it and said he would not sell it.

After this the boy pined heart-sick till his father came and offered
a large price. But the painter kept the picture unsold on his shop-wall
and grimly sat before it, saying to himself, 'This is my revenge.'

The sole form this painter's worship took was to trace an image of his
god every morning.

And now he felt these pictures grow daily more different from those
he used to paint.

This troubled him, and he sought in vain for an explanation till one
day he started up from work in horror, the eyes of the god he had just
drawn were those of the minister, and so were the lips.

He tore up the picture, crying, 'My revenge has returned on my
head!'

31

THE GENERAL came before the silent and angry King and saluting him said:
'The village is punished, the men are stricken to dust, and the women
cower in their unlit homes afraid to weep aloud.'

THE FUGITIVE

The High Priest stood up and blessed the King and cried: 'God's mercy is ever upon you.'

The Clown, when he heard this, burst out laughing and startled the court. The King's frown darkened.

'The honour of the throne,' said the minister, 'is upheld by the King's prowess and the blessing of Almighty God.'

Louder laughed the Clown, and the King growled,—'Unseemly mirth!'

'God has showered many blessings upon your head,' said the Clown; 'the one he bestowed on me was the gift of laughter.'

'This gift will cost you your life,' said the King, gripping his sword with his right hand.

Yet the Clown stood up and laughed till he laughed no more.

A shadow of dread fell upon the Court, for they heard that laughter echoing in the depth of God's silence.

32

The Mother's Prayer

Prince Duryodhana, the son of the blind Kaurava King Dhritarashtra, and of Queen Gandhari, has played with his cousins the Pandava Kings for their kingdom, and won it by fraud.

DHRITARASHTRA

You have compassed your end.

DURYODHANA

Success is mine!

DHRITARASHTRA

Are you happy?

DURYODHANA

I am victorious.

DHRITARASHTRA

I ask you again, what happiness have you in winning the undivided kingdom?

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

DURYODHANA

Sire, a Kshatriya thirsts not after happiness but victory, that fiery wine pressed from seething jealousy. Wretchedly happy we were, like those inglorious stains that lie idly on the breast of the moon, when we lived in peace under the friendly dominance of our cousins. Then these Pandavas milked the world of its wealth, and allowed us a share, in brotherly tolerance. Now that they own defeat and expect banishment, I am no longer happy but exultant.

DHRITARASHTRA

Wretch, you forget that both Pandavas and Kauravas have the same forefathers.

DURYODHANA

It was difficult to forget that, and therefore our inequalities rankled in my heart. At midnight the moon is never jealous of the noonday sun. But the struggle to share one horizon between both orbs cannot last forever. Thank heaven, that struggle is over, and we have at last won solitude in glory.

DHRITARASHTRA

The mean jealousy!

DURYODHANA

Jealousy is never mean—it is in the essence of greatness. Grass can grow in crowded amity, not giant trees. Stars live in clusters, but the sun and moon are lonely in their splendour. The pale moon of the Pandavas sets behind the forest shadows, leaving the new-risen sun of the Kauravas to rejoice.

DHRITARASHTRA

But right has been defeated.

DURYODHANA

Right for rulers is not what is right in the eyes of the people. The people thrive by comradeship: but for a king, equals are enemies. They are obstacles ahead, they are terrors from behind. There is no place for brothers or friends in a king's polity; its one solid foundation is conquest.

THE FUGITIVE

DHRITARASHTRA

I refuse to call a conquest what was won by fraud in gambling.

DURYODHANA

A man is not shamed by refusing to challenge a tiger on equal terms with teeth and nails. Our weapons are those proper for success, not for suicide. Father, I am proud of the result and disdain regret for the means.

DHRITARASHTRA

But justice—

DURYODHANA

Fools alone dream of justice—success is not yet theirs: but those born to rule rely on power, merciless and unhampered with scruples.

DHRITARASHTRA

Your success will bring down on you a loud and angry flood of detraction.

DURYODHANA

The people will take amazingly little time to learn that Duryodhana is king and has power to crush calumny under foot.

DHRITARASHTRA

Calumny dies of weariness dancing on tongue-tips. Do not drive it into the heart to gather strength.

DURYODHANA

Unuttered defamation does not touch a king's dignity. I care not if love is refused us, but insolence shall not be borne. Love depends upon the will of the giver, and the poorest of the poor can indulge in such generosity. Let them squander it on their pet cats, tame dogs, and our good cousins the Pandavas. I shall never envy them. Fear is the tribute I claim for my royal throne. Father, only too leniently you lent your ear to those who slandered your sons; but if you intend still to allow those pious friends of yours to revel in shrill denunciation at the expense of your children, let us exchange our kingdom for the exile of our cousins, and go to the wilderness, where happily friends are never cheap!

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

DHRITARASHTRA

Could the pious warnings of my friends lessen my love for my sons, then we might be saved. But I have dipped my hands in the mire of your infamy and lost my sense of goodness. For your sakes I have heedlessly set fire to that ancient forest of our royal lineage—so dire is my love. Clapsed breast to breast, we, like a double meteor, are blindly plunging into ruin. Therefore doubt not my love; relax not your embrace till the brink of annihilation be reached. Beat your drums of victory, lift your banner of triumph. In this mad riot of exultant evil, brothers and friends will disperse till nothing remain save the doomed father, the doomed son and God's curse.

Enter an Attendant.

Sire, Queen Gandhari asks for audience.

DHRITARASHTRA

I await her.

DURYODHANA

Let me take my leave.

[Exit.

DHRITARASHTRA

Fly! For you cannot bear the fire of your mother's presence.

Enter Queen Gandhari, the mother of Duryodhana.

GANDHARI

At your feet I crave a boon.

DHRITARASHTRA

Speak, your wish is fulfilled.

GANDHARI

The time has come to renounce him.

THE FUGITIVE

DHRITARASHTRA

Whom, my queen?

GANDHARI

Duryodhana!

DHRITARASHTRA

Our own son, Duryodhana?

GANDHARI

Yes!

DHRITARASHTRA

This is a terrible boon for you, his mother, to crave!

GANDHARI

The fathers of the Kauravas, who are in Paradise, join me in beseeching you.

DHRITARASHTRA

The divine Judge will punish him who has broken His laws. But I am his father.

GANDHARI

Am I not his mother? Have I not carried him under my throbbing heart? Yes, I ask you to renounce Duryodhana the unrighteous.

DHRITARASHTRA

What will remain to us after that?

GANDHARI

God's blessing.

DHRITARASHTRA

And what will that bring us?

GANDHARI

New afflictions. Pleasure in our son's presence, pride in a new kingdom,

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

and shame at knowing both purchased by wrong done or connived at, like thorns dragged two ways, would lacerate our bosoms. The Pandavas are too proud ever to accept back from us the lands which they have relinquished; therefore it is only meet that we draw some great sorrow down on our heads so as to deprive that unmerited reward of its sting.

DHRITARASHTRA

Queen, you inflict fresh pain on a heart already rent.

GANDHARI

Sire, the punishment imposed on our son will be more ours than his. A judge callous to the pain that he inflicts loses the right to judge. And if you spare your son to save yourself pain, then all the culprits ever punished by your hands will cry before God's throne for vengeance,—had they not also their fathers?

DHRITARASHTRA

No more of this, Queen, I pray you. Our son is abandoned of God: that is why I cannot give him up. To save him is no longer in my power, and therefore my consolation is to share his guilt and tread the path of destruction, his solitary companion. What is done is done; let follow what must follow!

[Exit.

GANDHARI

Be calm, my heart, and patiently await God's judgment. Oblivious night wears on, the morning of reckoning nears, I hear the thundering roar of its chariot. Woman, bow your head down to the dust! and as a sacrifice fling your heart under those wheels! Darkness will shroud the sky, earth will tremble, wailing will rend the air and then comes the silent and cruel end,—that terrible peace, that great forgetting, and awful extinction of hatred—the supreme deliverance rising from the fire of death.

FERCELY THEY rend in pieces the carpet woven during ages of prayer for the welcome of the world's best hope.

THE FUGITIVE

The great preparations of love lie a heap of shreds, and there is nothing on the ruined altar to remind the mad crowd that their god was to have come. In a fury of passion they seem to have burnt their future to cinders, and with it the season of their bloom.

The air is harsh with the cry, 'Victory to the Brute!' The children look haggard and aged; they whisper to one another that time revolves but never advances, that we are goaded to run but have nothing to reach, that creation is like a blind man's groping.

I said to myself, 'Cease thy singing. Song is for one who is to come, the struggle without an end is for things that are.'

The road, that ever lies along like some one with ear to the ground listening for footsteps, to-day gleams no hint of coming guest, nothing of the house at its far end.

My lute said, 'Trample me in the dust.'

I looked at the dust by the roadside. There was a tiny flower among thorns. And I cried, 'The world's hope is not dead!'

The sky stooped over the horizon to whisper to the earth, and a hush of expectation filled the air. I saw the palm leaves clapping their hands to the beat of inaudible music, and the moon exchanged glances with the glistening silence of the lake.

The road said to me, 'Fear nothing!' and my lute said, 'Lend me thy songs!'

34

Translations: Baul' Songs

I

THIS LONGING TO meet in the play of love, my Lover, is not only mine but yours.

Your lips can smile, your flute make music, only through delight in my love; therefore you are importunate even as I.

¹ The Bauls are a sect of religious mendicants in Bengal, unlettered and unconventional, whose songs are loved and sung by the people. The literal meaning of the word 'Baul' is 'the Mad'.

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II

I SIT HERE on the road; do not ask me to walk further.

If your love can be complete without mine let me turn back from seeking you.

I refuse to beg a sight of you if you do not feel my need.

I am blind with market dust and mid-day glare, and so wait, in hopes that your heart, my heart's lover, will send you to find me.

III

I AM POURED forth in living notes of joy and sorrow by your breath.

Mornings and evenings in summer and in rains, I am fashioned to music.

Should I be wholly spent in some flight of song, I shall not grieve, the tune is so dear to me.

IV

MY HEART IS a flute he has played on. If ever it fall into other hands let him fling it away.

My lover's flute is dear to him, therefore if to-day alien breath have entered it and sounded strange notes, let him break it to pieces and strew the dust with them.

V

IN LOVE THE aim is neither pain nor pleasure but love only.

While free love binds, division destroys it, for love is what unites.

Love is lit from love as fire from fire, but whence came the first flame?

In your being it leaps under the rod of pain.

Then, when the hidden fire flames forth, the in and the out are one and all barriers fall in ashes.

Let the pain glow fiercely, burst from the heart and beat back darkness, need you be afraid?

The poet says, 'Who can buy love without paying its price? When you fail to give yourself you make the whole world miserly.'

VI

EYES SEE ONLY dust and earth, but feel with the heart, and know pure joy.

The delights blossom on all sides in every form, but where is your heart's thread to make a wreath of them?

THE FUGITIVE

My master's flute sounds through all things, drawing me out of my lodgings wherever they may be, and while I listen I know that every step I take is in my master's house.

For he is the sea, he is the river that leads to the sea, and he is the landing-place.

VII

STRANGE WAYS has my guest.

He comes at times when I am unprepared, yet how can I refuse him?

I watch all night with lighted lamp; he stays away; when the light goes out and the room is bare he comes claiming his seat, and can I keep him waiting?

I laugh and make merry with friends, then suddenly I start up, for lo! he passes me by in sorrow, and I know my mirth was vain.

I have often seen a smile in his eyes when my heart ached, then I knew my sorrow was not real.

Yet I never complain when I do not understand him.

VIII

I AM THE BOAT, you are the sea, and also the boatman.

Though you never make the shore, though you let me sink, why should I be foolish and afraid?

Is reaching the shore a greater prize than losing myself with you?

If you are only the haven, as they say, then what is the sea?

Let it surge and toss me on its waves, I shall be content.

I live in you whatever and however you appear. Save me or kill me as you wish, only never leave me in other hands.

IX

MAKE WAY, O bud, make way, burst open thy heart and make way.

The opening spirit has overtaken thee, canst thou remain a bud any longer?

The Fugitive III

1

COME, SPRING, reckless lover of the earth, make the forest's heart pant for utterance!

Come in gusts of disquiet where flowers break open and jostle the new leaves!

Burst, like a rebellion of light, through the night's vigil, through the lake's dark dumbness, through the dungeon under the dust, proclaiming freedom to the shackled seeds!

Like the laughter of lightning, like the shout of a storm, break into the midst of the noisy town; free stifled word and unconscious effort, reinforce our flagging fight, and conquer death!

2

I HAVE LOOKED on this picture in many a month of March when the mustard is in bloom—this lazy line of the water and the grey of the sand beyond, the rough path along the river-bank carrying the comradeship of the field into the heart of the village.

I have tried to capture in rhyme the idle whistle of the wind, the beat of the oar-strokes from a passing boat.

I have wondered in my mind how simply it stands before me, this great world: with what fond and familiar ease it fills my heart, this encounter with the Eternal Stranger.

3

THE FERRYBOAT plies between the two villages facing each other across the narrow stream.

The water is neither wide nor deep—a mere break in the path that enhances the small adventures of daily life, like a break in the words of a song across which the tune gleefully streams.

While the towers of wealth rise high and crash to ruin, these villages talk to each other across the garrulous stream, and the ferry-boat plies between them, age after age, from seed-time to harvest.

THE FUGITIVE

4

IN THE EVENING after they have brought their cattle home, they sit on the grass before their huts to know that you are among them unseen, to repeat in their songs the name which they have fondly given you.

While kings' crowns shine and disappear like falling stars, around village huts your name rises through the still night from the simple hearts of your lovers whose names are unrecorded.

5

IN BABY'S world, the trees shake their leaves at him, murmuring verses in an ancient tongue that dates from before the age of meaning, and the moon feigns to be of his own age—the solitary baby of night.

In the world of the old, flowers dutifully blush at the make-believe of faery legends, and broken dolls confess that they are made of clay.

6

MY WORLD, when I was a child, you were a little girl-neighbour, a loving timid stranger.

Then you grew bold and talked to me across the fence, offering me toys and flowers and shells.

Next you coaxed me away from my work, you tempted me into the land of the dusk or the weedy corner of some garden in mid-day loneliness.

At length you told me stories about bygone times, with which the present ever longs to meet so as to be rescued from its prison in the moment.

7

HOW OFTEN, great Earth, have I felt my being yearn to flow over you, sharing in the happiness of each green blade that raises its signal banner in answer to the beckoning blue of the sky!

I feel as if I had belonged to you ages before I was born. That is why, in the days when the autumn light shimmers on the mellowing ears of rice, I seem to remember a past when my mind was everywhere, and even to hear voices as of playfellows echoing from the remote and deeply veiled past.

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When, in the evening, the cattle return to their folds, raising dust from the meadow paths, as the moon rises higher than the smoke ascending from the village huts, I feel sad as for some great separation that happened in the first morning of existence.

8

MY MIND still buzzed with the cares of a busy day; I sat on without noting how twilight was deepening into dark. Suddenly light stirred across the gloom and touched me as with a finger.

I lifted my head and met the gaze of the full moon widened in wonder like a child's. It held my eyes for long, and I felt as though a love-letter had been secretly dropped in at my window. And ever since my heart is breaking to write for answer something fragrant as Night's unseen flowers—great as her declaration spelt out in nameless stars.

9

THE CLOUDS thicken till the morning light seems like a bedraggled fringe to the rainy night.

A little girl stands at her window, still as a rainbow at the gate of a broken-down storm.

She is my neighbour, and has come upon the earth like some god's rebellious laughter. Her mother in anger calls her incorrigible; her father smiles and calls her mad.

She is like a runaway waterfall leaping over boulders, like the topmost bamboo twig rustling in the restless wind.

She stands at her window looking out into the sky.

Her sister comes to say, 'Mother calls you.' She shakes her head.

Her little brother with his toy boat comes and tries to pull her off to play; she snatches her hand from his. The boy persists and she gives him a slap on the back.

The first great voice was the voice of wind and water in the beginning of earth's creation.

That ancient cry of nature—her dumb call to unborn life—has reached

THE FUGITIVE

this child's heart and leads it out alone beyond the fence of our times:
so there she stands, possessed by eternity!

10

THE KINGFISHER sits still on the prow of an empty boat, while in the shallow margin of the stream a buffalo lies tranquilly blissful, its eyes half closed to savour the luxury of cool mud.

Undismayed by the barking of the village cur, the cow browses on the bank, followed by a hopping group of *saliks* hunting moths.

I sit in the tamarind grove, where the cries of dumb life congregate—the cattle's lowing, the sparrows' chatter, the shrill scream of a kite overhead, the crickets' chirp, and the splash of a fish in the water.

I peep into the primeval nursery of life, where the mother Earth thrills at the first living clutch near her breast.

11

AT THE SLEEPY village the noon was still like a sunny midnight when my holidays came to their end.

My little girl of four had followed me all the morning from room to room, watching my preparations in grave silence, till, wearied, she sat by the door-post strangely quiet, murmuring to herself, 'Father must not go!'

This was the meal hour, when sleep daily overcame her, but her mother had forgotten her and the child was too unhappy to complain.

At last, when I stretched out my arms to her to say farewell, she never moved, but sadly looking at me said, 'Father, you must not go!'

And it amused me to tears to think how this little child dared to fight the giant world of necessity with no other resource than those few words, 'Father, you must not go!'

12

TAKE YOUR holiday, my boy; there are the blue sky and the bare field, the barn and the ruined temple under the ancient tamarind.

My holiday must be taken through yours, finding light in the dance of your eyes, music in your noisy shouts.

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To you autumn brings the true holiday freedom: to me it brings the impossibility of work; for lo! you burst into my room.

Yes, my holiday is an endless freedom for love to disturb me.

13

IN THE EVENING my little daughter heard a call from her companions below the window.

She timidly went down the dark stairs holding a lamp in her hand, shielding it behind her veil.

I was sitting on my terrace in the star-lit night of March, when at a sudden cry I ran to see.

Her lamp had gone out in the dark spiral staircase. I asked, 'Child, why did you cry?'

From below she answered in distress, 'Father, I have lost myself!'

When I came back to the terrace under the star-lit night of March, I looked at the sky, and it seemed that a child was walking there treasuring many lamps behind her veils.

If their light went out, she would suddenly stop and a cry would sound from sky to sky, 'Father, I have lost myself!'

14

THE EVENING stood bewildered among street lamps, its gold tarnished by the city dust.

A woman, gaudily decked and painted, leant over the rail of her balcony, a living fire waiting for its moths.

Suddenly an eddy was formed in the road round a street-boy crushed under the wheels of a carriage, and the woman on the balcony fell to the floor screaming in agony, stricken with the grief of the great white-robed Mother who sits in the world's inner shrine.

15

I REMEMBER the scene on the barren heath—a girl sat alone on the grass before the gipsy camp, braiding her hair in the afternoon shade.

THE FUGITIVE

Her little dog jumped and barked at her busy hands, as though her employment had no importance.

In vain did she rebuke it, calling it 'a pest,' saying she was tired of its perpetual silliness.

She struck it on the nose with her reproving forefinger, which only seemed to delight it the more.

She looked menacingly grave for a few moments, to warn it of impending doom; and then, letting her hair fall, quickly snatched it up in her arms, laughed, and pressed it to her heart.

16

HE IS TALL and lean, withered to the bone with long repeated fever, like a dead tree unable to draw a single drop of sap from anywhere.

In despairing patience, his mother carries him like a child into the sun, where he sits by the roadside in the shortening shadows of each forenoon.

The world passes by—a woman to fetch water, a herd-boy with cattle to pasture, a laden cart to the distant market—and the mother hopes that some least stir of life may touch the awful torpor of her dying son.

17

IF THE RAGGED villager, trudging home from the market, could suddenly be lifted to the crest of a distant age, men would stop in their work and shout and run to him in delight.

For they would no longer whittle down the man into the peasant, but find him full of the mystery and spirit of his age.

Even his poverty and pain would grow great, released from the shallow insult of the present, and the paltry things in his basket would acquire pathetic dignity.

18

WITH THE morning he came out to walk a road shaded by a file of deodars, that coiled the hill round like importunate love.

He held the first letter from his newly wedded wife in their village home, begging him to come to her, and come soon.

The touch of an absent hand haunted him as he walked, and the air

seemed to take up the cry of the letter: 'Love, my love, my sky is brimming with tears!'

He asked himself in wonder, 'How do I deserve this?'

The sun suddenly appeared over the rim of the blue hills, and four girls from a foreign shore came with swift strides, talking loud and followed by a barking dog.

The two elder turned away to conceal their amusement at something strange in his insignificance, and the younger ones pushed each other, laughed aloud, and ran off in exuberant mirth.

He stopped and his head sank. Then he suddenly felt his letter, opened and read it again.

19

THE DAY CAME for the image from the temple to be drawn round the holy town in its chariot.

The Queen said to the King, 'Let us go and attend the festival.'

Only one man out of the whole household did not join in the pilgrimage. His work was to collect stalks of spear-grass to make brooms for the King's house.

The chief of the servants said in pity to him, 'You may come with us.'

He bowed his head, saying, 'It cannot be.'

The man dwelt by the road along which the King's followers had to pass. And when the Minister's elephant reached this spot, he called to him and said, 'Come with us and see the God ride in his chariot!'

'I dare not seek God after the King's fashion,' said the man.

'How should you ever have such luck again as to see the God in his chariot?' asked the Minister.

'When God himself comes to my door,' answered the man.

The Minister laughed loud and said, 'Fool! "When God comes to your door!" yet a King must travel to see him!'

'Who except God visits the poor?' said the man.

DAYS WERE drawing out as the winter ended, and, in the sun, my dog played in his wild way with the pet deer.

The crowd going to the market gathered by the fence, and laughed to see the love of these playmates struggle with languages so dissimilar.

The spring was in the air, and the young leaves fluttered like flames. A gleam danced in the deer's dark eyes when she started, bent her neck at the movement of her own shadow, or raised her ears to listen to some whisper in the wind.

The message comes floating with the errant breeze, with the rustle and glimmer abroad in the April sky. It sings of the first ache of youth in the world, when the first flower broke from the bud, and love went forth seeking that which it knew not, leaving all it had known.

And one afternoon, when among the *amlak* trees the shadow grew grave and sweet with the furtive caress of light, the deer set off to run like a meteor in love with death.

It grew dark, and lamps were lighted in the house; the stars came out and night was upon the fields, but the deer never came back.

My dog ran up to me whining, questioning me with his piteous eyes which seemed to say, 'I do not understand!'

But who does ever understand?

OUR LANE is tortuous, as if, ages ago, she started in quest of her goal, vacillated right and left, and remained bewildered for ever.

Above in the air, between her buildings, hangs like a ribbon a strip torn out of space: she calls it her sister of the blue town.

She sees the sun only for a few moments at mid-day, and asks herself in wise doubt, 'Is it real?'

In June rain sometimes shades her band of daylight as with pencil hatchings. The path grows slippery with mud, and umbrellas collide. Sudden jets of water from spouts overhead splash on her startled pavement. In her dismay, she takes it for the jest of an unmannerly scheme of creation.

The spring breeze, gone astray in her coil of contortions, stumbles

like a drunken vagabond against angle and corner, filling the dusty air with scraps of paper and rag. 'What fury of foolishness! Are the Gods gone mad?' she exclaims in indignation.

But the daily refuse from the houses on both sides—scales of fish mixed with ashes, vegetable peelings, rotten fruit, and dead rats—never rouse her to question, 'Why should these things be?'

She accepts every stone of her paving. But from between their chinks sometimes a blade of grass peeps up. That baffles her. How can solid facts permit such intrusion?

On a morning when at the touch of autumn light her houses wake up into beauty from their foul dreams, she whispers to herself, 'There is a limitless wonder somewhere beyond these buildings.'

But the hours pass on; the households are astir; the maid strolls back from the market, swinging her right arm and with the left clasping the basket of provisions to her side; the air grows thick with the smell and smoke of kitchens. It again becomes clear to our Lane that the real and normal consist solely of herself, her houses, and their muck-heaps.

22

THE HOUSE, lingering on after its wealth has vanished, stands by the wayside like a madman with a patched rag over his back.

Day after day scars it with spiteful scratches, and rainy months leave their fantastic signatures on its bared bricks.

In a deserted upper room one of a pair of doors has fallen from rusty hinges; and the other, widowed, hangs day and night to the fitful gusts.

One night the sound of women wailing came from that house. They mourned the death of the last son of the family, a boy of eighteen, who earned his living by playing the part of the heroine in a travelling theatre.

A few days more and the house became silent, and all the doors were locked.

Only on the north side in the upper room that desolate door would neither drop off to its rest nor be shut, but swung to and fro in the wind like a self-torturing soul.

After a time children's voices echo once more through that house. Over the balcony-rail women's clothes are hung in the sun, a bird whistles from a covered cage, and a boy plays with his kite on the terrace.

THE FUGITIVE

A tenant has come to occupy a few rooms. He earns little and has many children. The tired mother beats them and they roll on the floor and shriek.

A maid-servant of forty drudges through the day, quarrels with her mistress, threatens to, but never leaves.

Every day some small repairs are done. Paper is pasted in place of missing panes; gaps in the railings are made good with split bamboo; an empty box keeps the boltless gate shut; old stains vaguely show through new whitewash on the walls.

The magnificence of wealth had found a fitting memorial in gaunt desolation; but, lacking sufficient means, they try to hide this with dubious devices, and its dignity is outraged.

They have overlooked the deserted room on the north side. And its forlorn door still hangs in the wind, like Despair beating her breast.

23

IN THE DEPTHS of the forest the ascetic practised penance with fast-closed eyes; he intended to deserve Paradise.

But the girl who gathered twigs brought him fruits in her skirt, and water from the stream in cups made of leaves.

The days went on, and his penance grew harsher till the fruits remained untasted, the water untouched; and the girl who gathered twigs was sad.

The Lord of Paradise heard that a man had dared to aspire to be as the Gods. Time after time he had fought the Titans, who were his peers, and kept them out of his kingdom; yet he feared a man whose power was that of suffering.

But he knew the ways of mortals, and he planned a temptation to decoy this creature of dust away from his adventure.

A breath from Paradise kissed the limbs of the girl who gathered twigs, and her youth ached with a sudden rapture of beauty, and her thoughts hummed like the bees of a rifled hive.

The time came when the ascetic should leave the forest for a mountain cave, to complete the rigour of his penance.

When he opened his eyes in order to start on this journey, the girl appeared to him like a verse familiar, yet forgotten, and which an added

melody made strange. The ascetic rose from his seat and told her that it was time he left the forest.

'But why rob me of my chance to serve you?' she asked with tears in her eyes.

He sat down again, thought for long, and remained on where he was.

That night remorse kept the girl awake. She began to dread her power and hate her triumph, yet her mind tossed on the waves of turbulent delight.

In the morning she came and saluted the ascetic and asked his blessing, saying she must leave him.

He gazed on her face in silence, then said, 'Go, and may your wish be fulfilled.'

For years he sat alone till his penance was complete.

The Lord of the Immortals came down to tell him that he had won Paradise.

'I no longer need it,' said he.

The God asked him what greater reward he desired.

'I want the girl who gathers twigs.'

24

THEY SAID that Kabir, the weaver, was favoured of God, and the crowd flocked round him for medicine and miracles. But he was troubled; his low birth had hitherto endowed him with a most precious obscurity to sweeten with songs and with the presence of his God. He prayed that it might be restored.

Envious of the repute of this outcast, the priests leagued themselves with a harlot to disgrace him. Kabir came to the market to sell cloths from his loom; when the woman grasped his hand, blaming him for being faithless, and followed him to his house, saying she would not be forsaken, Kabir said to himself, 'God answers prayers in his own way.'

Soon the woman felt a shiver of fear and fell on her knees and cried, 'Save me from my sin!' To which he said, 'Open your life to God's light!'

Kabir worked at his loom and sang, and his songs washed the stains from that woman's heart, and by way of return found a home in her sweet voice.

One day the King, in a fit of caprice, sent a message to Kabir to come

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and sing before him. The weaver shook his head: but the messenger dared not leave his door till his master's errand was fulfilled.

The King and his courtiers started at the sight of Kabir when he entered the hall. For he was not alone, the woman followed him. Some smiled, some frowned, and the King's face darkened at the beggar's pride and shamelessness.

Kabir came back to his house disgraced, the woman fell at his feet crying, 'Why accept such dishonour for my sake, master? Suffer me to go back to my infamy!'

Kabir said, 'I dare not turn my God away when he comes branded with insult.'

25

Somaka and Ritvik

The shade of King Somaka, faring to Heaven in a chariot, passes other shades by the roadside, among them that of Ritvik, his former high-priest.

A VOICE

Where would you go, King?

SOMAKA

Whose voice is that? This turbid air is like suffocation to the eyes; I cannot see.

THE VOICE

Come down, King! Come down from that chariot bound for Heaven.

SOMAKA

Who are you?

THE VOICE

I am Ritvik, who in my earthly life was your preceptor and the chief priest of your house.

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SOMAKA

Master, all the tears of the world seem to have become vapour to create this realm of vagueness. What make you here?

SHADES

This hell lies hard by the road to Heaven, whence lights glimmer dimly, only to prove unapproachable. Day and night we listen to the heavenly chariot rumbling by with travellers for that region of bliss; it drives sleep from our eyes and forces them to watch in fruitless jealousy. Far below us earth's old forests rustle and her seas chant the primal hymn of creation: they sound like the wail of a memory that wanders void space in vain.

RITVIK

Come down, King!

SHADES

Stop a few moments among us. The earth's tears still cling about you, like dew on freshly culled flowers. You have brought with you the mingled odours of meadow and forest; reminiscence of children, women, and comrades; something too of the ineffable music of the seasons.

SOMAKA

Master, why are you doomed to live in this muffled stagnant world?

RITVIK

I offered up your son in the sacrificial fire: *that* sin has lodged my soul in this obscurity.

SHADES

King, tell us the story, we implore you; the recital of crime can still bring life's fire into our torpor.

SOMAKA

I was named Somaka, the King of Videha. After sacrificing at innumerable shrines weary year on year, a son was born to my house in my old age, love for whom, like a sudden untimely flood, swept consideration for everything else from my life. He hid me completely, as a lotus hides its stem. The neglected duties of a king piled up in shame before my throne.

THE FUGITIVE

One day, in my audience hall, I heard my child cry from his mother's room, and instantly rushed away, vacating my throne.

RITVIK

Just then, it chanced, I entered the hall to give him my daily benediction; in blind haste he brushed me aside and enkindled my anger. When later he came back, shame-faced, I asked him: 'King, what desperate alarm could draw you at the busiest hour of the day to the women's apartments, so as to desert your dignity and duty—ambassadors come from friendly courts, the aggrieved who ask for justice, your ministers waiting to discuss matters of grave import? and even lead you to slight a Brahmin's blessing?'

SOMAKA

At first my heart flamed with anger; the next moment I trampled it down like the raised head of a snake and meekly replied: 'Having only one child, I have lost my peace of mind. Forgive me this once, and I promise that in future the father's infatuation shall never usurp the King.'

RITVIK

But my heart was bitter with resentment, and I said, 'If you must be delivered from the curse of having only one child, I can show you the way. But so hard is it that I feel certain you will fail to follow it.' This galled the King's pride and he stood up and exclaimed, 'I swear, by all that is sacred, as a Kshatriya and a King, I will not shrink, but perform whatever you may ask, however hard.' 'Then listen,' said I. 'Light a sacrificial fire, offer up your son: the smoke that rises will bring you progeny, as the clouds bring rain.' The King bowed his head upon his breast and remained silent: the courtiers shouted their horror, the Brahmins clapped their hands over their ears, crying, 'Sin it is both to utter and listen to such words.' After some moments of bewildered dismay the King calmly said, 'I will abide by my promise.' The day came, the fire was lit, the town was emptied of its people, the child was called for; but the attendants refused to obey, the soldiers rebelliously went off duty, throwing down their arms. Then I, who in my wisdom had soared far above all weakness of heart and to whom emotions were illusory, went myself to the apartment where, with their arms, women fenced the child like a flower surrounded by the menacing branches of a tree. He saw me and stretched out eager hands and struggled to come to me, for he longed to be free from the love that

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imprisoned him. Crying, 'I am come to give you true deliverance,' I snatched him by force from his fainting mother and his nurses wailing in despair. With quivering tongues the fire licked the sky and the King stood beside it, still and silent, like a tree struck dead by lightning. Fascinated by the godlike splendour of the blaze, the child babbled in glee and danced in my arms, impatient to seek an unknown nurse in the free glory of those flames.

SOMAKA

Stop, no more, I pray!

SHADES

Ritvik, your presence is a disgrace to hell itself!

THE CHARIOTEER

This is no place for you, King! nor have you deserved to be forced to listen to this recital of a deed which makes hell shudder in pity.

SOMAKA

Drive off in your chariot!—Brahmin, my place is by you in this hell. The Gods may forget my sin, but can I forget the last look of agonised surprise on my child's face when, for one terrible moment, he realised that his own father had betrayed his trust?

Enter Dharma, the Judge of Departed Spirits.

DHARMA

King, Heaven waits for you.

SOMAKA

No, not for me. I killed my own child.

DHARMA

Your sin has been swept away in the fury of pain it caused you.

RITVIK

No, King, you must never go to Heaven alone, and thus create a second hell for me, to burn both with fire and with hatred of you! Stay here!

THE FUGITIVE

SOMAKA

I will stay.

SHADES

And crown the despair and inglorious suffering of hell with the triumph of a soul!

26

THE MAN had no useful work, only vagaries of various kinds.

Therefore it surprised him to find himself in Paradise after a life spent perfecting trifles.

Now the guide had taken him by mistake to the wrong Paradise—one meant only for good, busy souls.

In this Paradise, our man saunters along the road only to obstruct the rush of business.

He stands aside from the path and is warned that he tramples on sown seed. Pushed, he starts up; hustled, he moves on.

A very busy girl comes to fetch water from the well. Her feet run on the pavement like rapid fingers over harp-strings. Hastily she ties a negligent knot with her hair, and loose locks on her forehead pry into the dark of her eyes.

The man says to her, 'Would you lend me your pitcher?'

'My pitcher?' she asks, 'to draw water?'

'No, to paint patterns on.'

'I have no time to waste,' the girl retorts in contempt.

Now a busy soul has no chance against one who is supremely idle.

Every day she meets him at the well, and every day he repeats the same request, till at last she yields.

Our man paints the pitcher with curious colours in a mysterious maze of lines.

The girl takes it up, turns it round and asks, 'What does it mean?'

'It has no meaning,' he answers.

The girl carries the pitcher home. She holds it up in different lights and tries to con its mystery.

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At night she leaves her bed, lights a lamp, and gazes at it from all points of view.

This is the first time she has met with something without meaning.

On the next day the man is again near the well.

The girl asks, 'What do you want?'

'To do more work for you.'

'What work?' she enquires.

'Allow me to weave coloured strands into a ribbon to bind your hair.'

'Is there any need?' she asks.

'None whatever,' he allows.

The ribbon is made, and thenceforward she spends a great deal of time over her hair.

The even stretch of well-employed time in that Paradise begins to show irregular rents.

The elders are troubled; they meet in council.

The guide confesses his blunder, saying that he has brought the wrong man to the wrong place.

The wrong man is called. His turban, flaming with colour, shows plainly how great that blunder has been.

The chief of the elders says, 'You must go back to the earth.'

The man heaves a sigh of relief: 'I am ready.'

The girl with the ribbon round her hair chimes in: 'I also!'

For the first time the chief of the elders is faced with a situation which has no sense in it.

27

It is said that in the forest, near the meeting of river and lake, certain fairies live in disguise who are only recognised as fairies after they have flown away.

A Prince went to this forest, and when he came where river met lake he saw a village girl sitting on the bank ruffling the water to make the lilies dance.

He asked her in a whisper, 'Tell me, what fairy art thou?'

The girl laughed at the question and the hillsides echoed her mirth.

The Prince thought she was the laughing fairy of the waterfall.

THE FUGITIVE

News reached the King that the Prince had married a fairy: he sent horses and men and brought them to his house.

The Queen saw the bride and turned her face away in disgust, the Prince's sister flushed red with annoyance, and the maids asked if that was how fairies dressed.

The Prince whispered, 'Hush! my fairy has come to our house in disguise.'

On the day of the yearly festival the Queen said to her son, 'Ask your bride not to shame us before our kinsfolk who are coming to see the fairy.'

And the Prince said to his bride, 'For my love's sake show thy true self to my people.'

Long she sat silent, then nodded her promise while tears ran down her cheeks.

The full moon shone, the Prince, dressed in a wedding robe, entered his bride's room.

No one was there, nothing but a streak of moonlight from the window aslant the bed.

The kinsfolk crowded in with the King and the Queen, the Prince's sister stood by the door.

All asked, 'Where is the fairy bride?'

The Prince answered, 'She has vanished for ever to make herself known to you.'

28

Karna and Kunti

The Pandava Queen Kunti before marriage had a son, Karna, who, in manhood, became the commander of the Kaurava host. To hide her shame she abandoned him at birth, and a charoteer, Adhiratha, brought him up as his son.

KARNA

I am Karna, the son of the charioteer, Adhiratha, and I sit here by the bank of holy Ganges to worship the setting sun. Tell me who you are.

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KUNTI

I am the woman who first made you acquainted with that light you are worshipping.

KARNA

I do not understand: but your eyes melt my heart as the kiss of the morning sun melts the snow on a mountain-top, and your voice rouses a blind sadness within me of which the cause may well lie beyond the reach of my earliest memory. Tell me, strange woman, what mystery binds my birth to you?

KUNTI

Patience, my son. I will answer when the lids of darkness come down over the prying eyes of day. In the meanwhile, know that I am Kunti.

KARNA

Kunti! The mother of Arjuna?

KUNTI

Yes, indeed, the mother of Arjuna, your antagonist. But do not, therefore, hate me. I still remember the day of the trial of arms in Hastina when you, an unknown boy, boldly stepped into the arena, like the first ray of dawn among the stars of night. Ah! who was that unhappy woman whose eyes kissed your bare slim body through tears that blessed you, where she sat among the women of the royal household behind the arras? Why, the mother of Arjuna! Then the Brahmin, master of arms, stepped forth and said, 'No youth of mean birth may challenge Arjuna to a trial of strength.' You stood speechless, like a thunder-cloud at sunset flashing with an agony of suppressed light. But who was the woman whose heart caught fire from your shame and anger, and flared up in silence? The mother of Arjuna! Praised be Duryodhana, who perceived your worth, and then and there crowned you King of Anga, thus winning the Kauravas a champion. Overwhelmed at this good fortune, Adhiratha, the charioteer, broke through the crowd; you instantly rushed to him and laid your crown at his feet amid the jeering laughter of the Pandavas and their friends. But there was one woman of the Pandava house whose heart glowed with joy at the heroic pride of such humility;—even the mother of Arjuna!

THE FUGITIVE

KARNA

But what brings you here alone, Mother of kings?

KUNTI

I have a boon to crave.

KARNA

Command me, and whatever manhood and my honour as a Kshatriya permit shall be offered at your feet.

KUNTI

I have come to take you.

KARNA

Where?

KUNTI

To my breast thirsting for your love, my son.

KARNA

Fortunate mother of five brave kings, where can you find place for me, a small chieftain of lowly descent?

KUNTI

Your place is before all my other sons.

KARNA

But what right have I to take it?

KUNTI

Your own God-given right to your mother's love.

KARNA

The gloom of evening spreads over the earth, silence rests on the water, and your voice leads me back to some primal world of infancy lost in twilight consciousness. However, whether this be dream, or fragment of forgotten reality, come near and place your right hand on my forehead. Rumour runs that I was deserted by my mother. Many a night she has come to me

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in my slumber, but when I cried: 'Open your veil, show me your face!' her figure always vanished. Has this same dream come this evening while I wake? See, yonder the lamps are lighted in your son's tents across the river; and on this side behold the tent-domes of my Kauravas, like the suspended waves of a spell-arrested storm at sea. Before the din of tomorrow's battle, in the awful hush of this field where it must be fought, why should the voice of the mother of my opponent, Arjuna, bring me a message of forgotten motherhood? and why should my name take such music from her tongue as to draw my heart out to him and his brothers?

KUNTI

Then delay not, my son, come with me!

KARNA

Yes, I will come and never ask question, never doubt. My soul responds to your call; and the struggle for victory and fame and the rage of hatred have suddenly become untrue to me, as the delirious dream of a night in the serenity of the dawn. Tell me whither you mean to lead?

KUNTI

To the other bank of the river, where those lamps burn across the ghastly pallor of the sands.

KARNA

Am I there to find my lost mother for ever?

KUNTI

O my son!

KARNA

Then why did you banish me—a castaway uprooted from my ancestral soil, adrift in a homeless current of indignity? Why set a bottomless chasm between Arjuna and myself, turning the natural attachment of kinship to the dread attraction of hate? You remain speechless. Your shame permeates the vast darkness and sends invisible shivers through my limbs. Leave my question unanswered! Never explain to me what made you rob your son of his mother's love! Only tell me why you have come to-day to call me back to the ruins of a heaven wrecked by your own hands?

THE FUGITIVE

KUNTI

I am dogged by a curse more deadly than your reproaches: for, though surrounded by five sons, my heart shrivels like that of a woman deprived of her children. Through the great rent that yawned for my deserted first-born, all my life's pleasures have run to waste. On that accursed day when I belied my motherhood you could not utter a word; to-day your recreant mother implores you for generous words. Let your forgiveness burn her heart like fire and consume its sin.

KARNA

Mother, accept my tears!

KUNTI

I did not come with the hope of winning you back to my arms, but with that of restoring your rights to you. Come and receive, as a king's son, your due among your brothers.

KARNA

I am more truly the son of a charioteer, and do not covet the glory of greater parentage.

KUNTI

Be that as it may, come and win back the kingdom, which is yours by right!

KARNA

Must you, who once refused me a mother's love, tempt me with a kingdom? The quick bond of kindred which you severed at its root is dead, and can never grow again. Shame were mine should I hasten to call the mother of kings mother, and abandon *my* mother in the charioteer's house!

KUNTI

You are great, my son! How God's punishment invisibly grows from a tiny seed to a giant life! The helpless babe disowned by his mother comes back a man through the dark maze of events to smite his brothers!

KARNA

Mother, have no fear! I know for certain that victory awaits the Pandavas.

Peaceful and still though this night be, my heart is full of the music of a hopeless venture and baffled end. Ask me not to leave those who are doomed to defeat. Let the Pandavas win the throne, since they must: I remain with the desperate and forlorn. On the night of my birth you left me naked and unnamed to disgrace: leave me once again without pity to the calm expectation of defeat and death!

29

WHEN LIKE A flaming scimitar the hill stream has been sheathed in gloom by the evening, suddenly a flock of birds passes overhead, their loud-laughing wings hurling their flight like an arrow among stars.

It startles a passion for speed in the heart of all motionless things; the hills seem to feel in their bosom the anguish of storm-clouds, and trees long to break their rooted shackles.

For me the flight of these birds has rent a veil of stillness, and reveals an immense flutter in this deep silence.

I see these hills and forests fly across time to the unknown, and darkness thrill into fire as the stars wing by.

I feel in my own being the rush of the sea-crossing bird, cleaving a way beyond the limits of life and death, while the migrant world cries with a myriad voices, 'Not here, but somewhere else, in the bosom of the Faraway.'

30

THE CROWD listens in wonder to Kashi, the young singer, whose voice, like a sword in feats of skill, dances amidst hopeless tangles, cuts them to pieces, and exults.

Among the hearers sits old Rajah Pratap in weary endurance. For his own life had been nourished and encircled by Barajlal's songs, like a happy land which a river laces with beauty. His rainy evenings and the still hours of autumn days spoke to his heart through Barajlal's voice, and his festive nights trimmed their lamps and tinkled their bells to those songs.

When Kashi stopped for rest, Pratap smilingly winked at Barajlal and spoke

to him in a whisper, 'Master, now let us hear music and not this new-fangled singing, which mimics frisky kittens hunting paralysed mice.' The old singer with his spotlessly white turban made a deep bow to the assembly and took his seat. His thin fingers struck the strings of his instrument, his eyes closed, and in timid hesitation his song began. The hall was large, his voice feeble, and Pratap shouted 'Bravo!' with ostentation, but whispered in his ear, 'Just a little louder, friend!'

The crowd was restless; some yawned, some dozed, some complained of the heat. The air of the hall hummed with many-toned inattention, and the song, like a frail boat, tossed upon it in vain till it sank under the hubbub.

Suddenly the old man, stricken at heart, forgot a passage, and his voice groped in agony, like a blind man at a fair for his lost leader. He tried to fill the gap with any strain that came. But the gap still yawned: and the tortured notes refused to serve the need, suddenly changed their tune, and broke into a sob. The master laid his head on his instrument, and in place of his forgotten music, there broke from him the first cry of life that a child brings into the world.

Pratap touched him gently on his shoulder, and said, 'Come away, our meeting is elsewhere. I know, my friend, that truth is widowed without love, and beauty dwells not with the many, nor in the moment.'

31

IN THE YOUTH of the world, Himalaya, you sprang from the rent breast of the earth, and hurled your burning challenges to the sun, hill after hill. Then came the mellow time when you said to yourself, 'No more, no further!' and your fiery heart, that raged for the freedom of clouds, found its limits, and stood still to salute the limitless. After this check on your passion, beauty was free to play upon your breast, and trust surrounded you with the joy of flowers and birds.

You sit in your solitude like a great reader, on whose lap lies open some ancient book with its countless pages of stone. What story is written there,

I wonder?—is it the eternal wedding of the divine ascetic, Shiva, with Bhavani, the divine love?—the drama of the Terrible wooing the power of the Frail?

32

I FEEL THAT my heart will leave its own colour in all your scenes, O Earth, when I bid you farewell. Some notes of mine will be added to your seasons' melody, and my thoughts will breathe unrecognised through the cycle of shadows and sunshine.

In far-distant days summer will come to the lovers' garden, but they will not know that their flowers have borrowed an added beauty from my songs, nor that their love for this world has been deepened by mine.

33

MY EYES FEEL the deep peace of this sky, and there stirs through me what a tree feels when it holds out its leaves like cups to be filled with sunshine.

A thought rises in my mind, like the warm breath from grass in the sun; it mingles with the gurgle of lapping water and the sigh of weary wind in village lanes,—the thought that I have lived along with the whole life of this world and have given to it my own love and sorrows.

34

I ASK NO reward for the songs I sang you. I shall be content if they live through the night, until Dawn, like a shepherd-maiden, calls away the stars, in alarm at the sun.

But there were moments when you sang your songs to me, and as my pride knows, my Poet, you will ever remember that I listened and lost my heart.

35

IN THE morning, when the dew glistened upon the grass, you came and gave a push to my swing; but, sweeping from smiles to tears, I did not know you.

Then came April's noon of gorgeous light, and I think you beckoned me to follow you.

But when I sought your face, there passed between us the procession of flowers, and men and women flinging their songs to the south wind.

Daily I passed you unheeded on the road.

But on some days full of the faint smell of oleanders, when the wind was wilful among complaining palm leaves, I would stand before you wondering if you ever had been a stranger to me.

36

THE DAY GREW dim. The early evening star faltered near the edge of a grey lonely sky.

I looked back and felt that the road lying behind me was infinitely removed; traced through my life, it had only served for a single journey and was never to be re-travelled.

The long story of my coming hither lies there dumb, in one meandering line of dust stretching from the morning hilltop to the brink of bottomless night.

I sit alone, and wonder if this road is like an instrument waiting to give up the day's lost voices in music when touched by divine fingers at nightfall.

37

GIVE ME THE supreme courage of love, this is my prayer—the courage to speak, to do, to suffer at thy will, to leave all things or be left alone. Strengthen me on errands of danger, honour me with pain, and help me climb to that difficult mood which sacrifices daily to thee.

Give me the supreme confidence of love, this is my prayer—the confidence that belongs to life in death, to victory in defeat, to the power hidden in frailest beauty, to that dignity in pain which accepts hurt but disdains to return it.

Translations: From Hindi Songs of Jnanadas

1

WHERE WERE your songs, my bird, when you spent your nights in the nest?
Was not all your pleasure stored therein?
What makes you lose your heart to the sky—the sky that is boundless?

Answer

While I rested within bounds I was content. But when I soared into vastness
I found I could sing.

2

MESSENGER, MORNING brought you, habited in gold.
After sunset your song wore a tune of ascetic grey, and then came
night.
Your message was written in bright letters across black.
Why is such splendour about you to lure the heart of one who is
nothing?

Answer

Great is the festival hall where you are to be the only guest.
Therefore the letter to you is written from sky to sky, and I, the proud
servant, bring the invitation with all ceremony.

3

I HAD travelled all day and was tired, then I bowed my head towards thy
kingly court still far away.
The night deepened, a longing burned in my heart; whatever the
words I sang, pain cried through them, for even my songs thirsted. O my
Lover, my Beloved, my best in all the world!

When time seemed lost in darkness thy hand dropped its sceptre to take
up the lute and strike the uttermost chords; and my heart sang out, O
my Lover, my Beloved, my best in all the world!

THE FUGITIVE

Ah, who is this whose arms enfold me?

Whatever I have to leave let me leave, and whatever I have to bear let me bear. Only let me walk with thee, O my Lover, my Beloved, my best in all the world!

Descend at whiles from thine audience hall, come down amid joys and sorrows; hide in all forms and delights, in love and in my heart; there sing thy songs, O my Lover, my Beloved, my best in all the world!

*Collected Poems and Plays of
Rabindranath Tagore*

This Evil Day

AGE AFTER AGE, hast Thou, O Lord, sent Thy messengers into this pitiless world, who have left their word: 'Forgive all. Love all. Cleanse your hearts from the blood-red stains of hatred.'

Adorable are they, ever to be remembered; yet from the outer door have I turned them away to-day—this evil day—with unmeaning salutation.

Have I not seen secret malignance strike down the helpless under the cover of hypocritical night?

Have I not heard the silenced voice of Justice weeping in solitude at might's defiant outrages?

Have I not seen in what agony reckless youth, running mad, has vainly shattered its life against insensitive rocks?

Choked is my voice, mute are my songs to-day, and darkly my world lies imprisoned in a dismal dream; and I ask Thee, O Lord, in tears: 'Hast Thou Thyself forgiven, hast even Thou loved those who are poisoning Thy air, and blotting out Thy light?'

Boro-Budur¹

THE SUN shone on a far-away morning, while the forest murmured its hymn of praise to light; and the hills, veiled in vapour, dimly glimmered like earth's dream in purple.

The King sat alone in the coconut grove, his eyes drowned in a vision, his heart exultant with the rapturous hope of spreading the chant of adoration along the unending path of time:

'Let Buddha be my refuge.'

His words found utterance in a deathless speech of delight, in an ecstasy of forms.

The island took it upon her heart; her hill raised it to the sky.

Age after age, the morning sun daily illumined its great meaning.

While the harvest was sown and reaped in the near-by fields by the stream, and life, with its chequered light, made pictured shadows on its epochs of changing screen, the prayer, once uttered in the quiet green of an

¹ Boro-budur is the great Buddhist *stupa* built on a hill-top in the island of Java.

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ancient morning, ever rose in the midst of the hide-and-seek of tumultuous time:

'Let Buddha be my refuge.'

The King, at the end of his days, is merged in the shadow of a nameless night among the unremembered, leaving his salutation in an imperishable rhythm of stone which ever cries:

'Let Buddha be my refuge.'

Generations of pilgrims came on the quest of an immortal voice for their worship; and this sculptured hymn, in a grand symphony of gestures, took up their lowly names and uttered for them:

'Let Buddha be my refuge.'

The spirit of those words has been muffled in mist in this mocking age of unbelief, and the curious crowds gather here to gloat in the gluttony of an irreverent sight.

Man to-day has no peace,—his heart arid with pride. He clamours for an ever-increasing speed in a fury of chase for objects that ceaselessly run, but never reach a meaning.

And now is the time when he must come groping at last to the sacred silence, which stands still in the midst of surging centuries of noise, till he feels assured that in an immeasurable love dwells the final meaning of Freedom, whose prayer is:

'Let Buddha be my refuge.'

Fulfilment

THE OVERFLOWING bounty of thy grace comes down from the heaven to seek my soul only, wherein it can contain itself.

The light that is rained from the sun and stars is fulfilled when it reaches my life.

The colour is like sleep that clings to the flower which waits for the touch of my mind to be awakened.

The love that tunes the strings of existence breaks out in music when my heart is won.

COLLECTED POEMS AND PLAYS

The Son of Man

FROM HIS eternal seat Christ comes down to this earth, where, ages ago, in the bitter cup of death He poured his deathless life for those who came to the call and those who remained away.

He looks about Him, and sees the weapons of evil that wounded His own age.

The arrogant spikes and spears, the slim, sly knives, the scimitar in diplomatic sheath, crooked and cruel, are hissing and raining sparks as they are sharpened on monster wheels.

But the most fearful of them all, at the hands of the slaughterers, are those on which has been engraved His own name, that are fashioned from the texts of His own words fused in the fire of hatred and hammered by hypocritical greed.

He presses His hand upon His heart; He feels that the age-long moment of His death has not yet ended, that new nails, turned out in countless numbers by those who are learned in cunning craftsmanship, pierce Him in every joint.

They had hurt Him once, standing at the shadow of their temple; they are born anew in crowds.

From before their sacred altar they shout to the soldiers, 'Strike!'

And the Son of Man in agony cries, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'

Raidas, the Sweeper

RAIDAS, THE sweeper, sat still, lost in the solitude of his soul, and some songs born of his silent vision found their way to the Rani's heart,—the Rani Jhali of Chitore.

Tears flowed from her eyes, her thoughts wandered away from her daily duties, till she met Raidas who guided her to God's presence.

The old Brahmin priest of the King's house rebuked her for her desecration of sacred law by offering homage as a disciple to an outcaste.

'Brahmin,' the Rani answered, 'while you were busy tying your purse-strings of custom ever tighter, love's gold slipped unnoticed to the earth, and my Master in his divine humility has picked it up from the dust.'

'Revel in your pride of the unmeaning knots without number, harden your miserly heart, but I, a beggar woman, am glad to receive love's wealth, the gift of the lowly dust, from my Master, the sweeper.'

Freedom

FREEDOM FROM fear is the freedom I claim for you, my Motherland!—fear, the phantom demon, shaped by your own distorted dreams;

Freedom from the burden of ages, bending your head, breaking your back, blinding your eyes to the beckoning call of the future;

Freedom from shackles of slumber wherewith you fasten yourself to night's stillness, mistrusting the star that speaks of truth's adventurous path;

Freedom from the anarchy of destiny, whose sails are weakly yielded to blind uncertain winds, and the helm to a hand ever rigid and cold as Death;

Freedom from the insult of dwelling in a puppet's world, where movements are started through brainless wires, repeated through mindless habits; where figures wait with patient obedience for a master of show to be stirred into a moment's mimicry of life.

The New Year

LIKE FRUIT, shaken free by an impatient wind
from the veils of its mother flower,
thou comest, New Year, whirling in a frantic dance
amid the stampede of the wind-lashed clouds
and infuriate showers,
while trampled by thy turbulence
are scattered away the faded and the frail
in an eddying agony of death.

Thou art no dreamer afloat on a languorous breeze,
lingering among the hesitant whisper and hum
of an uncertain season.

Thine is a majestic march, O terrible Stranger,
thundering forth an ominous incantation,
driving the days on to the perils of a pathless dark,
where thou carriest a dumb signal in thy banner,
a decree of destiny undeciphered.

COLLECTED POEMS AND PLAYS

Krishnakali

I CALL HER MY Krishna flower
 though they call her dark in the village.
I remember a cloud-laden day
 and a glance from her eyes,
her veil trailing down at her feet
 her braided hair loose on her back.
Ah, you call her dark; let that be,
 her black gazelle eyes I have seen.

Her cows were lowing in the meadow,
 when the fading light grew grey.
With hurried steps she came out
 from her hut near the bamboo grove.
She raised her quick eyes to the sky,
 where the clouds were heavy with rain.
Ah, you call her dark! let that be,
 her black gazelle eyes I have seen.

The East wind in fitful gusts
 ruffled the young shoots of rice.
I stood at the boundary hedge
 with none else in the lonely land.
If she espied me in secret or not
 She only knows and know I.
Ah, you call her dark! let that be,
 her black gazelle eyes I have seen.

She is the surprise of cloud
 in the burning heart of May,
a tender shadow on the forest
 in the stillness of sunset hour,
a mystery of dumb delight
 in the rain-loud night of June.
Ah, you call her dark! let that be,
 her black gazelle eyes I have seen.

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I call her my Krishna flower,
let all others say what they like.
In the rice-field of Maina village
I felt the first glance of her eyes.
She had not a veil on her face,
not a moment of leisure for shyness.
Ah, you call her dark! let that be,
her black gazelle eyes I have seen.

W.W. Pearson

THY NATURE IS to forget thyself;
but we remember thee,
Thou shinest in self-concealment
revealed by our love.

Thou lendest light from thine own soul
to those that are obscure.
Thou seekest neither love nor fame;
Love discovers thee.

Santiniketan Song

SHE IS OUR own, the darling of our hearts, Santiniketan.
Our dreams are rocked in her arms.
Her face is a fresh wonder of love every time we see her,
for she is our own, the darling of our hearts.
In the shadows of her trees we meet
in the freedom of her open sky.
Her mornings come and her evenings
bringing down heaven's kisses,
making us feel anew that she is our own, the darling of our hearts.

The stillness of her shades is stirred by the woodland whisper;
her *amlaki* groves are aquiver with the rapture of leaves.
She dwells in us and around us, however far we may wander.
She weaves our hearts in a song, making us one in music,
tuning our strings of love with her own fingers;
and we ever remember that she is our own, the darling of our hearts.

Poems

Introductory

HERE I SEND you my poems
densely packed in this writing book
like a cage crowded with birds.
The blue space, the infinity around constellations,
through which flocked my verses,
is left outside.
Stars, torn from the heart of night,
and tightly knit into a chain
may fetch a high price
from some jeweller in the suburb of paradise,
but the gods would miss from it the ethereal value
of the divinely undefined.
Imagine a song suddenly flashing up like a flying fish,
from the silent depth of time!
Would you care to catch it in your net
and exhibit it in your glass vessel
among a swarm of captives?

In the expansive epoch of lordly leisure,
the poet read his poems day by day
before his bounteous sovereign,
when the spirit of the printing press was not there
to smear with black dumbness
the background of a resonant leisure,
alive with the natural accompaniment of the irrelevant;
when the stanzas were not ranged into perfect packets of alphabets,
to be silently swallowed.
Alas, the poems which were for the listening ears
are tied today as chained lines of slaves
before their masters of critical eyes,
and banished into the greyness of tuneless papers,
and those that are kissed by eternity
have lost their way in the publishers' market.

For it is a desperate age of hurry and hustle
and the lyric muse has to take her journey
to her tryst of hearts

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

on trams and buses.

I sigh and wish that I had lived in the golden age of Kalidasa,
that you were,—but what is the use of wild and idle wishing?

I am hopelessly born in the age of the busy printing press,—a belated
Kalidasa,
and you, my love, are utterly modern.

Listlessly you turn the pages of my poems
reclining in your easy chair,
and you never have the chance to listen
with half-shut eyes to the murmur of metre
and at the end to crown your poet with a rose-wreath.
The only payment you make
is the payment of a few silver coins
to the keeper of the bookstall
in the College Square.

1

COME FRIEND, flinch not, step down upon the hard earth.
Do not gather dreams in the dusk.
Storms are brewing in the sky, lightning flashes are striking at our sleep.
Come down to the common life.
The web of illusion is torn, take shelter within walls of rough stones.

2

THE NEWS OF my love is abroad among the spring flowers.
It brings to my mind the old songs.
My heart of a sudden has put on green leaves of desire.
My love came not but her touch is on my hair, and her voice comes across
the fragrant fields in murmurs of April.
Her gaze is here in the sky, but where are her eyes?
Her kisses are in the air, but where are her lips?

3

ALL FRUITLESS is the cry,
All vain this burning fire of desire.

POEMS

The sun goes down to his rest,
There is gloom in the forest and glamour in the sky.
With downcast look and lingering steps
The evening star comes in the wake of departing day
And the breath of the twilight is deep with the fulness of a farewell feeling.

I clasp both thine hands in mine,
and keep thine eyes prisoner with my hungry eyes;
Seeing and crying, Where art thou,
Where, O, where!
Where is the immortal flame hidden in the depth of thee!

As in the solitary star of the dark evening sky
The light of heaven, with its immense mystery, is quivering,
In thine eyes, in the depth of their darkness
There shines a soul-beam tremulous with a wide mystery.

Speechless I gaze upon it -
And I plunge with all my heart
Into the deep of a fathomless longing;
I lose myself.

4

IF THERE IS nothing but pain in loving
then why is this love?
What folly is this to claim her heart
because you have offered her your own!
With the desire burning in your blood
and madness glowing in your eyes
why is this circling of a desert?
He hankers for nothing in the world
who is in possession of himself;
the sweet air of the spring is for him,
the flowers, the bird songs;
but love comes like a devouring shadow
effacing the whole world,

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eclipsing life and youth.
Then why seek this mist that darkens existence?

5

DELUSIONS I did cherish
but now I am rid of them.
Tracing the track of false hopes
I trod upon thorns
to know that they are not flowers.

I shall never trifle with love,
never play with heart.
I shall find my refuge in you
on the shore of the troubled sea.

6

I HAVE EVER loved thee in a hundred forms and times,
Age after age, in birth following birth.
The chain of songs that my fond heart did weave
Thou graciously didst take around thy neck,
Age after age, in birth following birth.

When I listen to the tales of the primitive past,
The love-pangs of the far distant times,
The meetings and partings of the ancient ages,
I see thy form gathering light
Through the dark dimness of Eternity
And appearing as a star ever fixed in the memory of the All.

We two have come floating by the twin currents of love
That well up from the inmost heart of the Beginningless.
We two have played in the lives of myriad lovers
In tearful solitude of sorrow,
In tremulous shyness of sweet union,
In old old love ever renewing its life.
The on-rolling flood of the love eternal
Hath at last found its perfect final course.

P O E M S

All the joys and sorrows and longings of heart,
All the memories of the moments of ecstasy,
All the love-lyrics of poets of all climes and times
Have come from the everywhere
And gathered in one single love at thy feet.

7

STRUCK WITH the curse in mid-wave of your tumultuous passion, your life
stilled into a stone, clean, cool and impassive.
You took your sacred bath of dust, plunging deep into the primitive peace
of the earth.
You lay down in the dumb immense where faded days drop, like dead
flowers with seeds, to sprout again into new dawns.
You felt the thrill of the sun's kiss with the roots of grass and trees that
are like infant's fingers clasping at mother's breast.

In the night, when the tired children of dust came back to the dust, their
rhythmic breath touched you with the large and placid motherliness
of the earth.
Wild weeds twined round you their bonds of flowering intimacy.
You were lapped by the sea of life whose ripples are the leaves' flutter,
bees' flight, grasshoppers' dance and tremor of moths' wings.
For ages you kept your ear to the ground, counting the footsteps of the
unseen comer, at whose touch silence flames into music.

Woman, the sin has stripped you naked, the curse has washed you pure,
you have risen into a perfect life.
The dew of that unfathomed night trembles on your eyelids, the mosses
of ever-green years cling to your hair.
You have the wonder of new birth and the wonder of old time in your
awakening.
You are young as the new-born flowers and old as the hills.

8

COME FRIEND, who can free me from bonds of toil,
for I lag behind while the pilgrims rush to follow their vision.

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Come like a sudden flood that runs with its offerings to the sea,
Sweep me away from the load that drags me down.
Come from among the crowd,
you, to whom I fully belong,
who can call me by my own true name
and smile and be known to me for ever.

9

BONDS? INDEED they are bonds, this love and this hope in our hearts.
They are as mother's arms pressing the child to the warmth of her bosom.
Thirst? Yes, it is the thirst which leads life to each source of its joy in the
breasts of the eternal mother.
Who would take from the child this thirst of his growing life and break
through the bonds of the mother's encircling arms?

10

I THOUGHT I had something to say to her when our eyes met in the road.
But she passed away, and it rocks day and night
like an idle boat on every wave of the hours—
the thing that I had to say to her.

It seems to sail in the autumn clouds in an endless quest
and to bloom into evening flowers
seeking its lost words in the sunset.

It twinkles like fireflies in my heart to find its own meaning
in the dusk of despair—
the thing that I had to say to her.

11

LORD OF MY being, has your wish been fulfilled in me?
Days have passed without service and nights without love.

P O E M S

Flowers have dropped on to the dust and have not been gathered for your acceptance.
 The harp strings strung with your own hands have slackened and lost their notes.
 I slept in the shadow of your garden and forgot to water your plants.
 Is the time over now, my lover? Have we come to the end of this play?
 Then let the bell ring of departure; let the morning come for the freshening of love.
 Let the knot of a new life be tied for us in a new bridal bond.

12

AT YOUTH'S coronation, Kalidasa,
 You took your seat, your beloved by your side,
 in Love's primal paradise.
 Earth spread its emerald-green carpet beneath your feet,
 the sky held over your heads
 its canopy gold-embroidered;
 the seasons danced round you
 carrying their wine cups of varied allurements,
 the whole universe yielded itself to your loneliness of delight,
 leaving no trace of human sorrows and sufferings
 in the immense solitude of your bridal chamber.
 Suddenly God's curse descended from on high
 hurling its thunderbolt of separation
 upon the boundless detachment of youth's egotism.
 The seasons' ministry in a moment was ended
 When the veil was wrenched from love's isolation,
 and on the tear-misted sky appeared the pageantry
 of the rainy world of June
 across which journeyed the sad notes of your bereaved heart
 towards a distant dream.

13

LITTLE SONGS and little things come to my mind this morning.
 I seem to be floating on a stream in a boat, passing by the world on both banks.

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Every little scene gives a sigh and says, 'I go.'
World's pleasure and pain, like brother and sister, lift their pathetic eyes
upon my face from afar.
Homely love peeps from her cottage corner to give me her passing glance.
With eager eyes I gaze from my heart's window on to the heart of the
world.
And feel that with all its good and bad it is lovable.

14

THOU OCEAN of things, they say, in thy dark depths there are pearls and
gems without end.
Many a diver learned in the sea is seeking for them.
But I care not to join in their search.

The light that flashes on your surface, the mystery that heaves on your
bosom, the music that maddens your waves, and the dance that trips
on your foam, are enough for me.

If ever I am weary of them, I will plunge into your unfathomed bottom
where there is death, or the treasure.

15

THOU SHALT dwell in silence in my heart like the full moon in the summer
night.
Thy sad eyes shall watch over me in my wanderings.
The shadow of thy veil shall rest upon my heart.
Thy breath like the full moon in the summer night shall hover about my
dreams, making them fragrant.

16

O MAN DIVINE, sanctify our efforts
with the light of thy sacred touch.
Dwell in our hearts,
hold before us the image of thy greatness.
Forgive our transgression,
teach us to forgive.

P O E M S

Guide us into serene fortitude
through all joys and sorrows,
inspire us with love
overcoming pride of self,
and let our devotion for thee
banish all enmity.

17

CEASELESS IS THE welter of rain that wearies the sky.
Alas for the forsaken! Alas for the homeless wanderer!
The shrieks of the wind die away in sobs and sighs.
What flying phantom does it pursue across the pathless wild?
The night is hopeless like the eyes of the blind.
Alas for the forsaken! Alas for the homeless wanderer!
The waves are frantic in the river lost in the shoreless dark.
The thunder growls, the lightning flashes its teeth.
The lights of the stars are dead.
Alas for the forsaken! Alas for the homeless wanderer!

18

YOU HAVE watched all night alone, your eyes are tired, sweet one!
The light of the lamp has paled, it flickers in the breeze of the dawn.
Wipe away your tears, my friend, and draw up the veil over your breast.
The autumn morning is still, the smell of the woods is in the air, the grassy
path is caressingly tender.
Let the wreath of the forlorn night lie crumpled upon the bed.
Come out in the world of the morning, gather fresh flowers in your skirt
and put on new blossoms in your hair.

19

I THREW AWAY my heart in the world; you took it up.
I sought for joy and gathered sorrow, you gave me sorrow and I found
joy.
My heart was scattered in pieces, you picked them up in your hand and
strung them in a thread of love.

You let me wander from door to door to show me at last how near you
are,
Your love plunged me into the deep trouble.
When I raised my head I found I was at your door.

20

MY HEART, like a peacock on a rainy day,
spreads its plumes tinged with rapturous colours of thoughts,
and in its ecstasy seeks some vision in the sky,—
with a longing for one whom it does not know.
My heart dances.

The clouds rumble from sky to sky—
the shower sweeps horizons,
the doves shiver in silence in their nests,
the frogs croak in the flooded fields,—
and the clouds rumble.

O who is she on the king's tower
that has loosened the braid of her dark hair,
has drawn over her breasts the blue veil?
She wildly starts and runs in the sudden flashes of lightning
and lets the dark hair dance on her bosom.

Ah my heart dances like a peacock,
the rain patters on the new leaves of summer,
the tremor of the crickets' chirp troubles the shade of the tree,
the river overflows its bank washing the village meadows.
My heart dances.

21

THE DUMB earth looks into my face and spreads her arms about me.
At night the fingers of the stars touch my dreams. They know my former
name.
Their whispers remind me of the music of a long silent lullaby. They bring
to my mind the smile of a face seen in the gleam of the first daybreak.

P O E M S

There is love in each speck of earth and joy in the spread of the sky.
I care not if I become dust, for the dust is touched by his feet.
I care not if I become a flower, for the flower he takes up in his hand.
He is in the sea, on the shore; he is with the ship that carries all.
Whatever I am I am blessed and blessed is this earth of dear dust.

22

THEY WHO ARE near to me do not know that you are nearer to me than
they are.
They who speak to me do not know that my heart is full with your unspoken
words.
They who crowd in my path do not know I am walking alone with you.
They who love me do not know that their love brings you to my heart.

23

FAR AS I GAZE at the depth of Thy immensity
I find no trace there of sorrow or death or separation.
Death assumes its aspect of terror
and sorrow its pain
only when, away from Thee,
I turn my face towards my own dark self.
Thou All Perfect,
everything abides at Thy feet
for all time.
The fear of loss only clings to me
with its ceaseless grief,
but the shame of my penury
and my life's burden
vanish in a moment
when I feel Thy presence
in the centre of my being.

24

I ASK FOR AN audience from you, my King, in your solitary chamber.
Call me from the crowd.

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When your gate was kept open for all I entered your courtyard with the
bustling throng, and in the confusion found you not.

Now when at night they take up their lanterns and go by different roads
to their different homes, allow me to linger here for a moment,
standing at your feet, and hold up my lamp and see your face.

25

LIGHT THY signal, Father, for us who have strayed far away from thee.
Our dwelling is among ruins haunted by lowering shadows of fear.
Our heart is bent under the load of despair and we insult thee when we
grovel to dust at every favour or threat that mocks our manhood.
For thus is desecrated the dignity of thee in us thy children, for thus we
put out our light and in our abject fear make it seem that our orphaned
world is blind and godless.

26

YET I CAN never believe that you are lost to us, my king, though our poverty
is great, and deep our shame.
Your will works behind the veil of despair, and in your own time opens
the gate of the impossible.
You come, as unto your own house, into the unprepared hall, on the
unexpected day.
Dark ruins at your touch become like a bud nourishing unseen in its
bosom the fruition of fulfilment.
Therefore I still have hope—not that the wrecks will be mended, but that
a new world will arise.

27

BE NOT ashamed, my brothers, to stand before the proud and the powerful
with your white robe of simpleness.
Let your crown be of humility, your freedom the freedom of the soul.
Build God's throne daily upon the ample bareness of your poverty, and
know that what is huge is not great and pride is not everlasting.

YOU WILL LEAD me from star to star to waken me in new mornings of love.
It is your love that draws out the flow of my being through the maze of
channels of new life over your endless worlds.
You will startle me with new visions of fulfilment at every bend of the road
and fashion my moments with immortal forms of joy.
The infinite life will never remain chained in unchanging shackles of
immortality but will speed through death to death to countless new
shrines of light in its eternal pilgrimage of love.

DARK CLOUDS have blotted all lights from above; and we caged birds cry
and ask you: 'My friend, is it the death moment of creation? Has God
withdrawn His blessings from the sky?'
Times were when the sudden breath of April would waft the distant
fragrance of hope into our hearts, and the morning light would gild
the iron bars of our prison with its golden spell and would bring the
gladness of the open world into our cage.
But, see, it is all dark in the hills yonder, and not a thinnest rift has been
made by the scimitar of light cutting through the massive gloom.
Our chains today sit heavy on our feet, and not a flush of glow is left in
the sky with which to build an illusion of joy.
But let not our fear and sorrow pain you, my friend!
Come not to sit at the door of our cage to cry with us.
Your wings are unfettered.
Far away from us you soar beyond all clouds.
And from there send us the message in song:
'The light is shining for ever. The lamp of the sun is not out.'

THE BATTLE IS OVER. After strife and struggles the treasure is gathered and
stored.
Come now, woman, with your golden jar of beauty. Wash away all dust
and dirt, fill up all cracks and flaws, make the heap shapely and
sound.
Come, beautiful woman, with the golden jar on your head.

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The play is over. I have come to the village and have set up my hearth stone.

Now come, woman, carrying your vessel of sacred water; with tranquil smile and devout love, make my home pure.

Come, noble woman, with your vessel of sacred water.

The morning is over. The sun is fiercely burning. The wandering stranger is seeking shelter.

Come, woman, with your full pitcher of sweetness. Open your door and with a garland of welcome ask him in.

Come, blissful woman, with your full pitcher of sweetness.

The day is over. The time has come to take leave.

Come, O woman, with your vessel full of tears. Let your sad eyes shed tender glow on the farewell path and the touch of thy trembling hand make the parting hour full.

Come, sad woman, with your vessel of tears.

The night is dark; the house is desolate and the bed empty, only the lamp for the last rites is burning.

Come, woman, bring your brimming jar of remembrance. Open the door of the secret chamber with your unbraided streaming hair and spotless white robe, replenish the lamp of worship.

Come, suffering woman, bring your brimming jar of remembrance.

31

LOVE, THOU hast made great my life with death's magnificence, and hast tinted all my thoughts and dreams with radiant hues of thy farewell rays.

The tear-washed limpid light reveals at life's last sunset-point the hints of Paradise, where descending flame of Kiss from starry sphere of love lights the sorrows of our earth to splendour of their end, in one blazing ecstasy of uttermost extinction.

Love, thou hast made one vast wonder Life and Death for me.

AS THE TENDER twilight covers in its fold of dusk-veil marks of hurt and wastage from the dusty day's prostration, even so let my great sorrow for thy loss, Beloved, spread one perfect golden-tinted silence of its sadness o'er my life.

Let all its jagged fractures and distortions, all unmeaning scattered scraps and wrecks and random ruins, merge in vastness of some evening stilled with thy remembrance, filled with endless harmony of pain and peace united.

THROUGH DEATH and sorrow
there dwells peace
in the heart of the Eternal.
Life's current flows without cease,
the sunlight and starlights
carry the smile of existence
and springtime its songs.
Waves rise and fall,
the flowers blossom and fade
and my heart yearns for its place
at the feet of the Endless.

THE NIGHT IS upon me.
My desires that wandered all day have come back to my heart like the murmur of the sea in the still evening air.
One lonely lamp is burning in my house in the dark.
The silence is in my blood.
I shut my eyes and see in my heart the beauty that is beyond all forms.

WHAT IS THIS melody that overflows my life, only I know and my heart knows.
 Why I watch and wait, what I beg and from whom, only I know and my heart knows.
 The morning smiles like a friend at my gate, the evening droops down like a flower by the edge of the woods.
 The flute music floats in the air in the dawn and in the dusk. It beguiles my thoughts away from my toils.
 What is this tune and who plays it ever, only I know and my heart knows.

THOU DIDST well to turn me back when I came begging.
 In thy parting glance I saw a smile; and since then
 I have learnt my lesson. I break my old alms bowl,
 I wait for my chance to give what is mine.

From the morning crowds have gathered at thy gateway.
 Let their need be all fulfilled. When at the fall of night
 they disperse, and cries are hushed; when stars seem listening
 to some epic of the age before their birth-time,—
 of the fight of new-born light with ancient darkness,—
 to thy feet I come with homage of my longing:
 'Take my lute in thine own hand and play it, Master.'

I HAVE FELT your muffled steps in my blood, Evermoving Past,
 have seen your hushed countenance
 in the heart of the garrulous day.

You have come to write the unfinished stories of our fathers in unseen
 script on the pages of our destiny;
 You lead back to life the unremembered designs
 for the shaping of new images.

Is not the restless Present itself a crowd of your own visions
 Flung up like a constellation from the abyss of dumb night?

BLESSED AM I that I am born to this land and that I had the luck to love her.

What care I if queenly treasure is not in her store but precious enough is for me the living wealth of her love.

The best gift of fragrance to my heart is from her own flowers and I know not where else shines the moon that can flood my being with such loveliness.

The first light revealed to my eyes was from her own sky and let the same light kiss them before they are closed for ever.

THE FLOOD, at last, has come upon
your dry river-bed.
Cry for the boatman,
cut the cordage,
launch the boat.

Take your oars, my comrades,
your debt has grown heavy,
for you have spent idle days at the landing,
hesitating to buy and sell.
Pull up the anchor,
set the sails,
let happen what may.

IF THEY ANSWER not to thy call walk alone,
If they are afraid and cower mutely facing the wall,
O thou of evil luck,
open thy mind and speak out alone.

If they turn away, and desert you when crossing the wilderness,
O thou of evil luck,

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trample the thorns under thy tread,
and along the blood-lined track travel alone.

If they do not hold up the light
when the night is troubled with storm,
O thou of evil luck,
with the thunder flame of pain ignite thine own heart
and let it burn alone.

41

THEY CALL YOU mad. Wait for tomorrow and keep silent.

They throw dust upon your head. Wait for tomorrow. They will bring their
wreath.

They sit apart in their high seat. Wait for tomorrow. They will come down
and bend their head.

42

IT MAY BE THAT your loved ones will forsake you, but mind it not, my heart.
It may be that the creeper of your hope will be laid low in the dust all
torn, its fruits wasted,—but mind it not, my heart.

It may be that the dark night will overtake you before you reach the gate,
and your attempts will ever be in vain to light your lamp.

When you tune your harp, the birds and the beasts of the wilderness will
flock around you. It may be that your brothers will remain unmoved,
but mind it not, my heart.

The walls are of stones, the doors barred. It may be that you will knock
oft and again, yet it will not open,— but mind it not, my heart.

43

LET THE EARTH and the water, the air and the fruits of my country be sweet,
my God.

Let the homes and marts, the forests and fields of my country be full, my
God.

Let the promises and hopes, the deeds and words of my country be true,
 my God.
 Let the lives and hearts of the sons and daughters of my country be one,
 my God.

44

OUR VOYAGE is begun, Captain, we bow to thee!
 The storm howls and the waves are wicked and wild, but we sail on.
 The menace of danger waits in the way to yield to thee its offerings of
 pain, and a voice in the heart of the tempest cries: 'Come to conquer
 fear!'
 Let us not linger to look back for the laggards, or benumb the quickening
 hours with dread and doubt.
 For thy time is our time and thy burden is our own and life and death
 are but thy breath playing upon the eternal sea of Life.
 Let us not wear our hearts away picking small help and taking slow count
 of friends.
 Let us know more than all else that thou art with us and we are thine
 for ever.

45

FOR A MERE nothing fill me with gladness. Only hold my hand in your hand.
 In the deepening night take up my heart and play with it as you wish.
 Bind me close to you with nothing.
 I shall spread myself out at your feet and lie still.
 I shall meet silence with silence under this sky.
 I shall become one with the night, clasping the earth to my breast.
 Make my life glad with nothing.
 The rains sweep the sky from end to end.
 In the wild wet wind jasmines revel in their own perfume.
 The cloud-hidden stars thrill in secret.
 Let me fill my heart to the full with nothing but my own depth of joy.

46

I SEEK AND SEEK on my harp strings the notes that can blend with thine.
 Simple is the awakening of the morning and the flow of water, simple are

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the dewdrops on leaves, colours in clouds, the moonlight on sand-banks of the river and showers of rain in the midnight.
I seek notes for my songs simple and full as these, fresh and flowing with life, old as the world and known to all.
But my strings are newly strung and they bristle with sharp newness as with spears.
Thus my songs never have the spirit of the winds, they never can mingle with the lights of the sky.
My effort is an effort and my restless strains try hard to drown thy music.

47

LET ME LIE down upon the ground beneath your footstool in perfect gladness.
Let my garment be red with the common dust you touch with your feet.
Set me not higher than others; keep me not apart from all else.
Draw me down into a sweet lowliness.
Let my garment be red with the common dust you touch with your feet.
Let me remain the last of all your pilgrims; I shall try to reach the lowest site which is the broadest.
They come from all sides to ask for gifts from your hands.
Let me wait till they all have had their shares; I shall be content with the last remnant.
Let my garment be red with the common dust you touch with your feet.

48

THE DARKLY veiled June has come once again
redolent of the rain-soaked earth;
my heart that had grown weary and old
answers to the call of the marching clouds,
overcome with the sudden rush of life's turbulence.

Shadows sweep over the young grass
on the vast lonely meadows;
and my blood surges up with the cry:
It has come, has come to my eyes, to my breast,
to my voice that sings in gladness.

49

OUR MASTER is a worker and we work with him,
Boisterous is his mirth and we laugh with his laughter.
He beats his drum and we march,
He sings and we dance in its tune.
His play is of life and death. We stake our joys and sorrows and play with him.
His call comes like the rumbling of clouds; we set out to cross oceans and hills.

50

THE SUN SHINES, the rain pours down in showers,
the leaves glisten in the bamboo grove,
the smell of the newly tilled earth fills the air.
Our hands are strong, our hearts glad,
as we toil from morning till night to plough the land.
The spirit of a poet dances in swaying cadence
along the meadows, writing its verses of green lines,
spreading ripples of thrill through the ripening rice field.
The Earth's heart is joyous in the sunny October hours,
in the cloudless nights of the full moon,
as we toil from morning till night to plough the land.

51

THOU ART THE ruler of the minds of all people,
Thou Dispenser of India's destiny.
Thy name rouses the hearts
of the Punjab, Sind, Gujarat and Maratha,
of Dravida, Orissa and Bengal.
It echoes in the hills of the Vindhya and Himalayas,
mingles in the music of Jumna and Ganges.
and is chanted by the waves of the Indian Sea.
They pray for thy blessing and sing thy praise,
Thou dispenser of India's destiny,
Victory, Victory, Victory to thee.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

Day and night, thy voice goes out from land to land,
Calling Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and Jains round thy throne
and Parsees, Mussalmans and Christians.
Offerings are brought to thy shrine by the East and the West
to be woven in a garland of love.
Thou bringest the hearts of all peoples into the harmony of one life,
Thou Dispenser of India's destiny,
Victory, Victory, Victory to thee.

Eternal Charioteer, thou drivest man's history
along the road rugged with rises and falls of Nations.
Amidst all tribulations and terror
thy trumpet sounds to hearten those that despair and droop,
and guide all people in their paths of peril and pilgrimage.
Thou Dispenser of India's destiny,
Victory, Victory, Victory to thee.

When the long dreary night was dense with gloom
and the country lay still in a stupor,
thy Mother's arms held her,
thy wakeful eyes bent upon her face,
till she was rescued from the dark evil dreams
that oppressed her spirit,
Thou Dispenser of India's destiny,
Victory, Victory, Victory to thee.

The night dawns, the sun rises in the East,
the birds sing, the morning breeze brings a stir of new life.
Touched by golden rays of thy love
India wakes up and bends her head at thy feet.
Thou King of all Kings,
Thou Dispenser of India's destiny,
Victory, Victory, Victory to thee.

INFINITE IS YOUR WEALTH, BUT IT IS YOUR WISH TO RECEIVE IT IN SMALL MEASURE,
TO RECEIVE IT THROUGH ME FROM MY LITTLE HANDS.

That is why you have made me rich with your riches and have come to
my door yourself though my door is shut.
You will not drive in your chariot, swifter than thought, but it is your wish
to come down on the dust and walk with me step by step.

53

I KNOW THAT the flower one day shall blossom crowning my thorns.
I know my sorrow shall spread its red rose-leaves opening its heart to the
sun.
The breeze of the south for which the sky kept watch for weary days and
nights shall suddenly make my heart quiver.
My love shall bloom in a moment; my shame shall be no more when the
flower is ripe for offering.
And with the end of the night, at the touch of my friend it will drop at
his feet and spend its last petal in joy.

54

MY HEART IS on fire with the flame of thy songs.
It spreads and knows no bounds.
It dances swinging its arms in the sky, burning up the dead and the decaying.
The silent stars watch it from across the darkness.
The drunken winds come rushing upon it from all sides.
O, this fire, like a red lotus, spreads its petals in the heart of the night.

55

THOU HAST come again to me in the burst of a sudden storm,
filling my sky with the shudder of thy shadowy clouds.

The Sun is hidden, the stars are lost;
the red line of the road is merged in the mist of the rain;
the wail of the wind comes across the water.
Fitful showers, like ghastly fingers, strike the chords of some unseen harp,
waking up the music of the dark,
sweeping my heart with a shiver of sounds.

WITH A SWORD in his right hand and a flower in his left he comes.
 He breaks open thy door.
 He comes not to beg but to fight and conquer.
 He breaks open thy door.
 He marches through the path of death into thy life.
 He takes possession of everything thou hast, and will never be content
 with only a portion.
 He breaks open thy door.

FORGIVE MY languor, O Lord,
 if ever I lag behind
 upon life's way.

Forgive my anguished heart
 which trembles and hesitates
 in its service.

Forgive my fondness
 that lavishes its wealth
 upon an unprofitable past.

Forgive these faded flowers
 in my offering
 that wilt in the fierce heat
 of panting hours.

PILGRIM, THE night of the weary old year is ended.
 The blazing sun brings on your path the call of the Destroyer,
 the fiery scourge for pollutions of the past.
 A thin line of distance stretches along the road
 like a fine-drawn note from the one-stringed lute of a beggar
 seeking the way he has lost.

Let the grey dust of the road
take you up in her arms,
lead you away from the clasp of clinging reluctance!
Not for you is the music of the home,
the light of the evening lamp,
the wistful gaze of the lover keeping watch.
You have ever claimed the boon of Life
which is not in pleasure nor in peace or comfort,
wherefore the time has come for you
for rejection at every door.

The Cruel One has come,—
the bolts and bars of your gate are broken,
your wine vessel shattered;
take his hand whom you do not know
and dare not understand.
Never fear, pilgrim!
Turn not away from the terror of Truth,
nor be afraid of the phantom of the unreal,
take your last gift from him
who takes away everything.
Has the old night ended?
Then let it end!

59

THY CALL HAS sped over all countries of the world
and men have gathered around thy seat.
The day is come.
But where is India?
Does she still remain hidden, lagging behind?
Let her take up her burden and march with all.
Send her, mighty God, thy message of victory,
O Lord ever awake!

Those who defied suffering have crossed
the wilderness of death and have shattered
their prison of illusions.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

The day is come.

But where is India?

Her listless arms are idle and ashamed
and futile her days and nights, lacking in joy of life.
Touch her with thy living breath,
O Lord ever awake!

The morning sun of the new age has risen.

Thy temple hall is filled with pilgrims.

The day is come.

But where is India?

She lies on the dust in dishonour,
deprived of her seat.
Remove her shame, and give her a place
in thy House of Man,
O Lord ever awake!

The world's highroads are crowded,
resounding with the roar of thy chariot wheels.

The sky is trembling with travellers' songs.

The day is come.

But where is India?

Doors are shut in her house age-worn,
feeble is her hope, her heart sunk in silence.
Send thy voice to her children who are dumb,
O Lord ever awake!

Peoples there are who have felt thy strength
in their own hearts and sinews
and have earned life's fulfilment,
conquering fear.

The day is come.

But where is India?

Strike thy blow at her self-suspicion and despair!
Save her from the dread of her own pursuing shadow,
O Lord ever awake!

FROM TRIUMPH to triumph they drove their chariot over the earth's torn breast.
 Round them Time's footsteps were muffled and slow, and birds' songs lay gathered in the bosom of Night.
 Drunken of red fire their torch spread its glare like an arrogant lotus floating upon the blue with stars above as bees enchanted.
 They boasted that the undying lights of the sky fed the flame they carried till it conquered the night and won homage from the sullen silence of the dark.

The bell sounds.

They start up to find they had slept dreaming of wealth and pollution of power and the pillage of God's own temple.
 The sun of the new day shines upon the night's surrender of love.
 The torch lies shrouded in its ashes, and the sky rings with the rejoicing voice,
 'Victory to the earth! Victory to the heaven!
 Victory to the all-conquering Light!'

THOU HAST given us to live.
 Let us uphold this honour with all our strength and will;
 For thy glory rests upon the glory that we are.
 Therefore in thy name we oppose the power that would plant its banner upon our soul.
 Let us know that thy light grows dim in the heart that bears its insult of bondage.
 That the life, when it becomes feeble, timidly yields thy throne to untruth.
 For weakness is the traitor who betrays our soul.
 Let this be our prayer to thee—
 Give us power to resist pleasure where it enslaves us.
 To lift our sorrow up to thee as the summer holds its midday sun.
 Make us strong that our worship may flower in love, and bear fruit in work.
 Make us strong that we may not insult the weak and the fallen,

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

That we may hold our love high where all things around us are wooing
the dust.

They fight and kill for self-love, giving it thy name.
They fight for hunger that thrives on brothers' flesh,
They fight against thine anger and die,
But let us stand firm and suffer with strength
for the True, for the Good, for the Eternal in man,
for thy Kingdom which is in the union of hearts,
for the freedom which is of the Soul.

62

I SHALL NOT wait and watch in the house for thy coming,
but will go forth into the open,
for the petals fall from the drooping flowers and time flies to its end.
The wind is up, the water is ruffled.
Be swift and cut the rope,
let the boat drift in the midstream, for the time flies to its end.

The night is pale, the lonely moon is playing its ferry of dreams across
the sky.
The path is unknown, but I heed it not.
My mind has the wings of freedom
and I know that I shall cross the dark.
Let me but start on my journey, for the time flies to its end.

63

O MY CHILD, my infant Shiva,
self-forgetful,
at every step of thy wild dance things totter and tumble,
thy gatherings are scattered,
and a whirlwind of destruction
spreads the dust of thy trampled toys in the sky.
From desolation to desolation
thy world finds its release;
the stream of thy play ever flows
through the burst bond of thy playthings;

revelling in penury
 thou buildest thy creation with trifles,
 in the next moment to forget it
 for a mere caprice;
 with the sky for thy robe,
 all covers thou flingest away from thy limbs.
 With thy riches hidden in thy being
 thou dwellest in a world bare of all shame and show
 and thought for self,
 in a destitution that never makes thee poor,
 and the dust that soils not thy purity,
 the sweep of thine own dance
 ever wiping thee white.
 O Shiva, the Child,
 know me for thy lover,
 thy disciple in dancing,
 teach me the wisdom of unconcern,
 the game of breaking of toys,
 teach me how to guide my steps
 to the time of thy footfalls,
 how to move free by rending the webs
 of one's own weaving.

64

I CANNOT remember my mother,
 only sometime in the midst of my play
 a tune seems to hover over my playthings,
 the tune of some song that she used to hum while rocking my cradle.

I cannot remember my mother,
 but when in the early autumn morning
 the smell of the *shiuli* flowers floats in the air,
 the scent of the morning service in the temple comes to me as the scent
 of my mother.

I cannot remember my mother,
 only when from my bedroom window I send my eyes into the blue of the
 distant sky,

I feel that the stillness of my mother's gaze on my face
has spread all over the sky.

65

YOU ASK ME, mother, where I most wish to go. It is there from where I
first came to you. But I never can remember the place.
My father smiles at my trouble and says, 'It is beyond the clouds in the
land of the evening star.'
But I hear from you, it is deep in the bosom of the earth, from where
the flowers come away seeking the sun.
'That land lies unseen,' my auntie says, 'in the bottom of the sea, hiding
all the precious gems in its store.'
My brother pulls my hair and says, 'How can you find it, you stupid one,
for it is mingled in the air.'
It must be everywhere, it seems to me when I listen to you all.
Only my school-master shakes his head and says—'It is nowhere.'

66

PITILESS DARTS of fire strike a thirst pang in the heart of the sky.
Nights are sleepless, days long and languorous, scorched with heat.
I hear the tired doves crooning with plaintive notes
from behind the withered boughs,
and I watch the sky for the triumphant storm
to flood with its caress the waiting earth.

Come thirst-quenching water!
Well out in liquid rapture, rending the bosom of the hard!
From the mysterious dark leap out in overflowing streams,—
Come, you who are pure!
The sun waits to welcome you, for you are his playmate.
His lyric of light wakens golden songs in your heart.
Come, you who are radiant!
What magic spell has the desert demon cast on you,
and made you captive with his fetter of rocks?
Break your prison walls; come running out with your current,
free and dancing.
Come, you who are strong!

P O E M S

67

MY HEART sings at the wonder of my place
in this world of light and life;
at the feel in my pulse of the rhythm of creation
cadenced by the swing of the endless time.

I feel the tenderness of the grass in my forest walk,
the wayside flowers startle me;
that the gifts of the infinite are strewn in the dust
wakens my song in wonder.

I have seen, have heard, have lived;
in the depth of the known have felt
the truth that exceeds all knowledge
which fills my heart with wonder and I sing.

68

YOU HAVE drunk the draught of songs
that I poured for you,
and accepted the garland of my woven dreams.
My heart straying in the wilderness
was ever touched by the pain that was your own touch.

When my days are done, my leave-taking hushed
in a final silence,
my voice will linger in the autumn light
and rain-laden clouds
with the message that we had met.

69

MY HEART FEELS shy to bring to your vagrant mind
the lyric of my secret lest its meaning be missed
and its rhythm.

I shall wait for some auspicious hour
when the evening is compassionate,

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

your eyes drowned in its tender dimness,
and my voice reaches you
in a profound calm of truth.

I shall turn my secret round and round through my whisper
at a lonely corner of your heart,
even as the cricket among the silent *sāl* trees
turns single-toned beads of its chirping
in the rosary of night.

70

PARDON ME, if in my pride,
O maiden of a century, yet to be born,
I picture you reading my poems,
while the moon fills the gaps in my verse with its shower of silence,
I seem to feel your heart throb and hear you murmur,
'If he were alive today and had we met he would love me.'
I know you say to yourself,
'Only for this night let me light my lamp for him at my balcony,
though I know he may never come.'

71

HALF ASLEEP ON the shore you dreaded
the voice of Tempest
when he thundered in your ears his 'No'.
You had said to each other
that the shore had its plenty,
the house had its comfort,
when suddenly grinding his flashing teeth
Tempest growled 'No'.

But I have made Tempest my comrade
and left my shore,
my ship tosses on the sea.
I have trusted the Terrible,
have filled my sails with his breath

and my heart with his assurance
 that the shore is there.
 He cries to me, 'You are vagrant
 even as I am myself,
 Victory to you.'

Things are shattered to pieces
 scattered by the wind,
 the timid murmur in despair,
 'The end of time has come.'
 Tempest cries, 'Only that remains
 which is utterly given away.'
 With trust in him I march forward,
 I look not back
 while the hoarded heap is swept away by flood.

My traveller's reed is tuned
 with the tune of his loud laughter,
 it sings: Away with lures of desire,
 with bonds that are fixed,
 with the achievement that is past and hope that is idle.
 Learn for your drum the dance-time
 of the reckless waves beating against rocks.
 Away with greed and fear,
 with tyranny's banner borne by slaves.

Come Divine Destruction,
 drive us away from the house,
 from safety's easy path.
 Come with the flutter of your wings of death,
 spread upon the wind your cry 'No'.

No rest, no languor,
 No load of feebleness weighing down the head.
 Knock and break open the miser's door.
 Scatter away the musty gloom of storage,
 banish the self-distrust
 that seeks a hole wherein to hide,

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

and let your trumpet proclaim
in the wind
your terrible cry 'No'.

72

WOMAN, THOU hast made my days of exile tender with beauty,
and hast accepted me to thy nearness with a simple grace
that is like the smile with which the unknown star welcomed me
when I stood alone at the balcony and gazed upon the southern night.

There came the voice from above: 'We know you,
For you come as our guest from the dark of the infinite, the guest of light.'
Even in the same great voice thou hast cried to me: 'I know you.'
And though I know not thy tongue, Woman, I have heard it uttered in
thy music,—
'You are ever our guest on this earth, poet, the guest of love.'

73

A BEAST'S BONY frame lies bleaching on the grass.
Its dry white bones—Time's hard laughter—cry to me:
Thy end, proud man, is one with the end of the cattle that graze no more,
for when thy life's wine is spilt to its last drop
the cup is flung away in final unconcern.
I cry in answer:
Mine is not merely the life that pays its bed and board
with its bankrupt bones, and is made destitute.
Never can my mortal days contain to the full
all that I have thought and felt, gained and given,
listened to and uttered.

Often has my mind crossed Time's border,—
Is it to stop at last for ever at the boundary of crumbling bones?
Flesh and blood can never be the measure of the truth that is myself;
the days and moments cannot wear it out with their passing kicks;
the wayside bandit, Dust, dares not rob it of all its possessions.

Death, I refuse to accept from thee
that I am nothing but a gigantic jest of God,
a blank annihilation built with all the wealth of the Infinite.

74

SHE LEFT ME her flower of smile
taking my fruit of pain.
She clapped her hands and said,
she had won.

The noon had eyes like the mad,
red thirst raged in the sky.
I opened the basket and found
the flower dead.

75

DO NOT CALL him to thy house, the dreamer,
who walks alone by thy path
in the night.
His words are those of a strange land,
and strange is the melody
played by him on his one-stringed lute.
There is no need for thee to spread a seat for him;
he will depart before day-break.
For in the feast of freedom
he is asked to sing
the praise of the new-born light.

76

THE FLUTE-SOUND of a holiday music
floats in the air.
It is not the time for me to sit and brood alone.
The *shuli* branches shiver
with the thrill of an impending flower-time,
the touch of the dew is over the woodland.

On the fairy web in the forest path
the light and shadow feel each other.
The tall grass sends waves of laughter to the sky in its flowers,
and I gaze upon the horizon, seeking for my song.

77

WHO IS THIS captive that grieves within thee
thirsting for light?
His lute is silent,
though life's breath is abroad in the air;
His eyes do not see,
though morning lights the sky.

Birds sing of a new awakening to the forest,
the joy of new life breaks out in the tints of flowers,
the night beyond the wall has vanished,
yet the smoking lamp is still burning in the cell.
Alas, why is there this separation
between thy home and the sky?

78

FEAR NOT, FOR thou shalt conquer,
thy doors will open, thy bonds break.
Often thou lovest thyself in sleep,
and yet must find back thy world
again and again.
The call comes to thee from the earth and sky
the call from among men,
the call to sing of gladness and pain,
of shame and fear.
The leaves and the flowers,
the waters that fall and flow,
ask for thy notes to mingle with their own,
the darkness and light
to tremble in the rhythm of thy song.

THE MORNING-light aches
with the pain of parting.
Poet, take up thy flute!
Let be, if thou must depart, and go,
leaving thy song to the flowers
in this dew-dripping autumn.
Such a morning will come again
at the gold-tinted border of the East
with *kunda* flowers in her locks.
In the shady garden path, plaintive with dove's cooing,
tender with the caressing enchantment of the green,
will rise again the vision of this light,
her steps tinkling with the anklet of thine own songs.
Let be, if thou must depart.

FILL YOUR EYES with the colours that ripple
on beauty's stream,
vain is your struggle to clutch them.
That which you chase with your desire is a shadow,
that which thrills your life-chords is music.
The wine they drink at the assembly of gods
has no body, no measure.
It is in rushing brooks,
in flowering trees,
in the smile that dances at the corner of dark eyes.
Enjoy it in freedom.

THOU ART A glimmer of gold from the dawn on my life's shore,
a dew-drop on the first white flower of autumn.
Thou art a rainbow from the distant sky
bending o'er the dust,
a dream of the crescent moon
touched with a white cloud,

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thou art a secret of paradise
revealed by chance to the earth.
Thou art my poet's vision,
appearing from the days
of my forgotten birth,
thou art the word that is never for utterance,
a freedom that comes in the form of a bondage,
for thou openest the door for me
to the beauty of a living light.

82

I EVER GO seeking for this self of mine;
but how can I know
the fugitive, who flits in dreams
in changing forms and guises?

Often have I listened to its voice
in the heart of my own songs,
but never know I where it dwells.

The hours pass, the light fades,
the farewell tune is wafted in the evening breeze
from the flute of a passer-by.

83

FOR WHAT GREAT reward of my merit,
O Beautiful,
had I, a meadow-flower, once taken my place
in the chain on thy neck?
The newly-wakened eyes of the earth
were glad on that day,
and the lute, at the touch of the Ever-new,
broke out in melodies of dawn.
If that flower fades and drops to the earth
at the dim hour of the day,
when the bird's songs are languid,

P O E M S

let the evening wind sweep it away across the dark,
following thy departing steps,
never leaving it to be trodden to the dust
by the careless moments.

84

FEEL THY release in the air, O bird,
let not thy wings be timid.
Yield not to the lure of the nest,
to the enchantment of the night.

Dost thou not feel the hidden hope
that hums in thy dream when thou sleepest
and in the expectant dark of the dawn
the silent promise that reveals itself
as it rends the veil from the face of the bud.

85

I HAVE PLAYED my flute along the path,
I have sung at thy gate.
I have offered my tunes before thy temple's outer screen
decorated with endless forms and colours.

Today have come to me from everywhere
the words that speak of the End.
They ask me to break the bond of the road,
to come to the farther shore of the pilgrimage
by crossing the endless refrain
of meetings and partings.

86

LET THE LINKS of my shackles snap at every step of thy dance,
O Lord of Dancing,
and let my heart wake in the freedom of the eternal voice.
Let it feel the touch of that foot that ever sets swinging the lotus-seat of
the muse.

and with its perfume maddens the air through ages.
 Rebellious atoms are subdued into forms at thy dance-time,
 the suns and planets,—anklets of light,—twirl round thy moving feet,
 and, age after age, Things struggle to wake from dark slumber, through
 pain of life, into consciousness,
 and the ocean of thy bliss breaks out in tumults of suffering and joy.

Before I leave, tinge my heart in secret with thine own colour,
 the colour of the young smile, of tears shaded with ancient sadness.
 Let it tinge my thoughts, my deeds, the flame of my evening lamp,
 the waking moment of my midnight.
 Before I leave, rouse my heart with the swing of thy dancing feet,
 the swing that wakens stars in the deep of night,
 frees the stream from the rocky cave,
 gives voice to clouds in thunder and rain,—
 the swing by which the balance in the centre of existence is swayed in
 endless cycles of movement.

87

EARLY WINTER spreads her filmy veil
 over midnight stars,
 and the call comes from the deep,
 'Man, bring out your lamp.'

The forests are bare of flowers,
 the birds have ceased to sing
 the river-side grass has shed its blossoms.

Come, Dipali, waken hidden flames
 out of the desolate dark,
 and offer symphony of praise to eternal light.

The stars are dimmed
 the night is disconsolate,
 and the call comes from the deep,
 'Man, bring out your lamp.'

THE WORLD today is wild with the delirium of hatred,
the conflicts are cruel and unceasing in anguish,
crooked are its paths, tangled its bonds of greed.
All creatures are crying for a new birth of thine,
O Thou of boundless life,
save them, rouse thine eternal voice of hope,
Let Love's lotus with its inexhaustible treasure of honey
open its petals in thy light.

O Serene, O Free,
in thine immeasurable mercy and goodness
wipe away all dark stains from the heart of this earth.

Thou giver of immortal gifts
give us the power of renunciation
and claim from us our pride.
In the splendour of a new sunrise of wisdom
let the blind gain their sight
and let life come to the souls that are dead.

O Serene, O Free,
in thine immeasurable mercy and goodness
wipe away all dark stains from the heart of this earth.

Man's heart is anguished with the fever of unrest,
with the poison of self-seeking,
with a thirst that knows no end.
Countries far and wide flaunt on their foreheads
the blood-red mark of hatred.
Touch them with thy right hand,
make them one in spirit,
bring harmony into their life,
bring rhythm of beauty.

O Serene, O Free,
in thine immeasurable mercy and goodness
wipe away all dark stains from the heart of this earth.

WHY DEPRIVE me, my Fate,
of my woman's right
boldly to conquer the best of life's prizes
with mine own arrogant power,
and not to keep gazing at emptiness,
waiting for some chance drifting towards me
with the withered fruit of weary days of patience?
Send me without pity to the utter risk of my all for the treasure
guarded behind rudely forbidding barricades.

Never for me is to steal into the bridal chamber
with the timid tinkling of anklets
in a dim twilight dusk,
but recklessly to rush
into the desperate danger of love,
by some troubled sea,
where its stormy vehemence would snatch away from my face
the veil of shrinking maidenliness,
and amidst the ominous shrieks of sea-birds
could be raised to my warrior my cry—
You are mine own.

WE TWO LAY sunk in the dusk of dreams;
the time of awakening has come
waiting for the last word from you.
Turn your face to me
and with a tear-dimmed glance
make the sorrow of parting
ever beautiful.

The morning will appear with its early star
on the far-distant sky of loneliness.
The pain of this farewell night has been captured in my *vina*-strings,
the lost glory of love will remain woven in my visions.
Open with your own hands the door
towards final separation.

BRING TO THIS country once again the blessed name
 which made the land of thy birth sacred to all distant lands!
 Let thy great awakening under the *bodhi* tree be fulfilled,
 sweeping away the veil of unreason
 and let, at the end of an oblivious night,
 freshly blossom out in India thy remembrance!
 Bring life to the mind that is inert,
 thou Illimitable Light and Life!
 Let the air become vital with thy inspiration!
 Let open the doors that are barred,
 and the resounding conch shell
 proclaim thy arrival at Bharat's gate.
 Let, through innumerable voices,
 the gospel of an immeasurable love announce thy call.

ONCE AGAIN I wake up when the night has waned,
 when the world opens all its petals once more,
 and this is an endless wonder.
 Vast islands have sunk in the abyss unnamed,
 stars have been beggared of the last flicker of their light,
 countless epochs have lost all their ladings.
 World-conquerors have vanished into the shadow of a name
 behind dim legends,
 great nations raised their towers of triumph
 as a mere offering to the unappeasable hunger of the dust.
 Among this dissolving crowd of the discarded
 my forehead receives the consecration of light,
 and this is an endless wonder.
 I stand for another day with the Himalayas,
 with constellations of stars.
 I am here where in the surging sea-waves
 the infuriate dance of the Terrible
 is rhythmied with his boisterous laughter.
 The centuries on which have flashed up and foundered
 kingly crowns like bubbles

have left their signature on the bark of this aged tree,
where I am allowed to sit under its ancient shade for one more day,
and this is an endless wonder.

93

YOU SEEMED from afar
titanic in your mysterious majesty of terror.
With palpitating heart I stood before your presence.
Your knitted brows boded ill
and sudden came down the blow
with a growl and a crash.
My bones cracked,
with bowed head I waited
for the final fury to come.

It came.
And I wondered, could this be all of the menace?
With your weapon held high in suspense
you looked mightily big.

To strike me you came down
to where I crouched low on the ground.
You suddenly became small
and I stood up.
From thence there was only pain for me
but no fear.
Great you are as death itself,
but your victim is greater than death.

94

IDLY MY MIND follows the sinuous sweep of the Padma roaming under a
distant sky. On the further side of hers stretches the sand-bank,
insensitive to the living world, defiant in its sublime inutility.
On this side crowd the bamboo, the mango tree, the patriarchal banian;
the obsolete hut in ruins; the aged jack tree of a massive trunk; the
mustard field on the slope of the pond; the cane bush round the ditch
by the lane; the remnant walls of an indigo plantation clinging to a

P O E M S

silenced time, its row of casuarinas murmuring day and night in the forsaken garden.

The colony of Rajbanshis dwell there near the rugged bank fractured into zigzags, offering a scanty pasture to their goats; in the adjacent upland the corrugated roofs of the market storehouses keep staring hard at the sun.

The whole village stands shuddering in constant fear of the heartless stream.

The proud river has her name in the venerable texts; through her veins runs the sacred current of the Ganges.

She remains remote. The homesteads she passes by are tolerated by her, not recognised; her stately manner has a response in it to the majestic silence of the mountain and the large loneliness of the sea.

Once I had my boat secured at the landing slope of one of her islands in an isolated distance, far from all responsibilities.

I opened my eyes before the gaze of the morning star in the dawn, and slept on the roof under the constellation of the seven sages.

The heedless water ran by the edge of my desolate days, even as the traveller walking close to the joys and sorrows of the wayside homes, yet free from their appeal.

Now at the end of my young days I have come away to this plain here, grey and bare of trees, allowing a small detached spot for the swelling green of the shadow-sheltered Santal village.

I have for my neighbour the tiny river Kopai. She lacks the distinction of ancient lineage. The primitive name of hers is mixed up with the loud-laughing prattle of the Santal women of countless ages.

There is no gap for discord between the land and water in her intimacy with the village and she easily carries the whisper of her one bank to the other. The blossoming flax field is in indulgent contact with her as are the young shoots of rice.

Where the road comes to an abrupt break at the brink of her water, she graciously makes way for the passers-by across her crystal-clear garrulous stream.

Her speech is the speech of the humble home, not the language of the learned. Her rhythm has a common kinship both with the land and

the water; her vagrant stream is unjealous of the green and golden wealth of the earth.

Slender is her body that glides in curves across shadows and lights, clapping hands in a tripping measure.

In the rains her limbs become wild like those of the village girls drunk with the *mahua* wine, yet she never even in her wantonness breaks or drowns her neighbouring land; only with a jesting whirl of her skirt sweeps the banks while she runs laughing loud.

By the middle of autumn her waters become limpid, her current slim, revealing the pallid glimpse of the sands underneath. Her destitution does not shame her, for her wealth is not arrogant, nor her poverty mean.

They carry their own grace in their different moods, even as a girl when she dances with all her jewels aglimmer, or when she sits silent with languor in her eyes and a touch of a tired smile on her lips.

The Kopai in her pulsation finds its semblance in the rhythm of my poet's verse, the rhythm that has formed its comradeship with the language rich in music and that which is crowded with the jarring trivialities of the work-a-day hours.

Its cadence fails not the Santal boy lazily tramping along with his bow and arrows; it times itself to the lumbering market cart loaded with straw; to the panting breath of the potter shouldering earthen-wares in a pair of hanging baskets tied to a pole, his pet pariah dog fondly following his shadow; it moves at the pace of the weary steps of the village schoolmaster, worth three rupees a month, holding an old torn umbrella over his head.

AN OLDISH upcountry man tall and lean,
with shaven shrunken cheeks like wilted fruits,
jogging along the road to the market town
in his patched up pair of country-made shoes
and a short tunic made of printed chintz,
a frayed umbrella tilted over his head,
a bamboo stick under his armpit.

P O E M S

It is a sultry morning of August,
the light is vague filtering through thin white clouds.
The last night seemed smothered
under a damp black blanket:
and today a sluggish wind
is fitfully stirring a dubious response
among *amlaki* leaves.

The stranger passed by the hazy skyline of my mind,
a mere person,
with no definition, no care that may trouble him,
no needs for any the least thing.
And I appeared to him for a moment
at the farthest limit of the unclaimed land of his life,
in the grey mist that separates one
from all relations.

I imagine he has his cow in his stall,
a parrot in the cage,
his wife with bangles round her arms,
grinding wheat,
the washerman for his neighbour,
the grocer's shop across the lane,
a harassing debt to the man from Peshawar,
and somewhere my own indistinct self
only as a passing person.

96

THOUGH I know, my friend, that we are different
my mind refuses to own it.
For we two woke up in the same sleepless night
while the birds sang,
and the same spell of the spring
entered our hearts.

Though your face is towards the light
and mine in the shade

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

the delight of our meeting is sweet and secret,
for the flood of youth in its eddying dance
has drawn us close.

With your glory and grace you conquer the world,
my face is pale.
But a magnanimous breath of life
has carried me to your side
and the dark line of our difference
is aglow with the radiance of a dawn.

97

A VEIL OF A thousand years dropped between you and me
when you turned your face and merged in a past
where spectre-like dwell they
who missed love's path in a timorous dusk of doubt.
The space is but narrow that divides us,—
a tiny stream weaving in its murmur
the memory of our parting moment
the pathos of your passing footsteps.
And all that I can offer to you
is the music of an unspoken love
for it to follow you and vanish.

98

AT THE DUSK OF the early dawn, Ramananda, the great Brahmin Teacher,
stood in the sacred water of the Ganges waiting long for the cleansing
touch of the stream to flow over his heart.
He wondered why it was not granted him this morning.
The sun rose and he prayed for the divine light to bless his thoughts and
open his life to truth.
But his mind remained dark and distraught.
The sun climbed high over the *sal* forest and the fishermen's boats spread
their sails, the milk-maids with milk-vessels on head went to the
market.

The Guru started up, left the water and walked along the sand amidst weeds and rushes and clamorous *saliks*, busy digging holes for their nests on the slope of the river bank.

He reached the lane which took him to the evil-smelling village of the tanners where lean dogs were crunching bones at the wayside and kites swooped down upon casual morsels of flesh.

Bhajan sat before his cottage door under an ancient tamarind tree working at camel's saddle.

His body shrank with awe when he saw the Guru fresh from his bath come to the unclean neighbourhood and the grizzly old tanner bowed himself down to the dust from a distance.

Ramananda drew him to his heart and Bhajan, his eyes filled with tears, cried in dismay, 'Master, why bringest upon thee such pollution!' And Master said, 'While on my way to my bath I shunned your village and thus my heart missed the blessings of the Ganges whose mother's love is for all.

'Her own touch comes down at last upon me at the touch of your body with mine and I am purified.

'I cried this morning to the Sun, "The divine Person who is in thee is also within me but why do I not meet thee in my mind?"

'I have met him at this moment when his light descends upon your forehead as well as on mine, and there is no need for me today to go to the temple.'

99

I NEGLECTED to appraise your worth
being blindly sure of my possession.

The days followed each other and the nights
carrying your offerings to my feet.

I looked at them through the corner of my eyes
as they were being sent to my storehouse.

April's honeysuckles added their scent to your gifts,
the full moon of the autumn night
touched them with its glimmer.

Often you poured the flood of your dark tresses upon my lap
and your eyes swam with tears while you said:

My tribute to you, my king, is pitifully meagre;
I have failed to give you more, not having any more to give.

The days follow each other and the nights
but you are no longer here today.
I come to open at last my storehouse,
and take up the chain of the jewels,
that came from your hands on my neck.
My pride that remained indifferent
kisses the dust where you left your footprints.
Today I gain you truly
for with my sorrow I have paid the price of your love.

100

THE SANTAL woman hurries up and down the gravelled path under the *shimool* tree; a coarse grey *sari* closely twines her slender limbs, dark and compact; its red border sweeping across the air with the flaming red magic of the *palash* flower.

Some absent-minded divine designer, while fashioning a black bird with the stuff of the July cloud and the lightning flash, must have improvised unawares this woman's form; her impulsive wings hidden within, her nimble steps uniting in them a woman's walk and a bird's flight.

With a few lacquer bangles on her exquisitely modelled arms and a basket full of loose earth on her head, she flits across the gravel-red path under the *shimool* tree.

The lingering winter has finished its errand. The casual breath of the south is beginning to tease the austerity of the cold month. On the *himjhuri* branches the leaves are taking the golden tint of a rich decay. The ripe fruits are strewn over the *amlaki* grove where the rowdy boys crowd to pillage them. Swarms of dead leaves and dust are capering in a ghastly whirl following sudden caprices of the wind.

The building of my mud house has commenced and labourers are busy raising the walls. The distant whistle announces the passing of the train along the railway cutting, and the dingdong of the bell is heard from the neighbouring school.

I sit on my terrace watching the young woman toiling at her task hour after hour. My heart is touched with shame when I feel that the woman's service sacredly ordained for her loved ones, its dignity soiled by the market price, should have been robbed by me with the help of a few pieces of copper.

101

SINCE THE FIRST day-break of human age misted with myths,
they walk wonder-eyed on strange shores, the seekers,
and the fighters march at the drum-beats of storm gods
towards an ever-distant time,
along an endless stretch of battle-fields.

The earth trembles at the ceaseless treads of deadly pursuits,
the midnight sleep is troubled,
the easeful life is embittered
and death is made precious.

Those who rushed out at the urge of the road
ever move on beyond the boundaries of death,
and those who cling to their homes
are doomed to lie perpetually encased in the shell of a rigid life
in a soulless world.

Who is there who must be lured by an insipid peace,
by a stagnant stinking security,
and dully choose to build his shelter in a realm of ghosts?

In the beginning man found himself
at the cross-road of existence.
The provision of his journey was given him of his blood,
in his dream, in his path itself.

When he sat down to fix his plan and raised his tower high among clouds
its base crumbled away;
he built his dyke only to let it be swept away by floods.
Time and again he fell asleep in his hall of tired carousal
in the gasping light of smoke-bedimmed lamps,
till a sudden assault of a nightmare choked him,
rattled his ribs together
and he woke up in a groaning agony of death.

A sudden awakening has often startled him forth
from the ring-fence of decrepit centuries
towards undefined horizons,
and an impulse forced him away from the fetter of his swollen success,
reminding him that pillars of triumph across Time's chariot-path
bury the builder under their nameless ruins.
He hastens to join the army of the wreckers of patterns
coming from all ages,
crossing hills,
breaking stone walls,
bursting iron gates
while the sky throbs with the drum-beats of Eternity.

102

IN THAT EARLY dusk of a distracted age,
When God in scorn of his own workmanship
violently shook his head at his primitive efforts,
an impatient wave snatched you away, Africa,
from the bosom of the East,
and kept you brooding in a dense enclosure of niggardly light,
guarded by giant trees.
There you slowly stored
the baffling mysteries of the wilderness
in the dark cellars of your profound privacy,
conned the signals of land and water difficult to read;
and the secret magic of Nature invoked in your mind
magic rites from beyond the boundaries of consciousness.

You donned the disguise of deformity to mock the terrible,
 and in a mimicry of a sublime ferocity
 made yourself fearful to conquer fear,
 You are hidden, alas, under a black veil,
 which obscures your human dignity
 to the darkened vision of contempt.
 With man-traps stole upon you those hunters
 whose fierceness was keener than the fangs of your wolves,
 whose pride was blinder than your lightless forests.
 The savage greed of the civilised stripped naked its unashamed
 inhumanity,
 You wept and your cry was smothered,
 your forest trails became muddy with tears and blood,
 while the nailed boots of the robbers
 left their indelible prints
 along the history of your indignity.
 And all the time across the sea,
 church bells were ringing in their towns and villages,
 the children were lulled in mothers' arms,
 and poets sang hymns to Beauty.

Today when on the western horizon
 the sunset sky is stifled with dust-storm,
 when the beast, creeping out of its dark den,
 proclaims the death of the day with ghastly howls,
 come, you poet of the fatal hour,
 stand at that ravished woman's door,
 ask for her forgiveness,
 and let that be the last great word
 in the midst of the delirium of a diseased Continent.

LET HONOUR come to me from Thee
 through a call to some desperate task,
 in the pride of poignant suffering.

Lull me not into languid dreams;
 Shake me out of this cringing in the dust,
 Out of the fetters that shackle our mind, make futile our destiny;
 Out of the unreason that bends our dignity down under the
 indiscriminate feet of dictators;
 Shatter this age-long shame of ours,
 And raise our head
 into the boundless sky,
 into the generous light,
 into the air of freedom.

104

ENTANGLED in the meshes woven by countless gazing eyes,
 he is drawn into a whirl of noise,
 the man of fame.
 Alas, he has lost his rank among those
 who are privileged to remain unaware of the date of their birth,
 whose recognition in the world is slight,
 even as the leaves are that lightly swing on the branches
 and drop on the dust unnoticed.
 He lives in his solitary cell among the crowd
 with a chain of honour ever jangling round his limbs.
 Take pity and free him
 in the world of cool light, green shade and sweet reticence,
 in the unbounded dust,—
 the primeval playground of the eternal child.

When the ferry boat from the dark
 brought him to the landing on the shore of fresh knowledge,
 he had nothing to cover him from the light
 that touched his nakedness
 as it touches the sail unfurled in the air.
 In the simple freedom of that morning
 flowers without fame bloomed in the grass,
 and the spring hour spread its golden wings,
 in an immensity of leisure.

In that holiday's solitude
his name received its infinite worth from a sweet voice
whose far-away music makes him wistful
in the languorous afternoon of March
and whose date is lettered today
in this glistening quiver of *asath* leaves.

He had his poet's welcome from the river Padma
and the morning star through the intervals of bamboo leaves on her bank.
The dark masses of cloud had spread before him
a purple shadow on the distant rain-dimmed forest;
his eyes had followed the track of noisy girls to the river
along the shady village lane
and enjoyed the duet of colours under the sunset sky
in the blossoming field of mustard and linseed sown together.

He gazed and said, 'I love it',
and wished that this love of his remained behind him,
even when his big endeavours had come to nothing,
and that his salutation carrying his life-long wonder
should leave a lasting memory of his touch
on the dust of his earth.

105

YOU MAKER of pictures,
a ceaseless traveller among men and things,
rounding them up in your net of vision
and bringing them out in lines
far above their social value and market price.

Yonder colony of the outcaste,
its crowd of rustic roofs,
and an empty field in the background
scorched by the angry April sun
are hurriedly passed by and never missed,
till your wayfaring lines spoke out;
they are there,
and we started up and said, indeed they are.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

Those nameless tramps fading away every moment into shadows
were rescued from their nothingness
and compelled us to acknowledge
a greater appeal of the real in them
than is possessed by the rajahs
who lavish money on their portraits of dubious worth
for fools to gape at in wonder.

You ignored the mythological steed of paradise
when your eyes were caught by a goat
who is only noticed with our expostulation
when straying on our brinjal plot.
You brought out its own majesty of goatliness in your lines
and our mind woke up into a surprise.
The poor goat-seller remains ignorant of the fact
that the picture does not represent the commonplace beast that is his
own,
but it is a discovery.

106

BEHIND AN infinite secrecy of the dark
from which the world of prying lights was shut out
there walked in the Destroyer,
and underneath the pall of an ominous hush
rehearsed reparation in the deep of my being.
At last the stage was made vacant
for the new act of life's play,
when a fiery finger from the sky touched a fringe of the darkness
and a lightning thrill
pierced the immensity of sleep
breaking it to pieces.
A stream of awakening began to course through the veins of a blind
inertness—
as the first flood of the rainy June pursues its branching path
amidst the emptiness of a dry river-bed.
Big boulders of shadows barricaded the passage of light
and created confusion—

till they were swept away,
 and the spirit of new life unbared herself
 in a luminous horizon of peace.
 This body of mine—
 the carrier of the burden of a past—
 seemed to me like an exhausted cloud
 slipping off from the listless arm of the morning.
 I felt freed from its clasp
 in the heart of an incorporeal light
 at the furthest shore
 of evanescent things.

107

WHEN MY mind was released
 from the black cavern of oblivion
 and woke up into an intolerable surprise
 it found itself at the crater of a volcanic hell-fire
 that spouted forth a stifling fume of insult to Man;
 it witnessed the long-drawn suicidal agony of the Time-spirit
 passing through convulsions of a monstrous deformity worse than death.
 On its one side a defiant savagery
 and the growl of homicidal drunkenness,
 on the other timid powers tied to the load
 of their carefully guarded hoardings,
 meekly settling down to a silent safety of acquiescence
 after miscalculated bursts of impatience.
 At the old nations' council-chambers
 plans and protests are pressed flat between the tight-shut prudent lips.
 In the meanwhile across the sky rush with their blazing blasphemy
 the soulless swarms of vulture-machines
 carrying their missiles of ravenous passion for human entrails.

Give me power, O awful Judge,
 sitting on the throne of Eternity,
 give me a voice of thunder,
 that I may hurl imprecation
 upon this cannibal whose gruesome hunger

spares neither women nor children,
that my words of reproach may ever rock
upon the heart-throbs of a history humiliated by itself,
till this age choked and chained
finds the bed of its final rest in its ashes.

108

THE WAR drums are sounded,
Men force their features into frightfulness and gnash their teeth;
and before they rush out to gather raw human flesh for death's larder,
they march to the temple of Buddha, the compassionate,
to claim his blessings,
while loud beats the drum rat-a-tat
and earth trembles.

They pray for success;
for they must raise weeping and wailing
in their wake, sever ties of love,
plant flags on the ashes of desolated homes,
devastate the centres of culture
and shrines of beauty,
mark red with blood their trail
across green meadows and populous markets,
and so they march to the temple of Buddha, the compassionate,
to claim his blessings,
while loud beats the drum rat-a-tat
and earth trembles.

They will punctuate each thousand of the maimed and killed
with the trumpeting of their triumph,
arouse demon's mirth at the sight
of the limbs torn bleeding from women and children;
and they pray that they may befog minds with untruths
and poison God's sweet air of breath,
and therefore they march to the temple of Buddha, the compassionate,
to claim his blessings,
while loud beats the drum rat-a-tat
and earth trembles.

MY BIRTHDAY!
 With Death's passport in hand
 it has emerged from its dive into the chasm of nothingness
 to breathe a while on the outskirts of existence.
 From the worn-out chain have dropped the beads of the past years
 and with this newest birthday
 begins the counting of the days of a new-born life.
 The welcome offered today to me,
 a passer-by,
 who tries to con the signal of the morning of an unknown star
 beckoning him towards an uncharted voyage,
 is shared equally by his birthday
 and the time of his death,
 who mingle their lights like those of the morning star
 and of the waning moon.
 And I shall sing the same chant to both,
 to death and to life.

Grant me, Mother Earth,
 that my life's mirage born of burning thirst
 may recede in the farthest horizon
 and my unclean beggar's bowl empty into the dust
 its accumulated defilements;
 and as I start my crossing to the unrevealed shore
 let me never look back with longing
 on the last leavings of the feast of life.

Now when in this sleep-laden dusk of the day's end
 the meaning is lost of the keen-bladed hunger
 with which you had goaded me to drag life's chariot
 you begin to withdraw your gifts from me one by one.
 Slight has grown your need of me
 and slight have you made my use
 and set on my forehead the stamp of the discarded.
 I feel it all and yet I know,
 all this contumely of yours
 will not reduce my worth to nought.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

Cripple me, if you will,
 shut out all light from my eyes,
 shroud me in the shadow of infirmity,
 yet in the dilapidated temple of my being
 the ancient god will remain enthroned,
 Work your havoc and pile up the wreck,
 yet in the midst of this ruin
 the luminous spot of inward joy
 will burn bright as ever.
 For it was fed day after day on the heavenly wine
 which the gods pour on earth through every sight and sound.
 I had loved them all
 and sung of that love.
 That love has lifted me above your bounds,
 the love that shall abide, even though its words grow feeble,
 defaced by constant use.

On this love of mine have traced their autographs
 the pollen of the mango-blossom,
 and the dew-cooled fragrance of the *sephalika*
 the twitterings of the *doels* in early dawn
 and the rapturous touch of the beloved.
 When I take my leave of you, O Earth,
 take back from me, carefully reckoning,
 all that you had vouchsafed to me,
 the outfit and provision for a life's sojourn.
 Yet never think that I hold your gifts but slight.
 Ever grateful I am to this clay-cast mould
 through which I have had my introduction to the Formless.

Whenever I have approached your doors
 with the mind free from all coveting,
 I have been made welcome to your heart.
 I know your gifts are not for the greedy,
 that you withhold the nectar hidden in your earthen pot
 from the ravenous lips of those that hunger obscenely.
 You are waiting, O Earth, with your immortal gifts,
 to welcome the wayfarer who treads the arduous path of detachment.

The gluttons who lust for flesh,
the traffickers in festering carrion,
have banded today in their orgies of violence, day and night.
Yet mockery tempts my smile, as of old,
at the pompous folly of the learned,
at the tyranny of the beggarly rich,
at the hideous make-up of the showy,
at the blasphemy that lampoons the divine in Man.

Enough of this. The bell tolls the last hour at your porch,
and my heart responds to the creaking of the opening gates of farewell.
In this deepening gloom of the twilight,
I will gather what flickering flames remain to light my fading
consciousness,
to offer my last worship to you, O Earth,
under the gaze of the Seven Rishis.
And the incense of my last silent song will float round you.
Behind me will remain the *nagkeshar* plant
that has yet to flower,
the anguished heart of this shore
yearning in vain for a ferry across,
and love's self-reproach at its tired memory
vanishing behind the screen of daily task.

110

IN THE UPPER sky, lamped by science,
the night forgets itself,
while in the underground gloom
lean hunger and bloated voracity
crash against each other
till the earth begins to tremble
and the pillars of triumph
are perilously cracked,
swaying on the brink of gaping gulfs.

Do not howl in fear
or angrily judge God,

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

let the swelling evil burst itself in pain
and vomit out its accumulated filth.

When the victims of a carnivorous rage
are dragged by the competition of ravenous fangs,
let the hideousness of the blood-soaked blasphemy
arouse divine anger heralding a heroic peace
out of an awful retribution.

They throng in the church
in a primitive frenzy of faith made keen by fear
which hopes to flatter their God
into a complacent mood
into a feebleness of leniency.
They feel half sure that peace will be brought down
into this demented earth
by the mere volume of their wailing
uttered in sacred text.

They have confidence in their indulgent God
who may send them timely wisdom
to divert all sacrifices needed for the worship
towards the less strong,
leaving their own soiled hoardings undivided.

But let us hope,
for the sake of the dignity of moral justice in this world,
that God will never suffer to be cheated of His due
by the miserly manipulation of a diplomatic piety
carefully avoiding all cost to itself,
that a terrible penance may have to be passed through
to its ultimate end,
leaving no remnant of poison
in a treacherously healing scar.

and the towers of civilisation topple down to dust.
In the chaos of moral nihilism
are trampled underfoot by marauders
the best treasures of Man heroically won by the martyrs for ages.

Come, young nations,
proclaim the fight for freedom,
raise up the banner of invincible faith.
Build bridges with your life across the
gaping earth blasted by hatred,
and march forward.

Do not submit yourself to carry the burden of insult upon your head,
kicked by terror,
and dig not a trench with falsehood and cunning
to build a shelter for your dishonoured manhood;
offer not the weak as sacrifice to the strong
to save yourself.

112

THOSE WHO struck Him once
in the name of their rulers,
are born again in this present age.

They gather in their prayer-halls in a pious garb,
they call their soldiers,
'Kill, Kill', they shout;
in their roaring mingles the music of their hymns,
while the Son of Man in His agony prays, 'O God,
fling, fling far away this cup filled with the bitterest of poisons.'

113

ONCE YOU HAD lent to my eyes a generous portion from your limitless store
of light; now at the day's end you have come to reclaim it, my master,
and I know for certain that I must make good my debt.
But why cast shadow before my evening lamp? I am but a guest for a few
days in this world that has come of your light, but if out of its abundance

a few fragments of that light are left behind, let them remain in careless neglect at the last trace of your chariot.

Let me glean from that dust some scattered lights and shadows, some gleam of coloured illusion with which to build my own little world as a slight remnant of your debt, not worth gathering for good.

114

IN THIS GREAT Universe
The giant wheel of pain revolves;
Stars and planets split up;
Sparks of fiery dust, far-flung,
Scatter at terrific speed
Enveloping in network primordial
The anguish of existence.
In the armoury of pain
Spreading on the stretches of consciousness, aglow,
Clang the instruments of torture;
Bleeding wounds gape open.
Small is man's body,
How immense his strength of suffering.
At the concourse of creation and chaos
To what end does he hold up his cup of fiery drink
In the weird festival of the gods
Drunk in their titan power,—O why
Filling his body of clay
Sweeps the red delirious tide of tears?
To each moment he brings endless value
From his unconquerable will.
Man's sacrificial offering
His burning physical agony—
Can anything compare,
In the whole fiery dedication of the suns and stars?
Such unyielding wealth of prowess,
Such fearless endurance,
Such indifference to death,—
Triumphal march as this, in hundreds,
Trampling embers underfoot

To reach the limit of sorrow—
Is there anywhere such quest, nameless, radiant,
Such pilgrimage together, from road to road?
Such pure waters of service, breaking through igneous rocks,
Such endless store of love?

115

WHEN IN THE depth of the night
in the phantasmal light of the sick-bed
appears your wakeful presence,
it seems to me
that the countless suns and stars
have guaranteed my little life;
then I know that you will leave me
and the fear spreads from sky to sky,
the fear of the terrible indifference
of the All.

116

SHE IS THE SPIRIT of an Autumn evening,
robed in the gleams of the vanished sunset,
carrying the promise of the immense peace of the star,
guiding with her speechless ministry
the languid steps of the long lingering hours of the reluctant night
into the neighbourhood of the morning star.
Her tresses touched by the gentle breeze of the dawn,
that smell of the morning worship,
her sad and sweet face of the day's end
becomes radiant with the blessedness of the morning light.

117

WHEN I ROSE from my sleep
I found a basket of oranges at my feet,
my mind wondered who could be the
giver of such a gift;
my guesses flew from one name to another

but sweet names were abandoned
like flowers in the Spring,
and all varied names combined
to make this gift a perfect one.

118

IN THE ENDLESS paths of the world,
among numberless activities,
her nature is scattered
with all that is unattained in her and incomplete.
By the sick-bed around one eager aim
she appears as a new vision
complete in her being,
where all the goodness of all things
becomes centred in her,
in her touch, in her sleepless anxious eyes.

119

ON MY WAY TO recovery
when I received Nature's earliest friendly greetings,
she held before my eyes her precious gift of endless first surprise.
And those trees and the blue sky
bathed in morning light
though ancient and ever-known
revealed to me in them creation's everlasting first moment
and I felt that this one birth of mine
is woven in the web of many births of many changing forms
and like the sunlight composed of varied rays
every appearance in its unity
is blended with countless invisible other ones.

120

BLESSINGS HAVE I won in this life
of the Beautiful.
In the vessel of man's affection I taste His own divine nectar,
Sorrow, hard to bear,

P O E M S

has shown me the unhurt, unconquered soul.
On the day when I felt death's impending shadow,
fear's defeat has not been mine.
The great ones of the Earth
have not deprived me of their touch,
their undying words have I stored in my heart.
Grace I had from the god of life:
this memory let me leave
in grateful words.

SECTION TWO

Stray Birds

Fireflies

Stray Birds

1. The first of the birds that I saw in the morning was a small, brown, downy bird.

2. It was very small, and it was very young, and it was very brown.

3. It was very small, and it was very young, and it was very brown.

4. It was very small, and it was very young, and it was very brown.

5. It was very small, and it was very young, and it was very brown.

6. It was very small, and it was very young, and it was very brown.

7. It was very small, and it was very young, and it was very brown.

8. It was very small, and it was very young, and it was very brown.

9. It was very small, and it was very young, and it was very brown.

1

STRAY BIRDS of summer come to my window to sing and fly away.

And yellow leaves of autumn, which have no songs, flutter and fall there with a sigh.

2

O TROUPE OF little vagrants of the world, leave your footprints in my words.

3

THE WORLD puts off its mask of vastness to its lover.

It becomes small as one song, as one kiss of the eternal.

4

IT IS THE tears of the earth that keep her smiles in bloom.

5

THE MIGHTY desert is burning for the love of a blade of grass who shakes her head and laughs and flies away.

6

IF YOU SHED tears when you miss the sun, you also miss the stars.

7

THE SANDS in your way beg for your song and your movement, dancing water. Will you carry the burden of their lameness?

8

HER WISTFUL face haunts my dreams like the rain at night.

9

ONCE WE dreamt that we were strangers.

We wake up to find that we were dear to each other.

10

SORROW is hushed into peace in my heart like the evening among the silent trees.

11

SOME UNSEEN fingers, like idle breeze, are playing upon my heart the music of the ripples.

12

'WHAT LANGUAGE is thine, O sea?'
 'The language of eternal question.'
'What language is thy answer, O sky?'
 'The language of eternal silence.'

13

LISTEN, MY heart, to the whispers of the world with which it makes love to you.

14

THE MYSTERY of creation is like the darkness of night—it is great. Delusions of knowledge are like the fog of the morning.

15

DO NOT seat your love upon a precipice because it is high.

16

I SIT AT my window this morning where the world like a passer-by stops for a moment, nods to me and goes.

17

THESE LITTLE thoughts are the rustle of leaves; they have their whisper of joy in my mind.

STRAY BIRDS

18

WHAT YOU are you do not see, what you see is your shadow.

19

MY WISHES are fools, they shout across thy songs, my Master.
Let me but listen.

20

I CANNOT choose the best.
The best chooses me.

21

THEY THROW their shadows before them who carry their lantern on their back.

22

THAT I exist is a perpetual surprise which is life.

23

'WE, THE rustling leaves, have a voice that answers the storms, but who are you so silent?'
'I am a mere flower.'

24

REST BELONGS to the work as the eyelids to the eyes.

25

MAN IS A born child, his power is the power of growth.

26

GOD EXPECTS answers for the flowers he sends us, not for the sun and the earth.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

27

THE LIGHT that plays, like a naked child, among the green leaves happily knows not that man can lie.

28

O BEAUTY, find thyself in love, not in the flattery of thy mirror.

29

MY HEART beats her waves at the shore of the world and writes upon it her signature in tears with the words, 'I love thee.'

30

'MOON, FOR what do you wait?'
'To salute the sun for whom I must make way.'

31

THE TREES come up to my window like the yearning voice of the dumb earth.

32

HIS OWN mornings are new surprises to God.

33

LIFE FINDS its wealth by the claims of the world, and its worth by the claims of love.

34

THE DRY river-bed finds no thanks for its past.

35

THE BIRD wishes it were a cloud.
The cloud wishes it were a bird.

STRAY BIRDS

36

THE WATERFALL sings, 'I find my song, when I find my freedom.'

37

I CANNOT tell why this heart languishes in silence.

It is for small needs it never asks, or knows or remembers.

38

WOMAN, WHEN you move about in your household service your limbs sing like a hill stream among its pebbles.

39

THE SUN goes to cross the Western sea, leaving its last salutation to the East.

40

DO NOT blame your food because you have no appetite.

41

THE TREES, like the longings of the earth, stand a-tiptoe to peep at the heaven.

42

YOU SMILED and talked to me of nothing and I felt that for this I had been waiting long.

43

THE FISH IN the water is silent, the animal on the earth is noisy, the bird in the air is singing,

But Man has in him the silence of the sea, the noise of the earth and the music of the air.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

44

THE WORLD rushes on over the strings of the lingering heart making the music of sadness.

45

HE HAS made his weapons his gods.
When his weapons win he is defeated himself.

46

GOD FINDS himself by creating.

47

SHADOW, WITH her veil drawn, follows Light in secret meekness, with her silent steps of love.

48

THE STARS are not afraid to appear like fireflies.

49

I THANK thee that I am none of the wheels of power but I am one with the living creatures that are crushed by it.

50

THE MIND, sharp but not broad, sticks at every point but does not move.

51

YOUR IDOL is shattered in the dust to prove that God's dust is greater than your idol.

52

MAN DOES not reveal himself in his history, he struggles up through it.

STRAY BIRDS

53

WHILE THE glass lamp rebukes the earthen for calling it cousin, the moon rises, and the glass lamp, with a bland smile, calls her,—'My dear, dear sister.'¹

54

LIKE THE meeting of the seagulls and the waves we meet and come near. The seagulls fly off, the waves roll away and we depart.

55

MY DAY IS done, and I am like a boat drawn on the beach, listening to the dance-music of the tide in the evening.

56

LIFE IS given to us, we earn it by giving it.

57

WE COME nearest to the great when we are great in humility.

58

THE SPARROW is sorry for the peacock at the burden of its tail.

59

NEVER BE afraid of the moments—thus sings the voice of the everlasting.

60

THE HURRICANE seeks the shortest road by the no-road, and suddenly ends its search in the Nowhere.

¹ See no. 172, also based on the same Bengali original.—Editor

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

61

TAKE MY wine in my own cup, friend.
It loses its wreath of foam when poured into that of others.

62

THE PERFECT decks itself in beauty for the love of the Imperfect.

63

GOD SAYS to man, 'I heal you therefore I hurt, love you therefore punish.'

64

THANK THE flame for its light, but do not forget the lampholder standing
in the shade with constancy of patience.

65

TINY GRASS, your steps are small, but you possess the earth under your
tread.

66

THE INFANT flower opens its bud and cries, 'Dear World, please do not
fade.'

67

GOD GROWS weary of great kingdoms, but never of little flowers.

68

WRONG CANNOT afford defeat but Right can.

69

'I GIVE MY whole water in joy,' sings the waterfall, 'though little of it is
enough for the thirsty.'

STRAY BIRDS

70

WHERE IS the fountain that throws up these flowers in a ceaseless outbreak
of ecstasy?

71

THE WOODCUTTER'S axe begged for its handle from the tree.
The tree gave it.

72

IN MY solitude of heart I feel the sigh of this widowed evening veiled with
mist and rain.

73

CHASTITY is a wealth that comes from abundance of love.

74

THE MIST, like love, plays upon the heart of the hills and brings out surprises
of beauty.

75

WE READ the world wrong and say that it deceives us.

76

THE POET wind is out over the sea and the forest to seek his own voice.

77

EVERY CHILD comes with the message that God is not yet discouraged of
man.

78

THE GRASS seeks her crowd in the earth.
The tree seeks his solitude of the sky.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

79

MAN BARRICADES against himself.

80

YOUR VOICE, my friend, wanders in my heart, like the muffled sound of the sea among these listening pines.

81

WHAT IS this unseen flame of darkness whose sparks are the stars?

82

LET LIFE be beautiful like summer flowers and death like autumn leaves.

83

HE WHO WANTS to do good knocks at the gate; he who loves finds the gate open.

84

IN DEATH the many becomes one; in life the one becomes many.
Religion will be one when God is dead.¹

85

THE ARTIST is the lover of Nature, therefore he is her slave and her master.

86

'HOW FAR are you from me, O Fruit?'
'I am hidden in your heart, O Flower.'

¹ Also to be found in *Fireflies* and in *Lehkan*.—Editor

87

THIS LONGING is for the one who is felt in the dark, but not seen in the day.

88

'YOU ARE the big drop of dew under the lotus leaf, I am the smaller one on its upper side,' said the dewdrop to the lake.

89

THE SCABBARD is content to be dull when it protects the keenness of the sword.

90

IN DARKNESS the One appears as uniform; in the light the One appears as manifold.¹

91

THE GREAT earth makes herself hospitable with the help of the grass.

92

THE BIRTH and death of the leaves are the rapid whirls of the eddy whose wider circles move slowly among stars.

93

POWER SAID to the world, 'You are mine.'
The world kept it prisoner on her throne.
Love said to the world, 'I am thine.'
The world gave it the freedom of her house.

¹ 'Darkness smothers the one into uniformity/Light reveals the one in its multifariousness.' *Lekhan*

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

94

THE MIST is like the earth's desire.
It hides the sun for whom she cries.

95

BE STILL my heart, these great trees are prayers.

96

THE NOISE of the moment scoffs at the music of the Eternal.

97

I THINK OF other ages that floated upon the stream of life and love and death and are forgotten, and I feel the freedom of passing away.

98

THE SADNESS of my soul is her bride's veil.
It waits to be lifted in the night.

99

DEATH'S STAMP gives value to the coin of life; making it possible to buy with life what is truly precious.

100

THE CLOUD stood humbly in a corner of the sky
The morning crowned it with splendour.

101

THE DUST receives insult and in return offers her flowers.

102

DO NOT linger to gather flowers to keep them, but walk on, for flowers will keep themselves blooming all your way.

STRAY BIRDS

103

ROOTS ARE the branches down in the earth.
Branches are roots in the air.

104

THE MUSIC of the far-away summer flutters around the Autumn seeking its former nest.

105

DO NOT insult your friend by lending him merits from your own pocket.

106

THE TOUCH of the nameless days clings to my heart like mosses round the old tree.

107

THE ECHO mocks her origin to prove she is the original.

108

GOD is ashamed when the prosperous boasts of His special favour.

109

I CAST MY own shadow upon my path, because I have a lamp that has not been lighted.

110

MAN GOES into the noisy crowd to drown his own clamour of silence.

111

THAT WHICH ends in exhaustion is death, but the perfect ending is in the endless.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

112

THE SUN has his simple robe of light. The clouds are decked with gorgeousness.

113

THE HILLS are like shouts of children who raise their arms, trying to catch stars.

114

THE ROAD is lonely in its crowd for it is not loved.

115

THE POWER that boasts of its mischiefs is laughed at by the yellow leaves that fall, and clouds that pass by.

116

THE EARTH hums to me to-day in the sun, like a woman at her spinning, some ballad of the ancient time in a forgotten tongue.

117

THE GRASSBLADE is worthy of the great world where it grows.

118

DREAM is a wife who must talk,
Sleep is a husband who silently suffers.

119

THE NIGHT kisses the fading day whispering to his ear, 'I am death, your mother. I am to give you fresh birth.'

STRAY BIRDS

120

I FEEL THY beauty, dark night, like that of the loved woman when she has put out the lamp.

121

I CARRY IN my world that flourishes the worlds that have failed.

122

DEAR FRIEND, I feel the silence of your great thoughts of many a deepening eventide on this beach when I listen to these waves.

123

THE BIRD thinks it is an act of kindness to give the fish a lift in the air.

124

'IN THE MOON thou sendest thy love letter to me,' said the night to the sun.

'I leave my answers in tears upon the grass.'

125

THE GREAT is a born child; when he dies he gives his great childhood to the world.

126

NOT HAMMERSTROKES, but dance of the water sings the pebbles into perfection.

127

BEEs SIP honey from flowers and hum their thanks when they leave.
The gaudy butterfly is sure that the flowers owe thanks to him.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

128

TO BE outspoken is easy when you do not wait to speak the complete truth.

129

ASKS THE Possible to the Impossible, 'Where is your dwelling place?'
'In the dreams of the impotent,' comes the answer.

130

IF YOU SHUT your door to all errors truth will be shut out.

131

I HEAR SOME rustle of things behind my sadness of heart,—I cannot see them.

132

LEISURE IN its activity is work.
The stillness of the sea stirs in waves.

133

THE LEAF becomes flower when it loves.
The flower becomes fruit when it worships.

134

THE ROOTS below the earth claim no rewards for making the branches fruitful.

135

THIS RAINY evening the wind is restless.
I look at the swaying branches and ponder over the greatness of all things.

136

STORM OF midnight, like a giant child awakened in the untimely dark, has begun to play and shout.

137

THOU RAISEST thy waves vainly to follow thy lover, O sea, thou lonely bride of the storm.

138

'I AM ashamed of my emptiness,' said the Word to the Work.
'I know how poor I am when I see you,' said the Work to the Word.

139

TIME IS the wealth of change, but the clock in its parody makes it mere change and no wealth.

140

TRUTH IN HER dress finds facts too tight.
In fiction she moves with ease.

141

WHEN I travelled to here and to there, I was tired of thee, O Road, but now when thou leadest me to everywhere I am wedded to thee in love.

142

LET ME think that there is one among those stars that guides my life through the dark unknown.

143

WOMAN, WITH the grace of your fingers you touched my things and order came out like music.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

144

ONE SAD voice has its nest among the ruins of the years.
It sings to me in the night,—'I loved you.'

145

THE FLAMING fire warms me off by its own glow.
Save me from the dying embers hidden under ashes.

146

I HAVE my stars in the sky,
But oh for my little lamp unlit in my house.

147

THE DUST of the dead words clings to thee,
Wash thy soul with silence.

148

GAPS ARE left in life through which comes the sad music of death.

149

THE WORLD has opened its heart of light in the morning.
Come out, my heart, with thy love to meet it.

150

MY THOUGHTS shimmer with these shimmering leaves and my heart sings
with the touch of this sunlight; my life is glad to be floating with all things
into the blue of space, into the dark of time.

151

GOD'S GREAT power is in the gentle breeze, not in the storm.

152

THIS IS A dream in which things are all loose and they oppress. I shall find them gathered in thee when I awake and shall be free.

153

'WHO is there to take up my duties?' asked the setting sun.
'I shall do what I can, my Master,' said the earthen lamp.

154

BY PLUCKING her petals you do not gather the beauty of the flower.

155

SILENCE WILL carry your voice like the nest that holds the sleeping birds.

156

THE GREAT walks with the Small without fear.
The Middling keep aloof.

157

THE NIGHT opens the flowers in secret and allows the day to get thanks.

158

POWER TAKES as ingratitude the writhings of its victims.

159

WHEN WE rejoice in our fulness, then we can part with our fruits with joy.

160

THE RAINDROPS kissed the earth and whispered,—'We are thy homesick children, mother, come back to thee from the heaven.'

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

161

THE COBWEB pretends to catch dewdrops and catches flies.

162

LOVE! WHEN you come with the burning lamp of pain in your hand, I can see your face and know you as bliss.

163

'THE LEARNED say that your lights will one day be no more.' said the firefly to the stars.

The stars made no answer.

164

IN THE DUSK of the evening the bird of some early dawn comes to the nest of my silence.

165

THOUGHTS PASS in my mind like flocks of ducks in the sky.
I hear the voice of their wings.

166

THE CANAL loves to think that rivers exist solely to supply it with water.

167

THE WORLD has kissed my soul with its pain, asking for its return in songs.

168

THAT WHICH oppresses me, is it my soul trying to come out in the open, or the soul of the world knocking at my heart for its entrance?

169

THOUGHT FEEDS itself with its own words and grows.

170

I HAVE DIPPED the vessel of my heart into this silent hour; it has filled with love.

171

EITHER YOU have work or you have not.

When you have to say, 'Let us do something,' then begins mischief.

172

THE SUNFLOWER blushed to own the nameless flower as her kin.

The sun rose and smiled on it, saying, 'Are you well, my darling?'

173

'WHO DRIVES me forward like fate?'

'The Myself striding on my back.'

174

THE CLOUDS fill the watercups of the river, hiding themselves in the distant hills.

175

I SPILL water from my water jar as I walk on my way.

Very little remains for my home.

176

THE WATER in a vessel is sparkling; the water in the sea is dark.

The small truth has words that are clear; the great truth has great silence.

¹ See no. 53, also based on the same Bengali original—Editor

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

177

YOUR SMILE was the flowers of your own fields, your talk was the rustle of your own mountain pines, but your heart was the woman that we all know.

178

IT IS THE little things that I leave behind for my loved ones,—great things are for everyone.

179

WOMAN, THOU hast encircled the world's heart with the depth of thy tears as the sea has the earth.

180

THE SUNSHINE greets me with a smile.
The rain, his sad sister, talks to my heart.

181

MY FLOWER of the day dropped its petals forgotten.
In the evening it ripens into a golden fruit of memory.

182

I AM LIKE the road in the night listening to the footfalls of its memories in silence.

183

THE EVENING sky to me is like a window, and a lighted lamp, and a waiting behind it.

184

HE WHO IS too busy doing good finds no time to be good.

STRAY BIRDS

185

I AM THE autumn cloud, empty of rain, see my fulness in the field of ripened rice.

186

THEY HATED and killed and men praised them.
But God in shame hastens to hide its memory under the green grass.

187

TOES ARE THE fingers that have forsaken their past.

188

DARKNESS TRAVELS towards light, but blindness towards death.

189

THE PET DOG suspects the universe for scheming to take its place.

190

SIT STILL my heart, do not raise your dust.
Let the world find its way to you.

191

THE BOW whispers to the arrow before it speeds forth—'Your freedom is mine.'

192

WOMAN, IN your laughter you have the music of the fountain of life.

193

A MIND all logic is like a knife all blade.
It makes the hand bleed that uses it.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

194

GOD LOVES man's lamp lights better than his own great stars.¹

195

THIS WORLD is the world of wild storms kept tame with the music of beauty.

196

'MY HEART is like the golden casket of thy kiss,' said the sunset cloud to the sun.

197

BY TOUCHING you may kill, by keeping away you may possess.

198

THE CRICKET'S chirp and the patter of rain come to me through the dark, like the rustle of dreams from my past youth.

199

'I HAVE lost my dewdrop,' cries the flower to the morning sky that has lost all its stars.

200

THE BURNING log bursts in flame and cries,—'This is my flower, my death.'

201

THE WASP thinks that the honey-hive of the neighbouring bees is too small.
His neighbours ask him to build one still smaller.

¹ Also see *Fireflies*, no. 156.—Editor

STRAY BIRDS

202

'I CANNOT keep your waves,' says the bank to the river.
'Let me keep your footprints in my heart.'

203

THE DAY, with the noise of this little earth, drowns the silence of all worlds.

204

THE SONG feels the infinite in the air, the picture in the earth, the poem
in the air and the earth;
For its words have meaning that walks and music that soars.

205

WHEN THE sun goes down to the West, the East of his morning stands
before him in silence.

206

LET ME not put myself wrongly to my world and set it against me.

207

PRAISE SHAMES me, for I secretly beg for it.

208

LET MY doing nothing when I have nothing to do become untroubled in
its depth of peace like the evening in the seashore when the water is silent.

209

MAIDEN, YOUR simplicity, like the blueness of the lake, reveals your depth
of truth.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

210

THE BEST does not come alone.
It comes with the company of the all.

211

GOD'S RIGHT hand is gentle, but terrible is his left hand.

212

MY EVENING came among the alien trees and spoke in a language which
my morning stars did not know.

213

NIGHT'S DARKNESS is a bag that bursts with the gold of the dawn.

214

OUR DESIRE lends the colours of the rainbow to the mere mists and vapours
of life.

215

GOD WAITS to win back his own flowers as gifts from man's hands.

216

MY SAD thoughts tease me asking me their own names.

217

THE SERVICE of the fruit is precious, the service of the flower is sweet, but
let my service be the service of the leaves in its shade of humble devotion.

218

MY HEART HAS spread its sails to the idle winds for the shadowy island of
Anywhere.

STRAY BIRDS

219

MEN ARE cruel, but Man is kind.

220

MAKE ME thy cup and let my fulness be for thee and for thine.

221

THE STORM is like the cry of some god in pain whose love the earth refuses.

222

THE WORLD does not leak because death is not a crack.

223

LIFE HAS become richer by the love that has been lost.

224

MY FRIEND, your great heart shone with the sunrise of the East like the snowy summit of a lonely hill in the dawn.

225

THE FOUNTAIN of death makes the still water of life play.

226

THOSE WHO have everything but thee, my God, laugh at those who have nothing but thyself.

227

THE MOVEMENT of life has its rest in its own music.

228

KICKS ONLY raise dust and not crops from the earth.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

229

OUR NAMES are the light that glows on the sea waves at night and then dies without leaving its signature.

230

LET HIM only see the thorns who has eyes to see the rose.¹

231

SET BIRD'S wings with gold and it will never again soar in the sky.

232

THE SAME lotus of our clime blooms here in the alien water with the same sweetness, under another name.

233

IN HEART'S perspective the distance looms large.

234

THE MOON HAS her light all over the sky, her dark spots to herself.

235

DO NOT SAY, 'It is morning,' and dismiss it with a name of yesterday. See it for the first time as a new-born child that has no name.

236

SMOKE BOASTS to the sky, and Ashes to the earth, that they are brothers to the fire.

¹ 'Let him take note of the thorn who can see the flower as a whole.' *Lekhan*.

LEAF 41 STRAY BIRDS 41

237

THE RAINDROP whispered to the jasmine, 'Keep me in your heart for ever.'
The jasmine sighed, 'Alas,' and dropped to the ground.

238

TIMID THOUGHTS, do not be afraid of me.
I am a poet.

239

THE DIM silence of my mind seems filled with crickets' chirp—the grey
twilight of sound.

240

ROCKETS, YOUR insult to the stars follows yourself back to the earth.

241

THOU HAST led me through my crowded travels of the day to my evening's
loneliness.

I wait for its meaning through the stillness of the night.

242

THIS LIFE is the crossing of a sea, where we meet in the same narrow ship.
In death we reach the shore and go to our different worlds.

243

THE STREAM of truth flows through its channels of mistakes.

244

MY HEART is homesick to-day for the one sweet hour across the sea of time.

245

THE BIRD-SONG is the echo of the morning light back from the earth.

[425]

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

246

'ARE YOU too proud to kiss me?' the morning light asks the buttercup.

247

'HOW MAY I sing to thee and worship, O Sun?' asked the little flower.
'By the simple silence of thy purity,' answered the sun.

248

MAN IS worse than an animal when he is an animal.

249

DARK CLOUDS become heaven's flowers when kissed by light.

250

LET NOT THE sword-blade mock its handle for being blunt.

251

THE NIGHT'S silence, like a deep lamp, is burning with the light of its milky way.

252

AROUND THE sunny island of Life swells day and night death's limitless song of the sea.

253

IS NOT THIS mountain like a flower, with its petals of hills, drinking the sunlight?

254

THE REAL WITH its meaning read wrong and emphasis misplaced is the unreal.

STRAY BIRDS

255

FIND YOUR beauty, my heart, from the world's movement, like the boat that has the grace of the wind and the water.

256

THE EYES ARE not proud of their sight but of their eyeglasses.

257

I LIVE IN this little world of mine and am afraid to make it the least less. Lift me into thy world and let me have the freedom gladly to lose my all.

258

THE FALSE can never grow into truth by growing in power.

259

MY HEART, with its lapping waves of song, longs to caress this green world of the sunny day.

260

WAYSIDE GRASS, love the star, then your dreams will come out in flowers.

261

LET YOUR music, like a sword, pierce the noise of the market to its heart.

262

THE TREMBLING leaves of this tree touch my heart like the fingers of an infant child.

263

THIS SADNESS of my soul is her bride's veil.
It waits to be lifted in the night.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

264

THE LITTLE flower lies in the dust.
It sought the path of the butterfly.

265

I AM IN the world of the roads.
The night comes. Open thy gate, thou world of the home.

266

I HAVE sung the songs of thy day.
In the evening let me carry thy lamp through the stormy path.

267

I DO NOT ask thee into the house.
Come into my infinite loneliness, my Lover.

268

DEATH BELONGS to life as birth does.
The walk is in the raising of the foot as in the laying of it down.

269

I HAVE learnt the simple meaning of thy whispers in flowers and sunshine—teach me to know thy words in pain and death.

270

THE NIGHT'S flower was late when the morning kissed her, she shivered and sighed and dropped to the ground.

271

THROUGH THE sadness of all things I hear the crooning of the Eternal Mother.

272

I CAME TO your shore as a stranger; I lived in your house as a guest, I leave
your door as a friend, my earth.

273

LET MY thoughts come to you, when I am gone, like the afterglow of sunset
at the margin of starry silence.

274

LIGHT IN MY heart the evening star of rest and then let the night whisper
to me of love.

275

I AM A child in the dark.
I stretch my hands through the coverlet of night for thee, Mother.

276

THE DAY OF work is done. Hide my face in your arms, Mother.
Let me dream.

277

THE LAMP OF meeting burns long; it goes out in a moment at the parting.

278

ONE WORD keep for me in thy silence, O World, when I am dead, 'I have
loved.'

279

WE LIVE IN this world when we love it.

280

LET THE dead have the immortality of fame, but the living the immortality
of love.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

281

I HAVE SEEN thee as the half-awakened child sees his mother in the dusk
of the dawn and then smiles and sleeps again.

282

I SHALL DIE again and again to know that life is inexhaustible.

283

WHILE I was passing with the crowd in the road I saw thy smile from the
balcony and I sang and forgot all noise.

284

LOVE IS life in its fulness like the cup with its wine.

285

THEY LIGHT their own lamps and sing their own words in their temples.
But the birds sing thy name in thine own morning light,—for thy
name is joy.

286

LEAD ME in the centre of thy silence to fill my heart with songs.

287

LET THEM live who choose in their own hissing world of fireworks.
My heart longs for thy stars, my God.

288

LOVE'S PAIN sang round my life like the unplumbed sea, and love's joy sang
like birds in its flowering groves.

STRAY BIRDS

289

PUT OUT THE lamp when thou wishest.
I shall know thy darkness and shall love it.

290

WHEN I stand before thee at the day's end thou shalt see my scars and
know that I had my wounds and also my healing.

291

SOME DAY I shall sing to thee in the sunrise of some other world, 'I have
seen thee before in the light of the earth, in the love of man.'

292

CLOUDS COME floating into my life from other days no longer to shed rain
or usher storm but to give colour to my sunset sky.

293

TRUTH RAISES against itself the storm that scatters its seeds broadcast.

294

THE STORM OF the last night has crowned this morning with golden peace.

295

TRUTH SEEMS to come with its final word; and the final word gives birth
to its next.

296

BLESSED IS he whose fame does not outshine his truth.

297

SWEETNESS OF thy name fills my heart when I forget mine—like thy morning
sun when the mist is melted.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

298

THE SILENT night has the beauty of the mother and the clamorous day of the child.

299

THE WORLD loved man when he smiled. The world became afraid of him when he laughed.

300

GOD WAITS for man to regain his childhood in wisdom.

301

LET ME FEEL this world as thy love taking form, then my love will help it.

302

THY SUNSHINE smiles upon the winter days of my heart, never doubting of its spring flowers.

303

GOD KISSES the finite in his love and man the infinite.

304

THOU CROSSEST desert lands of barren years to reach the moment of fulfilment.

305

GOD'S SILENCE ripens man's thoughts into speech.

306

THOU WILT find, Eternal Traveller, marks of thy footsteps across my songs.

STRAY BIRDS

307

LET ME NOT shame thee, Father, who displayest thy glory in thy children.

308

CHEERLESS is the day, the light under frowning clouds is like a punished child with traces of tears on its pale cheeks, and the cry of the wind is like the cry of a wounded world. But I know I am travelling to meet my Friend.

309

TO-NIGHT THERE is a stir among the palm leaves, a swell in the sea, Full Moon, like the heart throb of the world. From what unknown sky hast thou carried in thy silence the aching secret of love?

310

I DREAM OF a star, an island of light, where I shall be born and in the depth of its quickening leisure my life will ripen its works like the ricefield in the autumn sun.

311

THE SMELL OF the wet earth in the rain rises like a great chant of praise from the voiceless multitude of the insignificant.

312

THAT LOVE can ever lose is a fact that we cannot accept as truth.

313

WE SHALL know some day that death can never rob us of that which our soul has gained, for her gains are one with herself.

314

GOD COMES to me in the dusk of my evening with the flowers from my past kept fresh in his basket.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

315

WHEN ALL the strings of my life will be tuned, my Master, then at every touch of thine will come out the music of love.

316

LET ME live truly, my Lord, so that death to me become true.

317

MAN'S HISTORY is waiting in patience for the triumph of the insulted man.

318

I FEEL THY gaze upon my heart this moment like the sunny silence of the morning upon the lonely field whose harvest is over.

319

I LONG FOR the Island of Songs across this heaving Sea of Shouts.

320

THE PRELUDE of the night is commenced in the music of the sunset, in its solemn hymn to the ineffable dark.

321

I HAVE SCALED the peak and found no shelter in fame's bleak and barren height. Lead me, my Guide, before the light fades, into the valley of quiet where life's harvest mellow into golden wisdom.

322

THINGS LOOK phantastic in this dimness of the dusk—the spires whose bases are lost in the dark and tree tops like blots of ink. I shall wait for the morning and wake up to see thy city in the light.

STRAY BIRDS

323

I HAVE suffered and despaired and known death and I am glad that I am
in this great world.

324

THERE ARE tracts in my life that are bare and silent. They are the open
spaces where my busy days had their light and air.

325

RELEASE ME from my unfulfilled past clinging to me from behind making
death difficult.

326

LET THIS be my last word, that I trust in thy love.

Fireflies

The flash of twilight green,
The flicker of the firefly's light,
The flash of the firefly's light.

The flash of the firefly's light,
The flicker of the firefly's light,
The flash of the firefly's light.

The flash of the firefly's light,
The flicker of the firefly's light,
The flash of the firefly's light.

The flash of the firefly's light,
The flicker of the firefly's light,
The flash of the firefly's light.

The flash of the firefly's light,
The flicker of the firefly's light,
The flash of the firefly's light.

The flash of the firefly's light,
The flicker of the firefly's light,
The flash of the firefly's light.

1

MY FANCIES are fireflies,—
Specks of living light
twinkling in the dark.¹

2

THE VOICE of wayside pansies,
that do not attract the careless glance,
murmurs in these desultory lines.²

3

IN THE DROWSY dark caves of the mind
dreams build their nest with fragments
dropped from day's caravan.

4

SPRING SCATTERS the petals of flowers
that are not for the fruits of the future,
but for the moment's whim.

5

JOY FREED from the bond of earth's slumber
rushes into numberless leaves,
and dances in the air for a day.

6

MY WORDS that are slight
may lightly dance upon time's waves
when my works heavy with import have gone down.

¹ These verses were not numbered in the earlier edition; we have done it for the sake of convenience.—Editor

² 'The same voice murmurs in these desultory lines/which is born in wayside pansies/letting hasty glances pass by.' *Lehman*

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

7

MIND'S underground moths
grow filmy wings
and take a farewell flight
in the sunset sky.

8

THE BUTTERFLY counts not months but moments,
and has time enough.¹

9

MY THOUGHTS, like sparks, ride on winged surprises,
carrying a single laughter.

10

THE TREE GAZES in love at its own beautiful shadow
which yet it never can grasp.²

11

LET MY LOVE, like sunlight, surround you
and yet give you illumined freedom.

12

DAYS ARE coloured bubbles
that float upon the surface of fathomless night.

13

MY OFFERINGS are too timid to claim your remembrance,
and therefore you may remember them.

¹ 'The butterfly does not count years but moments/and therefore has enough time.'
Lekhan

² This was wrongly printed as part of poem no. 9 in the first edition. This is in fact
a separate poem.—Editor

FIREFLIES

14

LEAVE OUT my name from the gift
if it be a burden,
but keep my song.

15

APRIL, LIKE a child,
writes hieroglyphs on dust with flowers,
wipes them away and forgets.

16

MEMORY, THE priestess, kills the present
and offers its heart to the shrine of the dead past.

17

FROM THE solemn gloom of the temple
children run out to sit in the dust,
God watches them play
and forgets the priest.

18

MY MIND starts up at some flash
on the flow of its thoughts
like a brook at a sudden liquid note of its own
that is never repeated.

19

IN THE mountain, stillness surges up
to explore its own height;
in the lake, movement stands still
to contemplate its own depth.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

20

THE DEPARTING night's one kiss
on the closed eyes of morning
glows in the star of dawn.

21

MAIDEN, THY beauty is like a fruit
which is yet to mature,
tense with an unyielding secret.

22

SORROW THAT has lost its memory
is like the dumb dark hours
that have no bird songs
but only the cricket's chirp.

23

BIGOTRY TRIES to keep truth safe in its hand
with a grip that kills it.
Wishing to hearten a timid lamp
great night lights all her stars.

24

THOUGH HE holds in his arms the earth-bride,
the sky is ever immensely away.

25

GOD SEEKS comrades and claims love,
the Devil seeks slaves and claims obedience.

26

THE CHILD ever dwells in the mystery of ageless time,
unobscured by the dust of history.

FIREFLIES

27

A LIGHT laughter in the steps of creation
carries it swiftly across time.

28

THE SOIL IN return for her service
keeps the tree tied to her,
the sky asks nothing and leaves it free.

29

JEWEL-LIKE the immortal
does not boast of its length of years
but of the scintillating point of its moment.¹

30

ONE WHO was distant came near to me in the morning,
and still nearer when taken away by night.

31

WHITE AND pink oleanders meet
and make merry in different dialects.

32

WHEN PEACE is active sweeping its dirt,
it is storm.

33

THE LAKE LIES low by the hill,
a tearful entreaty of love
at the foot of the inflexible.

¹ 'The immortal like a jewel, does not boast of a large surface in years/but of a shining point in a moment.' *Lekhan*

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

34

THERE SMILES the Divine Child
among his playthings of unmeaning clouds
and ephemeral lights and shadows.

35

THE BREEZE whispers to the lotus,
'What is thy secret?'
'It is myself,' says the lotus,
'Steal it and I disappear!'

36

THE FREEDOM of the storm and the bondage of the stem
join hands in the dance of swaying branches.

37

THE JASMINE'S lisp of love to the sun is her flowers.

38

THE TYRANT claims freedom to kill freedom
and yet to keep it for himself.

39

GOD'S TIRED OF their paradise, envy man.

40

CLOUDS ARE hills in vapour,
hills are clouds in stone,—
a phantasy in time's dream.

41

WHILE GOD waits for His temple to be built of love,
men bring stones.

42

I TOUCH GOD in my song
as the hill touches the far-away sea
with its waterfall.

43

LIGHT FINDS her treasure of colours
through the antagonism of clouds.

44

MY HEART to-day smiles at its past night of tears
like a wet tree glistening in the sun
after the rain is over.

45

I HAVE thanked the trees that have made my life fruitful
But have failed to remember the grass
that has ever kept it green.

46

THE ONE without second is emptiness,
the other one makes it true.

47

LIFE'S ERRORS cry for the merciful beauty
that can modulate their isolation
into a harmony with the whole.

48

THEY EXPECT thanks for the banished nest
because their cage is shapely and secure.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

49

IN LOVE I pay my endless debt to thee
for what thou art.

50

THE POND sends up its lyrics from its dark in lilies,
and the sun says, they are good.¹

51

YOUR CALUMNY against the great is impious,
it hurts yourself;
against the small it is mean,
for it hurts the victim.

52

THE FIRST flower that blossomed on this earth
was an invitation to the unborn song.

53

DAWN—THE many-coloured flower—fades,
and then the simple light-fruit,
the sun appears.

54

THE MUSCLE that has a doubt of its wisdom
throttles the voice that would cry.

55

THE WIND tries to take the flame by storm
only to blow it out.

¹ The bottom of the pond, from its dark sends up its lyrics in lilies, / and the sun says, they are good.' *Lekhan*

FIREFLIES

56

LIFE'S PLAY IS swift,
Life's playthings fall behind one by one
and are forgotten.

57

MY FLOWER, seek not thy paradise
in a fool's buttonhole.

58

THOU HAST risen late, my crescent moon,
but my night bird is still awake to greet thee.

59

DARKNESS IS the veiled bride
silently waiting for the errant light
to return to her bosom.

60

TREES ARE THE earth's endless effort to speak
to the listening heaven.

61

THE BURDEN OF self is lightened¹
when I laugh at myself.

62

THE WEAK CAN be terrible
because they try furiously to appear strong.

¹ 'My self's burden is lightened.' *Lekhan*

63

THE WIND OF heaven blows,
The anchor desperately clutches the mud,
and my boat is beating its breast against the chain.

64

THE SPIRIT OF death is one,
the spirit of life is many.
When God is dead religion becomes one.¹

65

THE BLUE OF the sky longs for the earth's green,
the wind between them sighs, 'Alas.'

66²

DAY'S PAIN muffled by its own glare,
burns among stars in the night.

67

THE STARS crowd round the virgin night
in silent awe at her loneliness
that can never be touched.

68

THE CLOUD gives all its gold
to the departing sun
and greets the rising moon
with only a pale smile.

¹ Also in *Stray Birds*, no. 84 and in *Lekhan*.—Editor

² No. 66 was erroneously printed in the first edition as a part of no. 65. In *Lekhan* it was printed separately.—Editor

69

HE WHO DOES good comes to the temple gate,
he who loves reaches the shrine.

70

FLOWER, HAVE pity for the worm,
it is not a bee,
its love is a blunder and a burden.

71

WITH THE ruins of terror's triumph
children build their doll's house.¹

72

THE LAMP waits through the long day of neglect
for the flame's kiss in the night.

73

FEATHERS IN the dust lying lazily content
have forgotten their sky.²

74

THE FLOWER which is single
need not envy the thorns
that are numerous.

75

THE WORLD suffers most from the disinterested tyranny
of its well-wisher.

¹ 'By the ruins of terror's triumph/children build their dust castle.' *Lekhan*

² 'Feathers lying in the dust have forgotten their sky.' *Lekhan*

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

76

WE GAIN freedom when we have paid the full price
for our right to live.

77

YOUR CARELESS gifts of a moment,¹
like the meteors of an autumn night,
catch fire in the depth of my being.

78

THE FAITH waiting in the heart of a seed
promises a miracle of life
which it cannot prove at once.

79

SPRING hesitates at winter's door,
but the mango blossom rashly runs out to him
before her time and meets her doom.

80

THE WORLD is the ever-changing foam
that floats on the surface of a sea of silence.

81

THE TWO separated shores mingle their voices
in a song of unfathomed tears.

82

AS A RIVER in the sea,
work finds its fulfilment
in the depth of leisure.

¹ 'Your moments' careless gifts'. *Lekhan*

FIREFLIES

83

I LINGERED ON my way till thy cherry tree lost its blossom,
but the azalea brings to me, my love, thy forgiveness.

84

THY SHY LITTLE pomegranate bud,
blushing to-day behind her veil,
will burst into a passionate flower
tomorrow when I am away.

85

THE CLUMSINESS of power spoils the key,
and uses the pickaxe.

86

BIRTH IS FROM the mystery of night
into the greater mystery of day.

87

THESE PAPER boats of mine are meant to dance
on the ripples of hours,
and not to reach any destination.

88

MIGRATORY songs wing from my heart
and seek their nests in your voice of love.

89

THE SEA OF danger, doubt and denial
around man's little island and certainty
challenges him to dare¹ the unknown.

¹ 'across into'. *Lekhan*

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

90

LOVE PUNISHES when it forgives,
and injured beauty by its awful silence.

91

YOU LIVE alone and unrecompensed
because they are afraid of your great worth.

92

THE SAME SUN is newly born in new lands
in a ring of endless dawns.

93

GOD'S WORLD is ever renewed by death,
a Titan's ever crushed by its own existence.

94

THE GLOW-WORM while exploring the dust
never knows that stars are in the sky.

95

THE TREE is of to-day, the flower is old,
it brings with it the message
of the immemorial seed.

96

EACH ROSE that comes brings me greetings
from the Rose of an eternal spring.

97

GOD HONOURS me when I work,
He loves me when I sing.¹

98

MY LOVE OF to-day finds no home²
in the nest deserted by yesterday's love.

99

THE FIRE OF pain traces for my soul
a luminous path across her sorrow.

100

THE GRASS survives the hill
through its resurrections from countless deaths.

101

THOU HAST vanished from my reach
leaving an impalpable touch in the blue of the sky,
an invisible image in the wind moving among the shadows.³

102

IN PITY FOR the desolate branch
spring leaves to it a kiss that fluttered in a lonely leaf.⁴

¹ Obviously due to editorial oversight nos. 96 and 97 were printed in the first edition as a single poem in one stanza.—Editor

² 'My love of today finds herself homeless', *Lekhan*

³ 'Since thou hast vanished from my reach/I feel that the sky carries an impalpable touch in its blueness/and the wind the invisible image of a movement among the restless grass.' *Lekhan*

⁴ 'Spring in pity for the desolate branch/left one fluttering kiss in a solitary leaf.'
Lekhan

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

103

THE SHY shadow in the garden
loves the sun in silence,
Flowers guess the secret, and smile,
while the leaves whisper.

104

I LEAVE NO trace of wings in the air,
but I am glad I have had my flight.

105

THE FIREFLIES, twinkling among leaves
make the stars wonder.

106

THE MOUNTAIN remains unmoved
at its seeming defeat by the mist.

107

WHILE THE rose said to the sun
'I shall ever remember thee'
her petals fell to the dust.

108

HILLS ARE THE earth's gesture of despair
for the unreachable.¹

109

THOUGH THE thorn in thy flower pricked me,
O Beauty,
I am grateful.

¹ "Hills are the silent cry of the earth for the unreachable." *Lekhan*

FIREFLIES

110

THE WORLD knows that the few
are more than the many.

111

LET NOT MY love be a burden on you, my friend,
know that it pays itself.

112

DAWN PLAYS her lute before the gate of darkness,
'and is content to vanish when the sun comes out.'¹

113

BEAUTY IS truth's smile
when she beholds her own face
in a perfect mirror.

114

THE DEW-DROP knows the sun
only within its own tiny orb.

115

FORLORN thoughts from the forsaken hives of all ages,
swarming in the air, hum round my heart and seek my voice.

116

THE DESERT is imprisoned in the wall
of its unbounded barrenness.

¹ 'till the sun comes out and sees her vanish.' *Lekhan*

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

117

IN THE THRILL of little leaves
I see the air's invisible dance,
and in their glimmering
the secret heart-beats of the sky.

118

YOU ARE LIKE a flowering tree,
amazed when I praise you for your gifts.

119

THE EARTH'S sacrificial fire
flames up in her trees
scattering sparks in flowers.

120

FORESTS, THE clouds of earth,
hold up to the sky their silence,
and clouds from above come down
in resonant showers.

121

THE WORLD speaks to me in pictures,
my soul answers in music.

122

THE SKY TELLS its beads all night
on the countless stars
in memory of the sun.

123

THE DARKNESS of night, like pain, is dumb,
the darkness of dawn, like peace, is silent.

FIREFLIES

124

PRIDE ENGRAVES his frowns in stones,
love offers her surrender in flowers.

125

THE OBSEQUIOUS brush curtains truth
in deference to the canvas which is narrow.

126

THE HILL IN ITS longing for the far-away sky
wishes to be like the cloud
with its endless urge of seeking.

127

TO JUSTIFY their own spilling of ink
they spell the day as night.

128

PROFIT SMILES¹ on goodness
when the good is profitable.

129

IN ITS swelling pride
the bubble doubts the truth of the sea,
and laughs and bursts into emptiness.

130

LOVE IS AN endless mystery,
for it has nothing else to explain it.

¹ 'laughs'. *Lekhan*.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

131

MY CLOUDS, sorrowing in the dark,
forget that they themselves
have hidden the sun.

132

MAN DISCOVERS his own wealth
when God comes to ask gifts of him.

133

YOU LEAVE your memory as a flame
to my lonely lamp of separation.¹

134

I CAME TO offer thee a flower,
but thou must have all my garden,—
It is thine.

135

THE PICTURE—a memory of light
treasured by the shadow.

136

IT IS EASY TO make faces at the sun,
He is exposed by his own light in all directions.

137

LOVE REMAINS a secret even when spoken,
for only a lover truly knows that he is loved.

¹ "Thou hast left thy memory as a flame/to my lonely lamp of separation."
Lekhan

138

HISTORY slowly smothers its truth,
but hastily struggles to revive it
in the terrible penance of pain.

139

MY WORK IS rewarded in daily wages,
I wait for my final value in love.

140

BEAUTY KNOWS to say, 'Enough,'
barbarism clamours for still more.

141

GOD LOVES to see in me, not his servant,
but himself who serves all.

142

THE DARKNESS of night is in harmony with day,
the morning of mist is discordant.

143

IN THE bounteous time of roses love is wine,—
it is food in the famished hour
when their petals are shed.

144

AN UNKNOWN flower in a strange land
speaks to the poet:
'Are we not of the same soil, my lover?'

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

145

I AM ABLE TO love my God
because He gives me freedom to deny Him.

146

MY UNTUNED strings beg for music
in their anguished cry of shame.

147

THE WORM thinks it strange and foolish
that man does not eat his books.

148

THE CLOUDED sky to-day bears the vision
of the shadow of a divine sadness¹
on the forehead of brooding eternity.

149

THE SHADE OF my trees is for passers by,
its fruit for the one for whom I wait.

150

FLUSHED WITH the glow of sunset
earth seems like a ripe fruit
ready to be harvested by night.

151

LIGHT ACCEPTS darkness for his spouse
for the sake of creation.

¹ 'of a divine shadow of sadness', *Lekhan*

152

THE REED waits for his master's breath,
the Master goes seeking for his reed.

153

TO THE BLIND pen the hand that writes is unreal,
its writing unmeaning.

154

THE SEA SMITES his own barren breast
because he has no flowers to offer to the moon.

155

THE GREED FOR fruit misses the flower.

156

GOD IN His temple of stars
waits for man to bring him his lamp.

157

THE FIRE restrained in the tree fashions flowers.
Released from bonds, the shameless flame dies in barren ashes.

158

THE SKY SETS no snare to capture the moon,
it is her own freedom which binds her.
The light that fills the sky
seeks its limit in a dew-drop on the grass.

159

WEALTH IS THE burden of bigness,
Welfare the fulness of being.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

160

THE RAZOR-BLADE is proud of its keenness
when it sneers at the sun.

161

THE BUTTERFLY has leisure to love the lotus,
not the bee busily storing honey.

162

CHILD, THOU, bringest to my heart
the babble of the wind and the water,
the flowers' speechless secrets, the clouds' dreams,
the mute gaze of wonder of the morning sky.

163

THE RAINBOW among the clouds may be great
but the little butterfly among the bushes is greater.

164

THE MIST weaves her net round the morning,
captivates him, and makes him blind.

165

THE MORNING Star whispers to Dawn,
'Tell me that you are only for me.'
'Yes,' she answers,
'And also only for that nameless flower.'

166

THE SKY remains infinitely vacant
for earth there to build its heaven with dreams.

FIREFLIES

167

PERHAPS THE crescent moon smiles in doubt
at being told that it is a fragment
awaiting perfection.

168

LET THE evening forgive the mistakes of the day
and thus win peace for herself.

169

BEAUTY SMILES in the confinement of the bud,
in the heart of a sweet incompleteness.

170

YOUR FLITTING love lightly brushed with its wings
my sun-flower
and never asked if it was ready to surrender its honey.

171

LEAVES ARE silences¹
around flowers which are their words.

172

THE TREE BEARS its thousand years
as one large majestic moment.

173

MY OFFERINGS are not for the temple at the end of the road,
but for the wayside shrines
that surprise me at every bend.

¹ 'Leaves are masses of silence'. *Lekhan*

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

174

YOUR SMILE, my love, like the smell of a strange flower,
is simple and inexplicable.

175

DEATH LAUGHS when the merit of the dead is exaggerated
for it swells his store with more than he can claim.

176

THE SIGH OF the shore follows in vain
the breeze that hastens the ship
across the sea.

177

TRUTH LOVES its limits,
for there it meets the beautiful.

178

BETWEEN THE shores of Me and Thee
there is the loud ocean, my own surging self,
which I long to cross.

179

THE RIGHT TO possess boasts foolishly
of its right to enjoy.

180

THE ROSE IS a great deal more
than a blushing apology for the thorn.

181

DAY OFFERS TO the silence of stars
his golden lute to be tuned
for the endless life.

FIREFLIES

182

THE WISE know how to teach,
the fool how to smite.

183

THE CENTRE is still and silent in the heart
of an eternal dance of circles.

184

THE JUDGE thinks that he is just when he compares
the oil of another's lamp
with the light of his own.

185

THE CAPTIVE flower in the King's wreath
smiles bitterly when the meadow-flower envies her.

186

ITS STORE OF snow is the hill's own burden,
its outpouring of streams is borne by all the world.

187

LISTEN TO THE prayer of the forest
for its freedom in flowers.¹

188

LET YOUR LOVE see me
even through the barrier of nearness.

¹ "I have the prayer to the sun / from the myriad buds in the forest: / "open our eyes.""
Lehhan

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

189

THE SPIRIT OF work in creation is there
to carry and help the spirit of play.

190

TO CARRY THE burden of the instrument,
count the cost of its material,
and never to know that it is for music,
is the tragedy of deaf life.

191

FAITH IS THE bird that feels the light
and sings when the dawn is still dark.

192

I BRING TO THEE, night, my day's empty cup,
to be cleansed with thy cool darkness
for a new morning's festival.

193

THE MOUNTAIN fir, in its rustling,
modulates the memory of its fights with the storm
into a hymn of peace.¹

194

GOD HONOURED me with his fight
when I was rebellious,
He ignored me when I was languid.

¹ 'The mountain fir keeps hidden/the memory of its struggle with the storm/
murmuring in its rustling boughs a hymn of peace.' *Lekhan*

FIREFLIES

195

THE SECTARIAN thinks
that he has the sea
ladled into his private pond.¹

196

IN THE SHADY depth of life
are the lonely nests of memories
that shrink from words.²

197

LET MY LOVE find its strength
in the service of day,
its peace in the union of night.³

198

LIFE SENDS UP in blades of grass
its silent hymn of praise
to the unnamed Light.

199

THE STARS OF night are to me
the memorials of my day's faded flowers.⁴

200

OPEN THY DOOR to that which must go,
for the loss becomes unseemly when obstructed.

¹ 'The man proud of his sect/thinks that he has the sea/ladled into his private pond.' *Lekhan*

² 'In the shady depth of life are the lonely nests of unutterable pain.' *Lekhan*

³ 'Let my love feel its strength' instead of 'find its strength'. *Lekhan*

⁴ 'Stars of night are the memorials for me/of my day's faded flowers.' *Lekhan*

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

201

TRUE END IS NOT in the reaching of the limit,
but in a completion which is limitless.

202

THE SHORE whispers to the sea:
'Write to me what thy waves struggle to say.'
The sea writes in foam again and again
and wipes off the lines in a boisterous despair.

203

LET THE TOUCH of thy finger¹ thrill my life's strings
and make the music thine and mine.

204

THE INNER world rounded in my life² like a fruit,
matured in joy and sorrow,
will drop into the darkness of the original soil
for some further course of creation.

205

FORM IS IN Matter, rhythm in Force,
meaning in the Person.

206

THERE ARE seekers of wisdom and seekers of wealth,
I seek thy company so that I may sing.

¹ 'Let thy touch', *Lekhan*.

² In *Lekhan* there is a comma after 'life', and the second line begins with 'like a fruit'.

207

AS THE TREE its leaves, I shed my words on the earth,
let my thoughts unuttered flower in thy silence.¹

208

MY FAITH in truth, my vision of the perfect,
help thee, Master, in thy creation.

209

ALL THE delights that I have left
in life's fruits and flowers
let me offer to thee at the end of the feast,
in a perfect union of love.

210

SOME HAVE thought deeply and explored the meaning of thy truth
and they are great;
I have listened to catch the music of thy play,
and I am glad.

211

THE TREE is a winged spirit
released from the bondage of seed,
pursuing its adventure of life
across the unknown.

212

THE LOTUS offers its beauty to the heaven
the grass its service to the earth.

¹ 'Like the tree its leaves, I scatter my speech on the dust/Let my words unuttered flower in thy silence.' *Lekhan*

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

213

THE SUN'S KISS mellows into abandonment
the miserliness of the green fruit clinging to its stem.

214

THE FLAME met the earthen lamp in me,
and what a great marvel of light!

215

MISTAKES LIVE in the neighbourhood of truth
and therefore delude us.

216

THE CLOUD laughed at the rainbow
saying that it was an upstart
gaudy in its emptiness.
The rainbow calmly answered
'I am as inevitably real as the sun himself.'

217

LET ME NOT grope in vain in the dark
but keep my mind still in the faith
that the day will break
and truth will appear
in its simplicity.

218

THROUGH THE silent night
I hear the returning vagrant hopes of the morning
knock at my heart.

FIREFLIES

219

MY NEW LOVE comes
bringing to me the eternal wealth of the old.

220

THE EARTH gazes at the moon and wonders
that she should have all her music in her smile.

221

DAY WITH ITS glare of curiosity
puts the stars to flight.

222

MY MIND HAS its true union with thee, O sky,
at the window which is mine own,
and not in the open
where thou hast thy sole kingdom.

223

MAN CLAIMS God's flowers as his own
when he weaves them in a garland.

224

THE BURIED city, laid bare to the sun of a new age,
is ashamed that it has lost all its songs.

225

LIKE MY heart's pain that has long missed its meaning,
the sun's rays robed in dark
hide themselves under the ground.
Like my heart's pain at love's sudden touch,
they change their veil at the spring's call

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

and come out in the carnival of colours,
in flowers and leaves.

226

MY LIFE'S empty flute
waits for its final music¹
like the primal darkness
before the stars came out.

227

EMANCIPATION from the bondage of the soil
is no freedom for the tree.

228

THE TAPESTRY of life's story is woven
with the threads of life's ties
ever joining and breaking.

229

THOSE THOUGHTS of mine that are never captured by words
perch upon my songs and dance.²

230

MY SOUL to night loses itself
in the silent heart of a tree
standing alone among the whispers of immensity.

231

PEARL SHELLS cast up by the sea
on death's barren beach,—
a magnificent wastefulness of creative life.

¹ 'Vacancy in my life's flute waits for its music'. *Lekhan*

² 'Those thoughts of mine that soar free in the air/come to perch upon my songs.'
Lekhan

232

THE SUNLIGHT opens for me the world's gate,
love's light its treasure.

233

MY LIFE LIKE the reed with its stops,
has its play of colours
through the gaps in its hopes and gains.¹

234

LET NOT MY thanks to thee
rob my silence of its fuller homage.

235

LIFE'S aspirations come
in the guise of children.

236

THE FADED flower sighs
that the spring has vanished for ever.

237

IN MY LIFE'S garden
my wealth has been of the² shadows and lights
that are never gathered and stored.

238

THE FRUIT that I have gained for ever
is that which thou hast accepted.

¹ 'My life has its play of colours through thwarted hopes and gains incomplete/like the reed that has its music through its gaps.' *Lekhan*

² 'the' is deleted in *Lekhan*.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

239

THE JASMINE knows the sun to be her brother in the heaven.

240

LIGHT is young, the ancient light;
shadows are of the moment, they are born old.

241

I FEEL THAT the ferry of my songs at the day's end
will bring me across to the other shore
from where I shall see.

242

THE BUTTERFLY flitting from flower to flower
ever remains mine,
I lose the one that is netted by me.

243

YOUR VOICE, free bird, reaches my sleeping nest,
and my drowsy wings dream
of a voyage to the light
above the clouds.

244

I MISS THE meaning of my own part
in the play of life
because I know not of the parts
that others play.

245

THE FLOWER sheds all its petals
and finds the fruit.

246

I LEAVE MY songs behind me
to the bloom of the ever-returning honey-suckles
and the joy of the wind from the south.

247

DEAD LEAVES when they lose themselves in soil
take part in the life of the forest.

248

THE MIND EVER seeks its words
from its sounds and silence
as the sky from its darkness and light.

249

THE UNSEEN dark plays on his flute
and the rhythm of light
eddies into stars and suns,
into thoughts and dreams.

250

MY SONGS ARE to sing
that I have loved Thy¹ singing.

251

WHEN THE voice of the Silent touches my words
I know him and therefore I know myself.

252

MY LAST salutations are to them
who knew me imperfect and loved me.

¹ 'thy' in *Lekhan*.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

253

LOVE'S GIFT cannot be given,
it waits to be accepted.

254

WHEN DEATH comes and whispers to me
'Thy days are ended,'
let me say to him, 'I have lived in love
and not in mere time.'
He will ask 'Will thy songs remain?'
I shall say 'I know not, but this I know
that often when I sang I found my eternity.'

255

'LET ME LIGHT my lamp'
says the star
'And never debate
if it will help to remove the darkness.'

256

BEFORE THE end of my journey
may I reach within myself
the one which is the all,
leaving the outer shell
to float away with the drifting multitude
upon the current of chance and change.

SECTION THREE

The Child

"WHAT OF THE night?" they ask.

No answer comes.

For the blind Time gropes in a maze and knows not its path or purpose.

The darkness in the valley stares like the dead eye-sockets of a giant,
the clouds like a nightmare oppress the sky,
and the massive shadows lie scattered like the torn limbs of the night.
A lurid glow waxes and wanes on the horizon,—
is it an ultimate threat from an alien star,
or an elemental hunger licking the sky?

Things are deliriously wild,

they are a noise whose grammar is a groan,
and words smothered out of shape and sense.

They are the refuse, the rejections, the fruitless failures of life,
abrupt ruins of prodigal pride,—

fragments of a bridge over the oblivion of a vanished stream,
godless shrines that shelter reptiles,
marble steps that lead to blankness.

Sudden tumults rise in the sky and wrestle
and a startled shudder runs along the sleepless hours.

Are they from desperate floods
hammering against their cave walls,
or from some fanatic storms
whirling and howling incantations?

Are they the cry of an ancient forest
flinging up its hoarded fire in a last extravagant suicide,
or screams of a paralytic crowd scourged by lunatics blind and deaf?

Underneath the noisy terror a stealthy hum creeps up like bubbling volcanic mud,

a mixture of sinister whispers, rumours and slanders, and hisses of derision.

The men gathered there are vague like torn pages of an epic.

Groping in groups or single, their torchlight tattoos their faces in chequered lines, in patterns of frightfulness.

The maniacs suddenly strike their neighbours on suspicion
and a hubbub of an indiscriminate fight bursts forth echoing from hill to hill.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

The women weep and wail,
they cry that their children are lost in a wilderness of contrary paths
with confusion at the end.

Others defiantly ribald shake with raucous laughter
their lascivious limbs unshrinkingly loud,
for they think that nothing matters.

2

THERE ON THE crest of the hill
stands the Man of faith amid the snow-white silence,

He scans the sky for some signal of light,
and when the clouds thicken and the nightbirds scream as they fly,
he cries, 'Brothers, despair not, for Man is great.'

But they never heed him,
for they believe that the elemental brute is eternal
and goodness in its depth is darkly cunning in deception.
When beaten and wounded they cry, 'Brother, where art thou?'
The answer comes, 'I am by your side.'—

But they cannot see in the dark
and they argue that the voice is of their own desperate desire,
that men are ever condemned to fight for phantoms
in an interminable desert of mutual menace.

3

THE CLOUDS part, the morning star appears in the East,
a breath of relief springs up from the heart of the earth,
the murmur of leaves ripples along the forest path,
and the early bird sings.

'The time has come,' proclaims the Man of faith.

'The time for what?'

'For the pilgrimage.'

They sit and think, they know not the meaning,
and yet they seem to understand according to their desires.

The touch of the dawn goes deep into the soil
and life shivers along through the roots of all things.

'To the pilgrimage of fulfilment,' a small voice

THE CHILD

whispers, nobody knows whence.
Taken up by the crowd
it swells into a mighty meaning.
Men raise their heads and look up,
women lift their arms in reverence,
children clap their hands and laugh.
The early glow of the sun shines like a golden garland
on the forehead of the Man of faith,
and they all cry: 'Brother, we salute thee!'

4

MEN BEGIN TO gather from all quarters,
from across the seas, the mountains and pathless wastes,
They come from the valley of the Nile and the banks of the Ganges,
from the snow-sunk uplands of Thibet,
from high-walled cities of glittering towers,
from the dense dark tangle of savage wilderness.
Some walk, some ride on camels, horses and elephants,
on chariots with banners vying with the clouds of dawn,
The priests of all creeds burn incense, chanting verses as they go.
The monarchs march at the head of their armies,
lances flashing in the sun and drums beating loud.
Ragged beggars and courtiers pompously decorated,
agile young scholars and teachers burdened with learned age jostle
each other in the crowd.
Women come chatting and laughing,
mothers, maidens and brides,
with offerings of flowers and fruit,
sandal paste and scented water.
Mingled with them is the harlot,
shrill of voice and loud in tint and tinsel.
The gossip is there who secretly poisons the well of human sympathy
and chuckles.
The maimed and the cripple join the throng with the blind and the
sick,
the dissolute, the thief and the man who makes a trade of his God
for profit and mimics the saint.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

'The fulfilment!'
They dare not talk aloud,
but in their minds they magnify their own greed,
and dream of boundless power,
of unlimited impunity for pilfering and plunder,
and eternity of feast for their unclean gluttonous flesh.

5

THE MAN OF faith moves on along pitiless paths strewn with flints over
scorching sands and steep mountainous tracks.

They follow him, the strong and the weak, the aged and young,
the rulers of realms, the tillers of the soil.

Some grow weary and footsore, some angry and suspicious.

They ask at every dragging step,

'How much further is the end?'

The Man of faith sings in answer;

they scowl and shake their fists and yet they cannot resist him;

the pressure of the moving mass and indefinite hope push them
forward.

They shorten their sleep and curtail their rest,

they out-vie each other in their speed,

they are ever afraid lest they may be too late for their chance
while others be more fortunate.

The days pass,

the ever-receding horizon tempts them with renewed lure of the unseen
till they are sick.

Their faces harden, their curses grow louder and louder.

6

IT IS NIGHT.

The travellers spread their mats on the ground under the banyan
tree.

A gust of wind blows out the lamp

and the darkness deepens like a sleep into a swoon.

Someone from the crowd suddenly stands up

and pointing to the leader with merciless finger breaks out:

THE CHILD

'False prophet, thou hast deceived us!'
Others take up the cry one by one,
women hiss their hatred and men growl.
At last one bolder than others suddenly deals him a blow.
They cannot see his face, but fall upon him in a fury of destruction
and hit him till he lies prone upon the ground his life extinct.
The night is still, the sound of the distant waterfall comes muffled,
and a faint breath of jasmine floats in the air.

7

THE PILGRIMS are afraid.

The women begins to cry, the men in an agony of wretchedness
shout at them to stop.

Dogs break out barking and are cruelly whipped into silence broken
by moans.

The night seems endless and men and women begin to wrangle as
to who among them was to blame.

They shriek and shout and as they are ready to unsheathe their knives
the darkness pales, the morning light overflows the mountain tops.

Suddenly they become still and gasp for breath as they gaze at the
figure lying dead.

The women sob out loud and men hide their faces in their hands.
A few try to slink away unnoticed,

but their crime keeps them chained to their victim.

They ask each other in bewilderment,

'Who will show us the path?'

The old man from the East bends his head and says:

'The Victim.'

They sit still and silent.

Again speaks the old man,

'We refused him in doubt, we killed him in anger, now we shall accept
him in love,

for in his death he lives in the life of us all, the great Victim.'

And they all stand up and mingle their voices and sing,

'Victory to the Victim.'

'To the pilgrimage' calls the young,
 'to love, to power, to knowledge, to wealth overflowing,'
 'We shall conquer the world and the world beyond this,'
 they all cry exultant in a thundering cataract of voices.
 The meaning is not the same to them all, but only the impulse,
 the moving confluence of wills that reck not death and disaster.
 No longer they ask for their way,
 no more doubts are there to burden their minds or weariness to clog
 their feet.

The spirit of the Leader is within them and ever beyond them—
 the Leader who has crossed death and all limits.
 They travel over the fields where the seeds are sown,
 by the granary where the harvest is gathered,
 and across the barren soil where famine dwells
 and skeletons cry for the return of their flesh.
 They pass through populous cities humming with life,
 through dumb desolation hugging its ruined past,
 and hovels for the unclad and unclean,
 a mockery of home for the homeless.
 They travel through long hours of the summer day,
 and as the light wanes in the evening they ask the man who reads
 the sky:

'Brother, is yonder the tower of our final hope and peace?'
 The wise man shakes his head and says:
 'It is the last vanishing cloud of the sunset.'
 'Friends,' exhorts the young, 'do not stop.
 Through the night's blindness we must struggle into the Kingdom of
 living light.'

They go on in the dark.
 The road seems to know its own meaning
 and dust underfoot dumbly speaks of direction.
 The stars—celestial wayfarers—sing in silent chorus:
 'Move on, comrades!'
 In the air floats the voice of the Leader:
 'The goal is nigh.'

THE FIRST FLUSH of dawn glistens on the dew-dripping leaves of the forest.

The man who reads the sky cries:

'Friends, we have come!'

They stop and look around.

On both sides of the road the corn is ripe to the horizon,

—the glad golden answer of the earth to the morning light.

The current of daily life moves slowly

between the village near the hill and the one by the river bank.

The potter's wheel goes round, the woodcutter brings fuel to the market,

the cow-herd takes his cattle to the pasture,

and the woman with the pitcher on her head walks to the well.

But where is the King's castle, the mine of gold, the secret book of magic,

the sage who knows love's utter wisdom?

'The stars cannot be wrong,' assures the reader of the sky.

'Their signal points to that spot.'

And reverently he walks to a wayside spring

from which wells up a stream of water, a liquid light,

like the morning melting into a chorus of tears and laughter.

Near it in a palm grove surrounded by a strange hush stands a leaf-thatched hut,

at whose portal sits the poet of the unknown shore, and sings:

'Mother, open the gate!'

A RAY OF morning sun strikes aslant at the door.

The assembled crowd feel in their blood the primæval chant of creation:

'Mother, open the gate!'

The gate opens.

The mother is seated on a straw bed with the babe on her lap,

Like the dawn with the morning star.

The sun's ray that was waiting at the door outside falls on the head of the child.

The poet strikes his lute and sings out:

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

'Victory to Man, the new-born, the ever-living.'
They kneel down,—the king and the beggar, the saint and the sinner,
the wise and the fool,—and cry:
'Victory to Man, the new-born, the ever-living.'
The old man from the East murmurs to himself:
'I have seen!'

SECTION FOUR

One Hundred Poems of Kabir

INTRODUCTION

THE POET Kabir, a selection from whose songs is here for the first time offered to English readers, is one of the most interesting personalities in the history of Indian mysticism. Born in or near Benares, of Mohammedan parents, and probably about the year 1440, he became in early life a disciple of the celebrated Hindu ascetic Rāmānanda. Rāmānanda had brought to Northern India the religious revival which Rāmānuja, the great twelfth-century reformer of Brāhmanism, had initiated in the South. This revival was in part a reaction against the increasing formalism of the orthodox cult, in part an assertion of the demands of the heart as against the intense intellectualism of the Vedānta philosophy, the exaggerated monism which that philosophy proclaimed. It took in Rāmānuja's preaching the form of an ardent personal devotion to the God Vishnu, as representing the personal aspect of the Divine Nature: that mystical 'religion of love' which everywhere makes its appearance at a certain level of spiritual culture, and which creeds and philosophies are powerless to kill.

Though such a devotion is indigenous in Hinduism, and finds expression in many passages of the Bhagavad Gītā, there was in its mediaeval revival a large element of syncretism. Rāmānanda, through whom its spirit is said to have reached Kabir, appears to have been a man of wide religious culture, and full of missionary enthusiasm. Living at the moment in which the impassioned poetry and deep philosophy of the great Persian mystics, Attār, Sādī, Jalālu'ddīn Rūmī, and Hāfiz, were exercising a powerful influence on the religious thought of India, he dreamed of reconciling this intense and personal Mohammedan mysticism with the traditional theology of Brāhmanism. Some have regarded both these great religious leaders as influenced also by Christian thought and life: but as this is a point upon which competent authorities hold widely divergent views, its discussion is not attempted here. We may safely assert, however, that in their teachings, two—perhaps three—apparently antagonistic streams of intense spiritual culture met, as Jewish and Hellenistic thought met in the early Christian Church: and it is one of the outstanding characteristics of Kabir's genius that he was able in his poems to fuse them into one.

A great religious reformer, the founder of a sect to which nearly a million northern Hindus still belong, it is yet supremely as a mystical poet that Kabir lives for us. His fate has been that of many revealers of Reality. A hater of religious exclusivism, and seeking above all things to initiate men into the liberty of the children of God, his followers have honoured his memory by re-erecting in a new place the barriers which he laboured to cast down. But his wonderful songs survive, the spontaneous expressions of his vision and his love; and it is by these, not by the didactic teachings

associated with his name, that he makes his immortal appeal to the heart. In these poems a wide range of mystical emotion is brought into play: from the loftiest abstractions, the most other-worldly passion for the Infinite, to the most intimate and personal realization of God, expressed in homely metaphors and religious symbols drawn indifferently from Hindu and Mohammedan belief. It is impossible to say of their author that he was Brāhman or Sūfi, Vedāntist or Vaishnavite. He is, as he says himself, 'at once the child of Allah and of Rām.' That Supreme Spirit Whom he knew and adored, and to Whose joyous friendship he sought to induct the souls of other men, transcended whilst He included all metaphysical categories, all credal definitions; yet each contributed something to the description of that Infinite and Simple Totality Who revealed Himself, according to their measure, to the faithful lovers of all creeds.

Kabir's story is surrounded by contradictory legends, on none of which reliance can be placed. Some of these emanate from a Hindu, some from a Mohammedan source, and claim him by turns as a Sūfi and a Brāhman saint. His name, however, is practically a conclusive proof of Moslem ancestry; and the most probable tale is that which represents him as the actual or adopted child of a Mohammedan weaver of Benares, the city in which the chief events of his life took place.

In fifteenth-century Benares the syncretistic tendencies of Bhakti religion had reached full development. Sūfis and Brāhmans appear to have met in disputation: the most spiritual members of both creeds frequenting the teachings of Rāmānanda, whose reputation was then at its height. The boy Kabir, in whom the religious passion was innate, saw in Rāmānanda his destined teacher; but knew how slight were the chances that a Hindu guru would accept a Mohammedan as disciple. He therefore hid upon the steps of the river Ganges, where Rāmānanda was accustomed to bathe; with the result that the master, coming down to the water, trod upon his body unexpectedly, and exclaimed in his astonishment, 'Rām! Rām!'—the name of the incarnation under which he worshipped God. Kabir then declared that he had received the mantra of initiation from Rāmānanda's lips, and was by it admitted to discipleship. In spite of the protests of orthodox Brāhmans and Mohammedans, both equally annoyed by this contempt of theological landmarks, he persisted in his claim; thus exhibiting in action that very principle of religious synthesis which Rāmānanda had sought to establish in thought. Rāmānanda appears to have accepted him, and though Mohammedan legends speak of the famous Sūfi Pir, Takkī of Jhansi, as Kabir's master in later life, the Hindu saint is the only human teacher to whom in his songs he acknowledges indebtedness.

The little that we know of Kabir's life contradicts many current ideas concerning the Oriental mystic. Of the stages of discipline through which he passed, the manner in which his spiritual genius developed, we are completely ignorant. He seems to have remained for years the disciple of

Rāmānanda, joining in the theological and philosophical arguments which his master held with all the great Mullahs and Brāhmans of his day; and to this source we may perhaps trace his acquaintance with the terms of Hindu and Sūfī philosophy. He may or may not have submitted to the traditional education of the Hindu or the Sūfī contemplative: it is clear, at any rate, that he never adopted the life of the professional ascetic, or retired from the world in order to devote himself to bodily mortifications and the exclusive pursuit of the contemplative life. Side by side with his interior life of adoration, its artistic expression in music and words—for he was a skilled musician as well as a poet—he lived the sane and diligent life of the Oriental craftsman. All the legends agree on this point: that Kabir was a weaver, a simple and unlettered man, who earned his living at the loom. Like Paul the tentmaker, Boehme the cobbler, Bunyan the tinker, Tersteegen the ribbon-maker, he knew how to combine vision and industry; the work of his hands helped rather than hindered the impassioned meditation of his heart. Hating mere bodily austerities, he was no ascetic, but a married man, the father of a family—a circumstance which Hindu legends of the monastic type vainly attempt to conceal or explain—and it was from out of the heart of the common life that he sang his rapturous lyrics of divine love. Here his works corroborate the traditional story of his life. Again and again he extols the life of home, the value and reality of diurnal existence, with its opportunities for love and renunciation; pouring contempt upon the professional sanctity of the Yogi, who 'has a great beard and matted locks, and looks like a goat,' and on all who think it necessary to flee a world pervaded by love, joy, and beauty—the proper theatre of man's quest—in order to find that One Reality Who has 'spread His form of love throughout *all* the world.'¹

It does not need much experience of ascetic literature to recognize the boldness and originality of this attitude in such a time and place. From the point of view of orthodox sanctity, whether Hindu or Mohammedan, Kabir was plainly a heretic; and his frank dislike of all institutional religion, all external observance—which was as thorough and as intense as that of the Quakers themselves—completed, so far as ecclesiastical opinion was concerned, his reputation as a dangerous man. The 'simple union' with Divine Reality which he perpetually extolled, as alike the duty and the joy of every soul, was independent both of ritual and of bodily austerities; the God whom he proclaimed was 'neither in Kaaba nor in Kailāsh.' Those who sought Him needed not to go far; for He awaited discovery everywhere, more accessible to 'the washerwoman and the carpenter' than to the self-righteous holy man.² Therefore the whole apparatus of piety, Hindu and Moslem alike—the temple and mosque, idol and holy water, scriptures and priests—were denounced by this inconveniently clear-sighted poet as

¹ Cf. Poems 21, 40, 43, 66, 76.

² Poems 1, 2, 41.

mere substitutes for reality; dead things intervening between the soul and its love—

The images are all lifeless, they cannot speak: I know, for I have cried aloud to them.

The Purāna and the Korān are mere words: lifting up the curtain, I have seen.¹

This sort of thing cannot be tolerated by any organized church; and it is not surprising that Kabir, having his head-quarters in Benares, the very centre of priestly influence, was subjected to considerable persecution. The well-known legend of the beautiful courtesan sent by the Brāhmans to tempt his virtue, and converted, like the Magdalen, by her sudden encounter with the initiate of a higher love, preserves the memory of the fear and dislike with which he was regarded by the ecclesiastical powers. Once at least, after the performance of a supposed miracle of healing, he was brought before the Emperor Sikandar Lodī, and charged with claiming the possession of divine powers. But Sikandar Lodī, a ruler of considerable culture, was tolerant of the eccentricities of saintly persons belonging to his own faith. Kabir, being of Mohammedan birth, was outside the authority of the Brāhmans, and technically classed with the Sūfis, to whom great theological latitude was allowed. Therefore, though he was banished in the interests of peace from Benares, his life was spared. This seems to have happened in 1495, when he was nearly sixty years of age; it is the last event in his career of which we have definite knowledge. Thenceforth he appears to have moved about amongst various cities of northern India, the centre of a group of disciples; continuing in exile that life of apostle and poet of love to which, as he declares in one of his songs, he was destined 'from the beginning of time.' In 1518, an old man, broken in health, and with hands so feeble that he could no longer make the music which he loved, he died at Maghar near Gorakhpur.

A beautiful legend tells us that after his death his Mohammedan and Hindu disciples disputed the possession of his body; which the Mohammedans wished to bury, the Hindus to burn. As they argued together, Kabir appeared before them, and told them to lift the shroud and look at that which lay beneath. They did so, and found in the place of the corpse a heap of flowers; half of which were buried by the Mohammedans at Maghar, and half carried by the Hindus to the holy city of Benares to be burned—fitting conclusion to a life which had made fragrant the most beautiful doctrines of two great creeds.

¹ Poems 42, 65, 67.

The poetry of mysticism might be defined on the one hand as a temperamental reaction to the vision of Reality; on the other, as a form of prophecy. As it is the special vocation of the mystical consciousness to mediate between two orders, going out in loving adoration towards God and coming home to tell the secrets of Eternity to other men; so the artistic self-expression of this consciousness has also a double character. It is love-poetry, but love-poetry which is often written with a missionary intention.

Kabir's songs are of this kind: outbirths at once of rapture and of charity. Written in the popular Hindi, not in the literary tongue, they were deliberately addressed—like the vernacular poetry of Jacopone da Todi and Richard Rolle—to the people rather than to the professionally religious class; and all must be struck by the constant employment in them of imagery drawn from the common life, the universal experience. It is by the simplest metaphors, by constant appeals to needs, passions, relations which all men understand—the bridegroom and bride, the guru and disciple, the pilgrim, the farmer, the migrant bird—that he drives home his intense conviction of the reality of the soul's intercourse with the Transcendent. There are in his universe no fences between the 'natural' and 'supernatural' worlds; everything is a part of the creative Play of God, and therefore—even in its humblest details—capable of revealing the Player's mind.

This willing acceptance of the here-and-now as a means of representing supernal realities is a trait common to the greatest mystics. For them, when they have achieved at last the true theopathic state, all aspects of the universe possess equal authority as sacramental declarations of the Presence of God; and their fearless employment of homely and physical symbols—often startling and even revolting to the unaccustomed taste—is in direct proportion to the exaltation of their spiritual life. The works of the great Sufis, and amongst the Christians of Jacopone da Todi, Ruysbroeck, Boehme, abound in illustrations of this law. Therefore we must not be surprised to find in Kabir's songs—his desperate attempts to communicate his ecstasy and persuade other men to share it—a constant juxtaposition of concrete and metaphysical language; swift alternations between the most intensely anthropomorphic, the most subtly philosophical, ways of apprehending man's communion with the Divine. The need for this alternation; and its entire naturalness for the mind which employs it, is rooted in his concept, or vision, of the Nature of God; and unless we make some attempt to grasp this, we shall not go far in our understanding of his poems.

Kabir belongs to that small group of supreme mystics—amongst whom St. Augustine, Ruysbroeck, and the Sūfī poet Jalālu'ddīn Rūmī are perhaps the chief—who have achieved that which we might call the synthetic vision of God. These have resolved the perpetual opposition between the per-

sonal and impersonal, the transcendent and immanent, static and dynamic aspects of the Divine Nature; between the Absolute of philosophy and the 'sure true Friend' of devotional religion. They have done this, not by taking these apparently incompatible concepts one after the other; but by ascending to a height of spiritual intuition at which they are, as Ruysbroeck said, 'melted and merged in the Unity,' and perceived as the completing opposites of a perfect Whole. This proceeding entails for them—and both Kabir and Ruysbroeck expressly acknowledge it—a universe of three orders: Becoming, Being, and that which is 'More than Being,' i.e., God.¹ God is here felt to be not the final abstraction, but the one actuality. He inspires, supports, indeed inhabits, both the durational, conditioned, finite world of Becoming and the unconditioned, non-successional, infinite world of Being; yet utterly transcends them both. He is the omnipresent Reality, the 'All-pervading' within Whom 'the worlds are being told like beads.' In His personal aspect He is the 'beloved Fakir,' teaching and companionship each soul. Considered as Immanent Spirit, He is 'the Mind within the mind.' But all these are at best partial aspects of His nature, mutually corrective: as the Persons in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity—to which this theological diagram bears a striking resemblance—represent different and compensating experiences of the Divine Unity within which they are resumed. As Ruysbroeck discerned a plane of reality upon which 'we can speak no more of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but only of One Being, the very substance of the Divine Persons'; so Kabir says that 'beyond both the limited and the limitless is He, the Pure Being.'²

Brahma, then, is the Ineffable Fact compared with which 'the distinction of the Conditioned from the Unconditioned is but a word': at once the utterly transcendent One of Absolutist philosophy, and the personal Lover of the individual soul—'common to all and special to each,' as one Christian mystic has it. The need felt by Kabir for both these ways of describing Reality is a proof of the richness and balance of his spiritual experience; which neither cosmic nor anthropomorphic symbols, taken alone, could express. More absolute than the Absolute, more personal than the human mind, Brahma therefore exceeds whilst He includes all the concepts of philosophy, all the passionate intuitions of the heart. He is the Great Affirmation, the fount of energy, the source of life and love, the unique satisfaction of desire. His creative word is the *Om* or 'Everlasting Yea.' The negative philosophy, which strips from the Divine Nature all its attributes and—defining Him only by that which He is not—reduces Him to an 'Emptiness,' is abhorrent to this most vital of poets. Brahma, he says, 'may never be found in abstractions.' He is the One Love who pervades the world, discerned in His fullness only by the eyes of love; and those who know Him thus share, though they may never tell, the joyous and ineffable secret of the universe.³

¹ Nos. 7 and 49.

² No. 7.

³ Nos. 7, 26, 76, 90.

Now Kabir, achieving this synthesis between the personal and cosmic aspects of the Divine Nature, eludes the three great dangers which threaten mystical religion.

First, he escapes the excessive emotionalism, the tendency to an exclusively anthropomorphic devotion, which results from an unrestricted cult of Divine Personality, especially under an incarnational form; seen in India in the exaggerations of Krishna worship, in Europe in the sentimental extravagances of certain Christian saints.

Next, he is protected from the soul-destroying conclusions of pure monism, inevitable if its logical implications are pressed home: that is, the identity of substance between God and the soul, with its corollary of the total absorption of that soul in the Being of God as the goal of the spiritual life. For the thorough-going monist the soul, in so far as it is real, is substantially identical with God; and the true object of existence is the making patent of this latent identity, the realization which finds expression in the Vedāntist formula 'That art thou.' But Kabir says that Brahma and the creature are 'ever distinct, yet ever united'; that the wise man knows the spiritual as well as the material world to 'be no more than His footstool.'¹ The soul's union with Him is a love union, a mutual inhabitation; that essentially dualistic relation which all mystical religion expresses, not a self-mergence which leaves no place for personality. This eternal distinction, the mysterious union-in-separateness of God and the soul, is a necessary doctrine of all sane mysticism; for no scheme which fails to find a place for it can represent more than a fragment of that soul's intercourse with the spiritual world. Its affirmation was one of the distinguishing features of the Vaishnavite reformation preached by Rāmānuja; the principle of which had descended through Rāmānanda to Kabir.

Last, the warmly human and direct apprehension of God as the supreme Object of love, the soul's comrade, teacher, and bridegroom, which is so passionately and frequently expressed in Kabir's poems, balances and controls those abstract tendencies which are inherent in the metaphysical side of his vision of Reality: and prevents it from degenerating into that sterile worship of intellectual formulae which became the curse of the Vedāntist school. For the mere intellectualist, as for the mere pietist, he has little approbation.² Love is throughout his 'absolute sole Lord': the unique source of the more abundant life which he enjoys, and the common factor which unites the finite and infinite worlds. All is soaked in love: that love which he described in almost Johannine language as the 'Form of God.' The whole of creation is the Play of the Eternal Lover; the living, changing, growing expression of Brahma's love and joy. As these twin passions preside over the generation of human life, so 'beyond the mists of pleasure and pain' Kabir finds them governing the creative acts of God. His manifestation is love; His activity is joy. Creation springs from one glad

¹ Nos. 7 and 9. ² Cf. especially Nos. 39, 67, 75, 90, 91.

act of affirmation: the Everlasting Yea, perpetually uttered within the depths of the Divine Nature.¹ In accordance with this concept of the universe as a Love-Game which eternally goes forward, a progressive manifestation of Brahma—one of the many notions which he adopted from the common stock of Hindu religious ideas, and illuminated by his poetic genius—movement, rhythm, perpetual change, forms an integral part of Kabir's vision of Reality. Though the Eternal and Absolute is ever present to his consciousness, yet his concept of the Divine Nature is essentially dynamic. It is by the symbols of motion that he most often tries to convey it to us; as in his constant reference to dancing, or the strangely modern picture of that Eternal Swing of the Universe which is 'held by the cords of love.'²

It is a marked characteristic of mystical literature that the great contemplatives, in their effort to convey to us the nature of their communion with the supersensuous, are inevitably driven to employ some form of sensuous imagery: coarse and inaccurate as they know such imagery to be, even at the best. Our normal human consciousness is so completely committed to dependence on the senses, that the fruits of intuition itself are instinctively referred to them. In that intuition it seems to the mystics that all the dim cravings and partial apprehensions of sense find perfect fulfilment. Hence their constant declaration that they *see* the uncreated light, they *hear* the celestial melody, they *taste* the sweetness of the Lord, they know an ineffable fragrance, they feel the very contact of love. 'Him verily seeing and fully feeling, Him spiritually hearing and Him delectably smelling and sweetly swallowing,' as Julian of Norwich has it. In those amongst them who develop psycho-sensorial automatisms these parallels between sense and spirit may present themselves to consciousness in the form of hallucinations: as the light seen by Suso, the music heard by Rolle, the celestial perfumes which filled St. Catherine of Siena's cell, the physical wounds felt by St. Francis and St. Teresa. These are excessive dramatizations of the symbolism under which the mystic tends instinctively to represent his spiritual intuition to the surface consciousness. Here, in the special sense-perception which he feels to be most expressive of Reality, his peculiar idiosyncrasies come out.

Now Kabir, as we might expect in one whose reactions to the spiritual order were so wide and various, uses by turn all the symbols of sense. He tells us that he has 'seen without sight' the effulgence of Brahma, tasted the divine nectar, felt the ecstatic contact of Reality, smelt the fragrance of the heavenly flowers. But he was essentially a poet and musician: rhythm and harmony were to him the garments of beauty and truth. Hence in his lyrics he shows himself to be, like Richard Rolle, above all things a musical mystic. Creation, he says again and again, is full of music: it is music. At the heart of the Universe 'white music is blossoming': love

¹ Nos. 17, 26, 76, 82. ² No. 16.

weaves the melody, whilst renunciation beats the time. It can be heard in the home as well as in the heavens; discerned by the ears of common men as well as by the trained senses of the ascetic. Moreover, the body of every man is a lyre on which Brahma, 'the source of all music,' plays. Everywhere Kabir discerns the 'Unstruck Music of the Infinite'—that celestial melody which the angel played to St. Francis, that ghostly symphony which filled the soul of Rolle with ecstatic joy.¹ The one figure which he adopts from the Hindu Pantheon and constantly uses, is that of Krishna the Divine Flute Player.² He sees the supernal music, too, in its visual embodiment, as rhythmical movement: that mysterious dance of the universe before the face of Brahma, which is at once an act of worship and an expression of the infinite rapture of the Immanent God.³

Yet in this wide and rapturous vision of the universe Kabir never loses touch with diurnal existence, never forgets the common life. His feet are firmly planted upon earth; his lofty and passionate apprehensions are perpetually controlled by the activity of a sane and vigorous intellect, by the alert commonsense so often found in persons of real mystical genius. The constant insistence on simplicity and directness, the hatred of all abstractions and philosophizings,⁴ the ruthless criticism of external religion: these are amongst his most marked characteristics. God is the Root whence all manifestations, 'material' and 'spiritual,' alike proceed; and God is the only need of man—'happiness shall be yours when you come to the Root.'⁵ Hence to those who keep their eye on the 'one thing needful,' denominations, creeds, ceremonies, the conclusions of philosophy, the disciplines of asceticism, are matters of comparative indifference. They represent merely the different angles from which the soul may approach that simple union with Brahma which is its goal; and are useful only in so far as they contribute to this consummation. So thorough-going is Kabir's eclecticism, that he seems by turns Vedānist and Vaishnavite, Pantheist and Transcendentalist, Brahman and Sūfi. In the effort to tell the truth about that ineffable apprehension, so vast and yet so near, which controls his life, he seizes and twines together—as he might have woven together contrasting threads upon his loom—symbols and ideas drawn from the most violent and conflicting philosophies and faiths. All are needed, if he is ever to suggest the character of that One whom the Upanishad called 'the Sun-coloured Being who is beyond this Darkness': as all the colours of the spectrum are needed if we would demonstrate the simple richness of white light. In thus adapting traditional materials to his own use he follows a method common amongst the mystics; who seldom exhibit any special love for originality of form. They will pour their wine into almost any vessel that comes to hand: generally using by prefer-

¹ Nos. 17, 18, 39, 41, 54, 76, 83, 89, 97. ² Nos. 50, 53, 68. ³ Nos. 26, 32, 76.

⁴ Nos. 75, 78, 80, 90. ⁵ No. 80.

ence—and lifting to new levels of beauty and significance—the religious or philosophic formulae current in their own day. Thus we find that some of Kabir's finest poems have as their subjects the commonplaces of Hindu philosophy and religion: the *Līlā*, or Sport, of God, the Ocean of Bliss, the Bird of the Soul, *Māyā*, the Hundred-petalled Lotus, and the 'Formless Form.' Many, again, are soaked in Sūfi imagery and feeling. Others use as their material the ordinary surroundings and incidents of Indian life: the temple bells, the ceremony of the lamps, marriage, suttee, pilgrimage, the characters of the seasons; all felt by him in their mystical aspect, as sacraments of the soul's relation with Brahma. In many of these a particularly beautiful and intimate feeling for Nature is shown.¹

In the collection of songs here translated there will be found examples which illustrate nearly every aspect of Kabir's thought, and all the fluctuations of the mystic's emotion: the ecstasy, the despair, the still beatitude, the eager self-devotion, the flashes of wide illumination, the moments of intimate love. His wide and deep vision of the universe, the 'Eternal Sport' of creation (82), the worlds being 'told like beads' within the Being of God (14, 16, 17, 76), is here seen balanced by his lovely and delicate sense of intimate communion with the Divine Friend, Lover, Teacher of the soul (10, 11, 23, 35, 51, 85, 86, 88, 92, 93; above all, the beautiful poem 34). As these apparently paradoxical views of Reality are resolved in Brahma, so all other opposites are reconciled in Him: bondage and liberty, love and renunciation, pleasure and pain (17, 25, 40, 89). Union with Him is the one thing that matters to the soul, its destiny and its need (51, 52, 54, 70, 74, 93, 96); and this union, this discovery of God, is the simplest and most natural of all things, if we would but grasp it (41, 46, 56, 72, 76, 78, 97). The union, however, is brought about by love, not by knowledge or ceremonial observances (38, 54, 55, 59, 91); and the apprehension which that union confers is ineffable—'neither This nor That,' as Ruysbroeck has it (9, 46, 76). Real worship and communion is in Spirit and in Truth (40, 41, 56, 63, 65, 70), therefore idolatry is an insult to the Divine Lover (42, 69) and the devices of professional sanctity are useless apart from charity and purity of soul (54, 65, 66). Since all things, and especially the heart of man, are God-inhabited, God-possessed (26, 56, 76, 89, 97), He may best be found in the here-and-now: in the normal, human, bodily existence, the 'mud' of material life (3, 4, 6, 21, 39, 40, 43, 48, 67). 'We can reach the goal without crossing the road' (76)—not the cloister but the home is the proper theatre of man's efforts: and if he cannot find God there, he need not hope for success by going farther afield. 'In the home is reality.' There love and detachment, bondage and freedom, joy and pain play by turns upon the soul; and it is from their conflict that the Unstruck Music of the Infinite proceeds. 'Kabir says: None but Brahma can evoke its melodies.'

¹ Nos. 15, 23, 67, 87, 98.

This version of Kabir's songs is chiefly the work of Mr. Rabindranāth Tagore, the trend of whose mystical genius makes him—as all who read these poems will see—a peculiarly sympathetic interpreter of Kabir's vision and thought. It has been based upon the printed Hindī text with Bengali translation of Mr. Kshiti Mohan Sen; who has gathered from many sources—sometimes from books and manuscripts, sometimes from the lips of wandering ascetics and minstrels—a large collection of poems and hymns to which Kabir's name is attached, and carefully sifted the authentic songs from the many spurious works now attributed to him. These painstaking labours alone have made the present undertaking possible.

We have also had before us a manuscript English translation of 116 songs made by Mr. Ajit Kumār Chakravarty from Mr. Kshiti Mohan Sen's text, and a prose essay upon Kabir from the same hand. From these we have derived great assistance. A considerable number of readings from the translation have been adopted by us; whilst several of the facts mentioned in the essay have been incorporated into this introduction. Our most grateful thanks are due to Mr. Ajit Kumār Chakravarty for the extremely generous and unselfish manner in which he has placed his work at our disposal.

EVELYN UNDERHILL.

1

I. 13. *mo ko kahān dhūnro bande*

O SERVANT, where dost thou seek Me?

Lo! I am beside thee.

I am neither in temple nor in mosque: I am neither in Kaaba nor in Kailash:

Neither am I in rites and ceremonies, nor in Yoga and renunciation.

If thou art a true seeker, thou shalt at once see Me: thou shalt meet Me in a moment of time.

Kabir says, 'O Sadhu! God is the breath of all breath.'

2

I. 16. *santan jāt na pūcho nirguniyan*

IT IS NEEDLESS to ask of a saint the caste to which he belongs;

For the priest, the warrior, the tradesman, and all the thirty-six castes, alike are seeking for God.

It is but folly to ask what the caste of a saint may be:

The barber has sought God, the washer-woman, and the carpenter—

Even Raidas was a seeker after God.

The Rishi Swapacha was a tanner by caste.

Hindus and Moslems alike have achieved that End, where remains no mark of distinction.

3

I. 57. *sādho bhāi, jīvat hī karo āsā*

O FRIEND! hope for Him whilst you live, know whilst you live, understand whilst you live: for in life deliverance abides.

If your bonds be not broken whilst living, what hope of deliverance in death?

It is but an empty dream, that the soul shall have union with Him because it has passed from the body:

The reference of the headlines of the poems is to: Śāntiniketan; Kabir by Śrī Kshitimohan Sen, 4 parts, Brahmacharyāśrama, Bolpur, 1910-11. For some assistance in normalizing the transliteration we are indebted to Prof. J.F. Blumhardt.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

If He is found now, He is found then,
 If not, we do but go to dwell in the City of Death.
 If you have union now, you shall have it hereafter.
 Bathe in the truth, know the true Guru, have faith in the true Name!
 Kabir says: 'It is the Spirit of the quest which helps; I am the slave
 of this Spirit of the quest.'

4

I. 58. *bāgo nā jā re nā jā*

DO NOT GO TO the garden of flowers!
 O Friend! go not there;
 In your body is the garden of flowers.
 Take your seat on the thousand petals of the lotus, and there gaze
 on the Infinite Beauty.

5

I. 63. *avadhū, māyā tajī na jāy*

TELL ME, Brother, how can I renounce Maya?
 When I gave up the tying of ribbons, still I tied my garment about
 me:
 When I gave up tying my garment, still I covered my body in its folds.
 So, when I give up passion, I see that anger remains;
 And when I renounce anger, greed is with me still;
 And when greed is vanquished, pride and vain-glory remain;
 When the mind is detached and casts Maya away, still it clings to the
 letter.
 Kabir says, 'Listen to me, dear Sadhu! the true path is rarely found.'

6

I. 83. *candā jhalkai yahi ghat māhīn*

THE MOON shines in my body, but my blind eyes cannot see it;
 The moon is within me, and so is the sun.
 The unstruck drum of Eternity is sounded within me; but my deaf ears
 cannot hear it.

So long as man clamours for the *I* and the *Mine*, his works are as naught:
When all love of the *I* and the *Mine* is dead, then the work of the
Lord is done.

For work has no other aim than the getting of knowledge:
When that comes, then work is put away.

The flower blooms for the fruit: when the fruit comes, the flower withers.
The musk is in the deer, but it seeks it not within itself: it wanders
in quest of grass.

7

I. 85. *sādhō, Brahm alakh lakhāyā*

WHEN HE Himself reveals, Himself, Brahma brings into manifestation That
which can never be seen.

As the seed is in the plant, as the shade is in the tree, as the void
is in the sky, as infinite forms are in the void—

So from beyond the Infinite, the Infinite comes; and from the Infinite
the finite extends.

The creature is in Brahma, and Brahma is in the creature: they are ever
distinct, yet ever united.

He Himself is the tree, the seed, and the germ.

He Himself is the flower, the fruit, and the shade.

He Himself is the sun, the light, and the lighted.

He Himself is Brahma, creature, and Maya.

He Himself is the manifold form, the infinite space;

He is the breath, the word, and the meaning.

He Himself is the limit and the limitless: and beyond both the limited
and the limitless is He, the Pure Being.

He is the Immanent Mind in Brahma and in the creature.

The Supreme Soul is seen within the soul,

The Point is seen within the Supreme Soul.

And within the Point, the reflection is seen again.

Kabir is blest because he has this supreme vision!

The Yogi, the Sanyasi, the Ascetics, are disputing one with another:
Kabir says, 'O brother! he who has seen that radiance of love, he is
saved.'

14

II. 56. *dariyā kī lahar dariyāo hai jī*

THE RIVER and its waves are one surf: where is the difference between the
river and its waves?

When the wave rises, it is the water; and when it falls, it is the same
water again. Tell me, Sir, where is the distinction?

Because it has been named as wave, shall it no longer be considered
as water?

Within the Supreme Brahma, the worlds are being told like beads:
Look upon that rosary with the eyes of wisdom.

15

II. 57. *jāñh khelat vasant pīturāñ*

WHERE SPRING, the lord of the seasons, reigneth, there the Unstruck Music
sounds of itself,

There the streams of light flow in all directions;

Few are the men who can cross to that shore!

There, where millions of Krishnas stand with hands folded,

Where millions of Vishnus bow their heads,

Where millions of Brahmās are reading the Vedas,

Where millions of Shivas are lost in contemplation,

Where millions of Indras dwell in the sky,

Where the demi-gods and the munis are unnumbered,

Where millions of Saraswatis, Goddess of Music, play on the vina—

There is my Lord self-revealed: and the scent of sandal and flowers
dwells in those deeps.

II. 59. *jāñh cet acet khambh dōū*

BETWEEN THE poles of the conscious and the unconscious, there has the mind made a swing:

Thereon hang all beings and all worlds, and that swing never ceases its sway.

Millions of beings are there: the sun and the moon in their courses are there:

Millions of ages pass, and the swing goes on.

All swing! the sky and the earth and the air and the water; and the Lord Himself taking form:

And the sight of this has made Kabir a servant,

II. 61. *grah candra tapan jot barat hai*

THE LIGHT of the sun, the moon, and the stars shines bright:

The melody of love swells forth, and the rhythm of love's detachment beats the time.

Day and night, the chorus of music fills the heavens; and Kabir says 'My Beloved One gleams like the lightning flash in the sky.'

Do you know how the moments perform their adoration?

Waving its row of lamps, the universe sings in worship day and night,

There are the hidden banner and the secret canopy;

There the sound of the unseen bells is heard.

Kabir says: 'There adoration never ceases; there the Lord of the Universe sitteth on His throne.'

The whole world does its works and commits its errors: but few are the lovers who know the Beloved.

The devout seeker is he who mingles in his heart the double currents of love and detachment, like the mingling of the streams of Ganges and Jumna;

In his heart the sacred water flows day and night; and thus the round of births and deaths is brought to an end.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

Behold what wonderful rest is in the Supreme Spirit! and he enjoys it, who makes himself meet for it.

Held by the cords of love, the swing of the Ocean of Joy sways to and fro; and a mighty sound breaks forth in song.

See what a lotus blooms there without water! and Kabir says
'My heart's bee drinks its nectar.'

What a wonderful lotus it is, that blooms at the heart of the spinning wheel of the universe! Only a few pure souls know of its true delight.

Music is all around it, and there the heart partakes of the joy of the Infinite Sea.

Kabir says: 'Dive thou into that Ocean of sweetness: thus let all errors of life and of death flee away.'

Behold how the thirst of the five senses is quenched there! and the three forms of misery are no more!

Kabir says: 'It is the sport of the Unattainable One: look within, and behold how the moon-beams of that Hidden One shine in you.'

There falls the rhythmic beat of life and death:

Rapture wells forth, and all space is radiant with light.

There the Unstruck Music is sounded; it is the music of the love of the three worlds.

There millions of lamps of sun and of moon are burning;

There the drum beats, and the lover swings in play.

There love-songs resound, and light rains in showers; and the worshipper is entranced in the taste of the heavenly nectar.

Look upon life and death; there is no separation between them,

The right hand and the left hand are one and the same.

Kabir says: 'There the wise man is speechless; for this truth may never be found in Vedas or in books.'

I have had my Seat on the Self-poised One,

I have drunk of the Cup of the Ineffable,

I have found the Key of the Mystery,

I have reached the Root of Union.

Travelling by no track, I have come to the Sorrowless Land: very easily has the mercy of the great Lord come upon me.

POEMS OF KABIR

They have sung of Him as infinite and unattainable: but I in my meditations have seen Him without sight.

That is indeed the sorrowless land, and none know the path that leads there:

Only he who is on that path has surely transcended all sorrow.

Wonderful is that land of rest, to which no merit can win;

It is the wise who has seen it, it is the wise who has sung of it.

This is the Ultimate Word: but can any express its marvellous savour?

He who has savoured it once, he knows what joy it can give.

Kabir says: 'Knowing it, the ignorant man becomes wise, and the wise man becomes speechless and silent,

The worshipper is utterly inebriated,

His wisdom and his detachment are made perfect;

He drinks from the cup of the inbreathings and the outbreathings of love.'

There the whole sky is filled with sound, and there that music is made without fingers and without strings;

There the game of pleasure and pain does not cease.

Kabir says: 'If you merge your life in the Ocean of Life, you will find your life in the Supreme Land of Bliss.'

What a frenzy of ecstasy there is in every hour! and the worshipper is pressing out and drinking the essence of the hours: he lives in the life of Brahma.

I speak truth, for I have accepted truth in life; I am now attached to truth, I have swept all tinsel away.

Kabir says: 'Thus is the worshipper set free from fear; thus have all errors of life and of death left him.'

There the sky is filled with music:

There it rains nectar:

There the harp-strings jingle, and there the drums beat.

What a secret splendour is there, in the mansion of the sky!

There no mention is made of the rising and the setting of the sun;

In the ocean of manifestation, which is the light of love, day and night are felt to be one.

Joy for ever, no sorrow, no struggle!

There have I seen joy filled to the brim, perfection of joy;

No place for error is there.

Kabir says: 'There have I witnessed the sport of One Bliss!'

I have known in my body the sport of the universe: I have escaped from the error of this world.

The inward and the outward are become as one sky, the Infinite and the finite are united: I am drunken with the sight of this All!

This Light of Thine fulfils the universe: the lamp of love that burns on the salver of knowledge.

Kabir says: 'There error cannot enter, and the conflict of life and death is felt no more.'

18

II. 77. *maddh ākās āp jahān baithē*

THE MIDDLE region of the sky, wherein the spirit dwelleth, is radiant with the music of light.

There, where the pure and white music blossoms, my Lord takes His delight.

In the wondrous effulgence of each hair of His body, the brightness of millions of suns and of moons is lost.

On that shore there is a city, where the rain of nectar pours and pours, and never ceases.

Kabir says: 'Come, O Dharmadas! and see my great Lord's Durbar.'

19

II. 20. *paramātam guru nihāṭ virājain*

O MY HEART! the Supreme Spirit, the great Master, is near you: wake, oh wake!

Run to the feet of your Beloved: for your Lord stands near to your head.

You have slept for unnumbered ages; this morning will you not wake?

II. 22. *man tu pār utar kānh jaiho*

TO WHAT shore would you cross, O my heart? there is no traveller before you, there is no road:

Where is the movement, where is the rest, on that shore?

There is no water; no boat, no boatman, is there;

There is not so much as a rope to tow the boat, nor a man to draw it.

No earth, no sky, no time, no thing, is there: no shore, no ford!

There, there is neither body nor mind: and where is the place that shall still the thirst of the soul? You shall find naught in that emptiness.

Be strong, and enter into your own body: for there your foothold is firm. Consider it well, O my heart! go not elsewhere.

Kabir says: 'Put all imaginations away, and stand fast in that which you are.'

II. 33. *ghar ghar dīpak barai*

LAMPS BURN in every house, O blind one! and you cannot see them.

One day your eyes shall suddenly be opened, and you shall see: and the fetters of death will fall from you.

There is nothing to say or to hear, there is nothing to do: it is he who is living, yet dead, who shall never die again.

Because he lives in solitude, therefore the Yogī says that his home is far away.

Your Lord is near: yet you are climbing the palm-tree to seek Him.

The Brahman priest goes from house to house and initiates people into faith:

Alas! the true fountain of life is beside you, and you have set up a stone to worship.

Kabir says: 'I may never express how sweet my Lord is. Yoga and the telling of beads, virtue and vice—these are naught to Him.'

II. 38. *sādhō, so satgur mohi bhāwai*

O BROTHER, my heart yearns for that true Guru, who fills the cup of true love, and drinks of it himself, and offers it then to me.

He removes the veil from the eyes, and gives the true Vision of Brahma:

He reveals the worlds in Him, and makes me to hear the Unstruck Music:

He shows joy and sorrow to be one:

He fills all utterance with love.

Kabir says: 'Verily he has no fear, who has such a Guru to lead him to the shelter of safety!'

II. 40. *tiñwir sājñh kā gahirā āwai*

THE SHADOWS of evening fall thick and deep, and the darkness of love envelops the body and the mind.

Open the window to the west, and be lost in the sky of love;

Drink the sweet honey that steepes the petals of the lotus of the heart.

Receive the waves in your body: what splendour is in the region of the sea!

Hark! the sounds of conches and bells are rising.

Kabir says: 'O brother, behold! the Lord is in this vessel of my body.'

II. 48. *jis se rahamī apār jagat men*

MORE THAN all else do I cherish at heart that love which makes me to live a limitless life in this world.

It is like the lotus, which lives in the water and blooms in the water: yet the water cannot touch its petals, they open beyond its reach.

It is like a wife, who enters the fire at the bidding of love. She burns and lets others grieve, yet never dishonours love.

This ocean of the world is hard to cross: its waters are very deep. Kabir says: 'Listen to me, O Sadhu! few there are who have reached its end.'

II. 45. *Hari ne apnā āp chipāyā*

MY LORD HIDES Himself, and my Lord wonderfully reveals Himself:

My Lord has encompassed me with hardness, and my Lord has cast down my limitations.

My Lord brings to me words of sorrow and words of joy, and He Himself heals their strife.

I will offer my body and mind to my Lord: I will give up my life, but never can I forget my Lord!

II. 75. *ōṅkār siwāe kōi sirjai*

ALL THINGS are created by the Om;

The love-form is His body.

He is without form, without quality, without decay:

Seek thou union with Him!

But that formless God takes a thousand forms in the eyes of His creatures:

He is pure and indestructible,

His form is infinite and fathomless,

He dances in rapture, and waves of form arise from His dance.

The body and the mind cannot contain themselves, when they are touched by His great joy.

He is immersed in all consciousness, all joys, and all sorrows;

He has no beginning and no end;

He holds all within His bliss.

II. 81. *satgur sōi dayā kar dīnhā*

IT IS THE MERCY of my true Guru that has made me to know the unknown;

I have learned from Him how to walk without feet, to see without eyes, to hear without ears, to drink without mouth, to fly without wings;

I have brought my love and my meditation into the land where there is no sun and moon, nor day and night.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

Without eating, I have tasted of the sweetness of nectar; and without water, I have quenched my thirst.

Where there is the response of delight, there is the fullness of joy. Before whom can that joy be uttered?

Kabir says: 'The Guru is great beyond words, and great is the good fortune of the disciple.'

28

II. 85. *nirgun āge sargun nācai*

BEFORE THE Unconditioned, the Conditioned dances:

'Thou and I are one!' this trumpet proclaims.

The Guru comes, and bows down before the disciple:

This is the greatest of wonders.

29

II. 87. *Kabir kab se bhaye vairāgi*

GORAKHNATH ASKS Kabir:

'Tell me, O Kabir, when did your vocation begin? Where did your love have its rise?'

Kabir answers:

'When He whose forms are manifold had not begun His play: when there was no Guru, and no disciple: when the world was not spread out: when the Supreme One was alone—

Then I became an ascetic; then, O Gorakh, my love was drawn to Brahma.

Brahmā did not hold the crown on his head; the god Vishnu was not anointed as king; the power of Shiva was still unborn; when I was instructed in Yoga.

'I became suddenly revealed in Benares, and Ramananda illumined me;

I brought with me the thirst for the Infinite, and I have come for the meeting with Him.

In simplicity will I unite with the Simple One; my love will surge up. O Gorakh, march thou with His music!'

II. 95. *yā tarvar meṃ ek pakherū*

ON THIS TREE is a bird: it dances in the joy of life.

None knows where it is: and who knows what the burden of its music may be?

Where the branches throw a deep shape, there does it have its nest: and it comes in the evening and flies away in the morning, and says not a word of that which it means.

None tell me of this bird that sings within me.

It is neither coloured nor colourless: it has neither form nor outline:

It sits in the shadow of love.

It dwells within the Unattainable, the Infinite, and the Eternal; and no one marks when it comes and goes.

Kabir says: 'O brother Sadhu! deep is the mystery. Let wise men seek to know where rests that bird.'

II. 100. *nis̄ dīn sālai ghāw*

A SORE PAIN troubles me day and night, and I cannot sleep;

I long for the meeting with my Beloved, and my father's house gives me pleasure no more.

The gates of the sky are opened, the temple is revealed:

I meet my husband, and leave at His feet the offering of my body and my mind.

II. 103. *nāco re mero man, matta hoy*

DANCE, MY heart! dance to-day with joy.

The strains of love fill the days and the nights with music, and the world is listening to its melodies:

Mad with joy, life and death dance to the rhythm of this music. The hills and the sea and the earth dance, The world of man dances in laughter and tears.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

Why put on the robe of the monk, and live aloof from the world in lonely pride?

Behold! my heart dances in the delight of a hundred arts; and the Creator is well pleased.

33

II. 105. *man mast huā tab kyon bole*

WHERE IS the need of words, when love has made drunken the heart?

I have wrapped the diamond in my cloak; why open it again and again?

When its load was light, the pan of the balance went up: now it is full, where is the need for weighing?

The swan has taken its flight to the lake beyond the mountains; why should it search for the pools and ditches any more?

Your Lord dwells within you: why need your outward eyes be opened?

Kabir says: 'Listen, my brother! my Lord, who ravishes my eyes, has united Himself with me.'

34

II. 110. *mohi tohi lāgī kaise chule*

HOW COULD the love between Thee and me sever?

As the leaf of the lotus abides on the water: so thou art my Lord, and I am Thy servant.

As the night-bird Chakor gazes all night at the moon: so Thou art my Lord and I am Thy servant.

From the beginning until the ending of time, there is love between Thee and me; and how shall such love be extinguished?

Kabir says: 'As the river enters into the ocean, so my heart touches Thee.'

35

II. 113. *vālam, āwo hamāre geh re*

MY BODY AND my mind are grieved for the want of Thee;

O my Beloved! come to my house.

When people say I am Thy bride, I am ashamed; for I have not touched Thy heart with my heart.

Then what is this love of mine? I have no taste for food, I have no sleep; my heart is ever restless within doors and without.

As water is to the thirsty, so is the lover to the bride. Who is there that will carry my news to my Beloved?

Kabir is restless: he is dying for sight of Him.

36

II. 126. *jāg piyārī, ab kāñ sowai*

O FRIEND, awake, and sleep no more!

The night is over and gone, would you lose your day also?

Others, who have wakened, have received jewels;

O foolish woman! you have lost all whilst you slept.

Your lover is wise, and you are foolish, O woman!

You never prepared the bed of your husband:

O mad one! you passed your time in silly play.

Your youth was passed in vain, for you did not know your Lord;

Wake, wake! See! your bed is empty: He left you in the night.

Kabir says: 'Only she wakes, whose heart is pierced with the arrow of His music.'

37

I. 36. *sūr parkāś, tāñh nain kahāñ pārye*

WHERE IS THE night, when the sun is shining? If it is night, then the sun withdraws its light.

Where knowledge is, can ignorance endure? If there be ignorance, then knowledge must die.

If there be lust, how can love be there? Where there is love, there is no lust.

Lay hold on your sword, and join in the fight. Fight, O my brother, as long as life lasts.

Strike off your enemy's head, and there make an end of him quickly: then come, and bow your head at your King's Durbar.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

He who is brave, never forsakes the battle: he who flies from it is no true fighter.

In the field of this body a great war goes forward, against passion, anger, pride, and greed:

It is in the kingdom of truth, contentment and purity, that this battle is raging; and the sword that rings forth most loudly is the sword of His Name.

Kabir says: 'When a brave knight takes the field, a host of cowards is put to flight.

It is a hard fight and a weary one, this fight of the truth-seeker: for the vow of the truth-seeker is more hard than that of the warrior, or of the widowed wife who would follow her husband.

For the warrior fights for a few hours, and the widow's struggle with death is soon ended:

But the truth-seeker's battle goes on day and night, as long as life lasts it never ceases.'

38

I. 50. *bhram kâ tâlâ lagâ mahat re*

THE LOCK of error shuts the gate, open it with the key of love:

Thus, by opening the door, thou shalt wake the Beloved.

Kabir says: 'O brother! do not pass by such good fortune as this.'

39

I. 59. *sādho, yah tan thāth tanvure ka*

O FRIEND! THIS body is His lyre;

He tightens its strings, and draws from it the melody of Brahma.

If the strings snap and the keys slacken, then to dust must this instrument of dust return:

Kabir says: 'None but Brahma can evoke its melodies.'

I. 65. *avadhū bhūle ko ghar lāwe*

HE IS DEAR TO me indeed who can call back the wanderer to his home. In the home is the true union, in the home is enjoyment of life: why should I forsake my home and wander in the forest? If Brahma helps me to realize truth, verily I will find both bondage and deliverance in home.

He is dear to me indeed who has power to dive deep into Brahma; whose mind loses itself with ease in His contemplation.

He is dear to me who knows Brahma, and can dwell on His supreme truth in meditation; and who can play the melody of the Infinite by uniting love and renunciation in life.

Kabir says: 'The home is the abiding place; in the home is reality; the home helps to attain Him Who is real. So stay where you are, and all things shall come to you in time.'

I. 76. *santo, sahaj samādh bhañi*

O SADHU! THE simple union is the best.

Since the day when I met with my Lord, there has been no end to the sport of our love.

I shut not my eyes, I close not my ears, I do not mortify my body;
I see with eyes open and smile, and behold His beauty everywhere:

I utter His Name, and whatever I see, it reminds me of Him; whatever I do, it becomes His worship.

The rising and the setting are one to me; all contradictions are solved.

Wherever I go, I move round Him,

All I achieve is His service:

When I lie down, I lie prostrate at His feet.

He is the only adorable one to me: I have none other.

My tongue has left off impure words, it sings His glory day and night;

Whether I rise or sit down, I can never forget Him; for the rhythm of His music beats in my ears.

Kabir says: 'My heart is frenzied, and I disclose in my soul what is hidden. I am immersed in that one great bliss which transcends all pleasure and pain.'

I. 79. *tīrath men to sab pānī hai*

THERE IS nothing but water at the holy bathing places; and I know that they are useless, for I have bathed in them.

The images are all lifeless, they cannot speak; I know, for I have cried aloud to them.

The Purana and the Koran are mere words; lifting up the curtain, I have seen.

Kabir gives utterance to the words of experience; and he knows very well that all other things are untrue.

I. 82. *pānī vic mīn piyāsī*

I LAUGH WHEN I hear that the fish in the water is thirsty.

You do not see that the Real is in your home, and you wander from forest to forest listlessly!

Here is the truth! Go where you will, to Benares or to Mathura; if you do not find your soul, the world is unreal to you.

I. 93. *gagan math gaib nisān gade*

THE HIDDEN Banner is planted in the temple of the sky; there the blue canopy decked with the moon and set with bright jewels is spread.

There the light of the sun and the moon is shining; still your mind to silence before that splendour.

Kabir says: 'He who has drunk of this nectar, wanders like one who is mad.'

I. 97. *sādho, ko hai kāñh se āyo*

WHO ARE YOU, and whence do you come?

Where dwells that Supreme Spirit, and how does He have His sport with all created things?

The fire is in the wood; but who awakens it suddenly? Then it turns to ashes, and where goes the force of the fire?

The true guru teaches that He has neither limit nor infinitude.

Kabir says: 'Brahma suits His language to the understanding of His hearer.'

46

I. 98. *sādhō, sahajai kāyā śodho*

O SADHU! purify your body in the simple way.

As the seed is within the banyan tree, and within the seed are the flowers, the fruits, and the shade:

So the germ is within the body, and within that germ is the body again.

The fire, the air, the water, the earth, and the aether; you cannot have these outside of Him.

O Kazi, O Pundit, consider it well: what is there that is not in the soul?

The water-filled pitcher is placed upon water, it has water within and without.

It should not be given a name, lest it call forth the error of dualism.

Kabir says: 'Listen to the Word, the Truth, which is your essence. He speaks the Word to Himself; and He Himself is the Creator.'

47

I. 102. *tarvar ek mūl bin phāḍā*

THERE IS A strange tree, which stands without roots and bears fruits without blossoming;

It has no branches and no leaves, it is lotus all over.

Two birds sing there; one is the Guru, and the other the disciple:

The disciple chooses the manifold fruits of life and tastes them, and the Guru beholds him in joy.

What Kabir says is hard to understand: 'The bird is beyond seeking, yet it is most clearly visible. The Formless is in the midst of all forms. I sing the glory of forms.'

I. 107. *calat mansā acal kinhī*

I HAVE STILLED my restless mind, and my heart is radiant: for in That-ness I have seen beyond That-ness, in company I have seen the Comrade Himself.

Living in bondage, I have set myself free: I have broken away from the clutch of all narrowness.

Kabir says: 'I have attained the unattainable, and my heart is coloured with the colour of love.'

I. 105. *jo dīśai, so to hai nāhīn*

THAT WHICH you see is not; and for that which is, you have no words.

Unless you see, you believe not: what is told you you cannot accept.

He who is discerning knows by the word; and the ignorant stands gaping.

Some contemplate the Formless, and others meditate on form: but the wise man knows that Brahma is beyond both.

That beauty of His is not seen of the eye: that metre of His is not heard of the ear.

Kabir says: 'He who has found both love and renunciation never descends to death.'

I. 126. *muralī bajat akhand sadāye*

THE FLUTE OF the Infinite is played without ceasing, and its sound is love:

When love renounces all limits, it reaches truth.

How widely the fragrance spreads! It has no end, nothing stands in its way.

The form of this melody is bright like a million suns: incomparably sounds the vīna, the vīna of the notes of truth.

I. 129. *sakhiyo, ham hūṃ bhāī vālamāī*

DEAR FRIEND, I am eager to meet my Beloved! My youth has flowered, and the pain of separation from Him troubles my breast.

I am wandering yet in the alleys of knowledge without purpose, but I have received His news in these alleys of knowledge.

I have a letter from my Beloved: in this letter is an unutterable message, and now my fear of death is done away.

Kabir says: 'O my loving friend! I have got for my gift the Deathless One.'

I. 130. *sāṅ bin dard kareje hoy*

WHEN I AM parted from my Beloved, my heart is full of misery: I have no comfort in the day, I have no sleep in the night. To whom shall I tell my sorrow?

The night is dark; the hours slip by. Because my Lord is absent, I start up and tremble with fear.

Kabir says: 'Listen, my friend! there is no other satisfaction, save in the encounter with the Beloved.'

I. 122. *kaun muraī sabd sun ānand bhayo*

WHAT IS THAT flute whose music thrills me with joy?

The flame burns without a lamp;

The lotus blossoms without a root;

Flowers bloom in clusters;

The moon-bird is devoted to the moon;

With all its heart the rain-bird longs for the shower of rain;

But upon whose love does the Lover concentrate His entire life?

I. 112. *śuntā nahī dhun kī khabar*

HAVE YOU NOT heard the tune which the Unstruck Music is playing? In the midst of the chamber the harp of joy is gently and sweetly played; and where is the need of going without to hear it?

If you have not drunk of the nectar of that One Love, what boots it though you should purge yourself of all stains?

The Kazi is searching the words of the Koran, and instructing others: but if his heart be not steeped in that love, what does it avail, though he be a teacher of men?

The Yogi dyes his garments with red: but if he knows naught of that colour of love, what does it avail though his garments be tinted?

Kabir says: 'Whether I be in the temple or the balcony, in the camp or in the flower garden, I tell you truly that every moment my Lord is taking His delight in me.'

I. 73. *bhakti kā mārāg jhīnā re*

SUBTLE IS the path of love!

Therein there is no asking and no not-asking,

There one loses one's self at His feet,

There one is immersed in the joy of the seeking; plunged in the deeps of love as the fish in the water.

The lover is never slow in offering his head for his Lord's service.

Kabir declares the secret of this love.

I. 68. *bhāī kōī satguru sant kahāwai*

HE IS THE real Sadhu, who can reveal the form of the Formless to the vision of these eyes:

Who teaches the simple way of attaining Him, that is other than rites or ceremonies:

Who does not make you close the doors, and hold the breath, and renounce the world:

Who makes you perceive the Supreme Spirit wherever the mind attaches itself:

Who teaches you to be still in the midst of all your activities.

Ever immersed in bliss, having no fear in his mind, he keeps the spirit of union in the midst of all enjoyments.

The infinite dwelling of the Infinite Being is everywhere: in earth, water, sky, and air:

Firm as the thunderbolt, the seat of the seeker is established above the void.

He who is within is without: I see Him and none else.

57

I. 66. *sādhō, śabd sādhanā kijai*

RECEIVE THAT Word from which the Universe springeth!

That Word is the Guru; I have heard it, and become the disciple.

How many are there who know the meaning of that Word?

O Sadhu! practise that Word!

The Vedas and the Puranas proclaim it,

The world is established in it,

The Rishis and devotees speak of it:

But none knows the mystery of the Word.

The householder leaves his house when he hears it,

The ascetic comes back to love when he hears it,

The Six Philosophies expound it,

The Spirit of Renunciation points to that Word,

From that Word the world-form has sprung,

That Word reveals all.

Kabir says: 'But who knows whence the Word cometh?'

58

I. 63. *pī le pyālā, ho matwālā*

EMPTY THE Cup! O be drunken!

Drink the divine nectar of His Name!

Kabir says: 'Listen to me, dear Sadhu!

From the sole of the foot to the crown of the head this mind is filled
with poison.'

59

I. 52. *khasm na cāhai bāwarī*

O MAN, IF thou dost not know thine own Lord, whereof art thou so proud?
Put thy cleverness away: mere words shall never unite thee to Him.
Do not deceive thyself with the witness of the Scriptures:
Love is something other than this, and he who has sought it truly has
found it.

60

I. 56. *sukh sindh kī sair kī*

THE SAVOUR of wandering in the ocean of deathless life has rid me of all
my asking:

As the tree is in the seed, so all diseases are in this asking.

61

I. 48. *sukh sāgar men āike*

WHEN AT last you are come to the ocean of happiness, do not go back
thirsty.

Wake, foolish man! for Death stalks you. Here is pure water before
you; drink it at every breath.

Do not follow the mirage on foot, but thirst for the nectar;

Dhruva, Prahlād, and Shukadeva have drunk of it, and also Raidas has
tasted it:

The saints are drunk with love, their thirst is for love.

Kabir says: 'Listen to me, brother! The nest of fear is broken.

Not for a moment have you come face to face with the world:

You are weaving your bondage of falsehood, your words are full of
deception:

With the load of desires which you hold on your head, how can you
be light?

Kabir says: 'Keep within you truth, detachment, and love.'

62

I. 35. *safī ko kaun śikhāwā hai*

WHO HAS EVER taught the widowed wife to burn herself on the pyre of her dead husband?

And who has ever taught love to find bliss in renunciation?

63

I. 39. *are man, dhīraj kāhe na dharai*

WHY SO impatient, my heart?

He who watches over birds, beasts, and insects,

He who cared for you whilst you were yet in your mother's womb,
Shall He not care for you now that you are come forth?

Oh my heart, how could you turn from the smile of your Lord and wander so far from Him?

You have left your Beloved and are thinking of others: and this is why all your work is in vain.

64

I. 117. *sāṁ se lagan kathin hai, bhāī*

HOW HARD IT is to meet my Lord!

The rain-bird wails in thirst for the rain: almost she dies of her longing,
yet she would have none other water than the rain.

Drawn by the love of music, the deer moves forward: she dies as she listens to the music, yet she shrinks not in fear.

The widowed wife sits by the body of her dead husband: she is not afraid of the fire.

Put away all fear for this poor body.

65

I. 22. *jab main bhūlā, re bhāī*

O BROTHER! when I was forgetful, my true Guru showed me the Way.

Then I left off all rites and ceremonies, I bathed no more in the holy water:

Then I learned that it was I alone who was mad, and the whole world beside me was sane; and I had disturbed these wise people.

From that time forth I knew no more how to roll in the dust in obeisance:

I do not ring the temple bell:

I do not set the idol on its throne:

I do not worship the image with flowers.

It is not the austerities that mortify the flesh which are pleasing to the Lord,

When you leave off your clothes and kill your senses, you do not please the Lord:

The man who is kind and who practises righteousness, who remains passive amidst the affairs of the world, who considers all creatures on earth as his own self,

He attains the Immortal Being, the true God is ever with him.

Kabir says: 'He attains the true Name whose words are pure, and who is free from pride and conceit.'

L. 20. *man na rangāye*

THE YOGI dyes his garments, instead of dyeing his mind in the colours of love:

He sits within the temple of the Lord, leaving Brahma to worship a stone.

He pierces holes in his ears, he has a great beard and matted locks, he looks like a goat:

He goes forth into the wilderness, killing all his desires, and turns himself into an eunuch:

He shaves his head and dyes his garments; he reads the Gita and becomes a mighty talker.

Kabir says: 'You are going to the doors of death, bound hand and foot!'

I. 9. *nā jāne sāhab kaisā hai*

I DO NOT KNOW what manner of God is mine.

The Mullah cries aloud to Him: and why? Is your Lord deaf? The subtle anklets that ring on the feet of an insect when it moves are heard of Him.

Tell your beads, paint your forehead with the mark of your God, and wear matted locks long and showy: but a deadly weapon is in your heart, and how shall you have God?

III. 102. *ham se rahā na jāy*

I HEAR THE melody of His flute, and I cannot contain myself:

The flower blooms, though it is not spring; and already the bee has received its invitation.

The sky roars and the lightning flashes, the waves arise in my heart,
The rain falls; and my heart longs for my Lord.

Where the rhythm of the world rises and falls, thither my heart has reached:

There the hidden banners are fluttering in the air.

Kabir says: 'My heart is dying, though it lives.'

III. 2. *jo khodā masjid vasat hai*

IF GOD BE within the mosque, then to whom does this world belong?

If Ram be within the image which you find upon your pilgrimage, then who is there to know what happens without?

Hari is in the East: Allah is in the West. Look within your heart, for there you will find both Karim and Ram;

All the men and women of the world are His living forms.

Kabir is the child of Allah and of Ram: He is my Guru, He is my Pir.

III. 9. *śīl śantosh sadā samadṛishṭi*

HE WHO IS meek and contented, he who has an equal vision, whose mind is filled with the fullness of acceptance and of rest:

He who has seen Him and touched Him, he is freed from all fear and trouble.

To him the perpetual thought of God is like sandal paste smeared on the body, to him nothing else is delight:

His work and his rest are filled with music: he sheds abroad the radiance of love.

Kabir says: 'Touch His feet, who is one and indivisible, immutable and peaceful; who fills all vessels to the brim with joy, and whose form is love.'

III. 13. *sādh sāngat pītam*

GO THOU TO the company of the good, where the Beloved One has His dwelling place:

Take all thy thoughts and love and instruction from thence.

Let that assembly be burnt to ashes where His Name is not spoken!

Tell me, how couldst thou hold a wedding-feast, if the bridegroom himself were not there?

Waver no more, think only of the Beloved;

Set not thy heart on the worship of other gods, there is no worth in the worship of other masters.

Kabir deliberates and says: 'Thus thou shalt never find the Beloved!'

III. 26. *tor hīrā hirāiṭwā kīcaḍ men*

THE JEWEL IS lost in the mud, and all are seeking for it;

Some look for it in the east, and some in the west; some in the water and some amongst stones.

But the servant Kabir has appraised it at its true value, and has wrapped it with care in the end of the mantle of his heart.

III. 26. *āyau din gaune kã ho*

THE PALANQUIN came to take me away to my husband's home, and it sent through my heart a thrill of joy;

But the bearers have brought me into the lonely forest, where I have no one of my own.

O bearers, I entreat you by your feet, wait but a moment longer: let me go back to my kinsmen and friends, and take my leave of them.

The servant Kabir sings: 'O Sadhu! finish your buying and selling, have done with your good and your bad: for there are no markets and no shops in the land to which you go.'

III. 30. *are dil, prem nagar kã ant na pãyã*

O MY HEART! you have not known all the secrets of this city of love: in ignorance you came, and in ignorance you return.

O my friend, what have you done with this life? You have taken on your head the burden heavy with stones, and who is to lighten it for you?

Your Friend stands on the other shore, but you never think in your mind how you may meet with Him:

The boat is broken, and yet you sit ever upon the bank; and thus you are beaten to no purpose by the waves.

The servant Kabir asks you to consider; who is there that shall befriend you at the last?

You are alone, you have no companion: you will suffer the consequences of your own deeds.

III. 55. *ved kahe sargun ke āge*

THE VEDAS say that the Unconditioned stands beyond the world of Conditions.

O woman, what does it avail thee to dispute whether He is beyond all or in all?

See thou everything as thine own dwelling place: the mist of pleasure and pain can never spread there.

There Brahma is revealed day and night: there light is His garment,
light is His seat, light rests on thy head.

Kabir says: 'The Master, who is true, He is all light.'

76

III. 48. *tū surat nain nihār*

OPEN YOUR eyes of love, and see Him who pervades this world! consider
it well, and know that this is your own country.

When you meet the true Guru, He will awaken your heart;

He will tell you the secret of love and detachment, and then you will
know indeed that He transcends this universe.

This world is the City of Truth, its maze of paths enchants the heart:

We can reach the goal without crossing the road, such is the sport
unending.

Where the ring of manifold joys ever dances about Him, there is the
sport of Eternal Bliss.

When we know this, then all our receiving and renouncing is over;

Thenceforth the heat of having shall never scorch us more.

He is the Ultimate Rest unbounded:

He has spread His form of love throughout all the world.

From that Ray which is Truth, streams of new forms are perpetually
springing: and He pervades those forms.

All the gardens and groves and bowers are abounding with blossom;
and the air breaks forth into ripples of joy.

There the swan plays a wonderful game,

There the Unstruck Music eddies around the Infinite One;

There in the midst the Throne of the Unheld is shining, whereon the
great Being sits—

Millions of suns are shamed by the radiance of a single hair of His
body.

On the harp of the road what true melodies are being sounded! and
its notes pierce the heart:

There the Eternal Fountain is playing its endless life-streams of birth
and death.

They call Him Emptiness who is the Truth of truths, in Whom all
truths are stored!

There within Him creation goes forward, which is beyond all philosophy; for philosophy cannot attain to Him:

There is an endless world, O my Brother! and there is the Nameless Being, of whom nought can be said.

Only he knows it who has reached that region: it is other than all that is heard and said.

No form, no body, no length, no breadth is seen there: how can I tell you that which it is?

He comes to the Path of the Infinite on whom the grace of the Lord descends: he is freed from births and deaths who attains to Him.

Kabir says: 'It cannot be told by the words of the mouth, it cannot be written on paper:

It is like a dumb person who tastes a sweet thing—how shall it be explained?'

77

III. 60. *cal hamṣā wā deś jahān*

O MYHEART! let us go to that country where dwells the Beloved, the ravisher of my heart!

There Love is filling her pitcher from the well, yet she has no rope wherewith to draw water;

There the clouds do not cover the sky, yet the rain falls down in gentle showers;

O bodiless one! do not sit on your doorstep; go forth and bathe yourself in that rain!

There it is ever moonlight and never dark; and who speaks of one sun only? that land is illuminate with the rays of a million suns.

78

III. 63. *kahaiṃ Kabir, śuno ho sādho*

KABIR SAYS: 'O Sadhu! hear my deathless words. If you want your own good, examine and consider them well.

You have estranged yourself from the Creator, of whom you have sprung: you have lost your reason, you have bought death.

All doctrines and all teachings are sprung from Him, from Him they grow: know this for certain, and have no fear.

Hear from me the tidings of this great truth!

Whose name do you sing, and on whom do you meditate? O, come forth from this entanglement!

He dwells at the heart of all things, so why take refuge in empty desolation?

If you place the Guru at a distance from you, then it is but the distance that you honour:

If indeed the Master be far away, then who is it else that is creating this world?

When you think that He is not here, then you wander further and further away, and seek Him in vain with tears.

Where He is far off, there He is unattainable: where He is near, He is very bliss.

Kabir says: 'Lest His servant should suffer pain He pervades him through and through.'

Know yourself then, O Kabir; for He is in you from head to foot. Sing with gladness, and keep your seat unmoved within your heart.

III. 66. *nā main dharmī nahīn adharmī*

I AM NEITHER pious nor ungodly,

I live neither by law nor by sense,

I am neither a speaker nor hearer,

I am neither a servant nor master,

I am neither bond nor free,

I am neither detached nor attached.

I am far from none: I am near to none.

I shall go neither to hell nor to heaven.

I do all works; yet I am apart from all works.

Few comprehend my meaning: he who can comprehend it, he sits unmoved.

Kabir seeks neither to establish nor to destroy.

III. 69. *satta nām hai sab ten nyārā*

THE TRUE Name is like none other name!

The distinction of the Conditioned from the Unconditioned is but a word:

The Unconditioned is the seed, the Conditioned is the flower and the fruit.

Knowledge is the branch, and the Name is the root.

Look, and see where the root is: happiness shall be yours when you come to the root.

The root will lead you to the branch, the leaf, the flower, and the fruit:

It is the encounter with the Lord, it is the attainment of bliss, it is the reconciliation of the Conditioned and the Unconditioned.

III. 74. *pratham ek jo āpai āp*

IN THE beginning was He alone, sufficient unto Himself: the formless, colourless, and unconditioned Being.

Then was there neither beginning, middle, nor end;

Then were no eyes, no darkness, no light;

Then were no ground, air, nor sky; no fire, water, nor earth; no rivers like the Ganges and the Jumna, no seas, oceans, and waves.

Then was neither vice nor virtue; scriptures there were not, as the Vedas and Puranas, nor as the Koran.

Kabir ponders in his mind and says, 'Then was there no activity: the Supreme Being remained merged in the unknown depths of His own self.'

The Guru neither eats nor drinks, neither lives nor dies:

Neither has He form, line, colour, nor vesture.

He who has neither caste nor clan nor anything else—how may I describe His glory?

He has neither form nor formlessness,

He has no name,

He has neither colour nor colourlessness,

He has no dwelling-place.

III. 76. *kahain Kabir vicār ke*

KABIR PONDERs and says: 'He who has neither caste nor country, who is formless and without quality, fills all space.'

The Creator brought into being the Game of Joy: and from the word Om the Creation sprang.

The earth is His joy; His joy is the sky;

His joy is the flashing of the sun and the moon;

His joy is the beginning, the middle, and the end;

His joy is eyes, darkness, and light.

Oceans and waves are His joy: His joy the Sarasvati, the Jumna, and the Ganges.

The Guru is One: and life and death, union and separation, are all His plays of joy!

His play the land and water, the whole universe!

His play the earth and the sky!

In play is the Creation spread out, in play it is established. The whole world, says Kabir, rests in His play, yet still the Player remains unknown.

III. 84. *jhī jhī jantar bājai*

THE HARP gives forth murmurous music; and the dance goes on without hands and feet.

It is played without fingers, it is heard without ears: for He is the ear, and He is the listener.

The gate is locked, but within there is fragrance: and there the meeting is seen of none.

The wise shall understand it.

III. 89. *mor phakīrwā māngī jāy*

THE BEGGAR goes a-begging, but I could not even catch sight of Him:
And what shall I beg of the Beggar? He gives without my asking.
Kabir says: 'I am His own: now let that befall which may befall!'

III. 90. *naihar se jiyarā phāṛ re*

MY HEART cries aloud for the house of my lover; the open road and the shelter of a roof are all one to her who has lost the city of her husband.

My heart finds no joy in anything: my mind and my body are distraught.

His place has a million gates, but there is a vast ocean between it and me:

How shall I cross it, O friend? for endless is the outstretching of the path.

How wondrously this lyre is wrought! When its strings are rightly strung, it maddens the heart: but when the keys are broken and the strings are loosened, none regard it more.

I tell my parents with laughter that I must go to my Lord in the morning;

They are angry, for they do not want me to go, and they say: 'She thinks she has gained such dominion over her husband that she can have whatsoever she wishes; and therefore she is impatient to go to him.'

Dear friend, lift my veil lightly now; for this is the night of love.

Kabir says: 'Listen to me! My heart is eager to meet my lover: I lie sleepless upon my bed. Remember me early in the morning!'

III. 96. *jīv mahāl men Śiv pahunwā*

SERVE YOUR God, who has come into this temple of life!

Do not act the part of a madman, for the night is thickening fast.

He has awaited me for countless ages, for love of me He has lost His heart:

Yet I did not know the bliss that was so near to me, for my love was not yet awake.

But now, my Lover has made known to me the meaning of the note that struck my ear:

Now, my good fortune is come.

Kabir says: 'Behold! how great is my good fortune! I have received the unending caress of my beloved!'

I. 71. *gagan ghaṭā ghaharānī, sādho*

CLOUDS THICKEN in the sky! O, listen to the deep voice of their roaring;
The rain comes from the east with its monotonous murmur.
Take care of the fences and boundaries of your fields, lest the rains
overflow them;

Prepare the soil of deliverance, and let the creepers of love and
renunciation be soaked in this shower.

It is the prudent farmer who will bring his harvest home; he shall fill
both his vessels, and feed both the wise men and the saints.

III. 118. *āj din ke main jāun balihārī*

THIS DAY is dear to me above all other days, for to-day the Beloved Lord
is a guest in my house;

My chamber and my courtyard are beautiful with His presence.

My longings sing His Name, and they are become lost in His great
beauty:

I wash His feet, and I look upon His Face; and I lay before Him as
an offering my body, my mind, and all that I have.

What a day of gladness is that day in which my Beloved, who is my
treasure, comes to my house!

All evils fly from my heart when I see my Lord.

'My love has touched Him; my heart is longing for the Name which
is Truth.'

Thus sings Kabir, the servant of all servants.

I. 100. *kōi śuntā hai jñānī rāg gagan men*

IS THERE any wise man who will listen to that solemn music which arises
in the sky?

For He, the Source of all music, makes all vessels full fraught, and
rests in fullness Himself.

He who is in the body is ever athirst, for he pursues that which is in
part:

But ever there wells forth deeper and deeper the sound 'He is this—
this is He'; fusing love and renunciation into one.

Kabir says: 'O brother! that is the Primal Word.'

90

I. 108. *main kâ se bûjhaun*

TO WHOM shall I go to learn about my beloved?

Kabir says: 'As you never may find the forest if you ignore the tree,
so He may never be found in abstractions.'

91

III. 12. *saṃskṛit bhāṣhā padhī līnhā*

I HAVE learned the Sanskrit language, so let all men call me wise:

But where is the use of this, when I am floating adrift, and parched
with thirst, and burning with the heat of desire?

To no purpose do you bear on your head this load of pride and vanity.

Kabir says: 'Lay it down in the dust, and go forth to meet the Beloved.
Address Him as your Lord.'

92

III. 110. *carkhā calai surat virahin kâ*

THE WOMAN who is parted from her lover spins at the spinning wheel.

The city of the body arises in its beauty; and within it the palace of
the mind has been built.

The wheel of love revolves in the sky, and the seat is made of the
jewels of knowledge:

What subtle threads the woman weaves, and makes them fine with love
and reverence!

Kabir says: 'I am weaving the garland of day and night. When my
Lover comes and touches me with His feet, I shall offer Him my tears.'

III.111. *kofin bhānu candra tārāṇ*

BENEATH THE great umbrella of my King millions of suns and moons and stars are shining!

He is the Mind within my mind: He is the Eye within mine eye.

Ah, could my mind and eyes be one! Could my love but reach to my Lover! Could but the fiery heat of my heart be cooled!

Kabir says: 'When you unite love with the Lover, then you have love's perfection.'

I. 92. *avadhū begam deś hamārā*

O SADHU! my land is a sorrowless land.

I cry aloud to all, to the king and the beggar, the emperor and the fakir—

Whosoever seeks for shelter in the Highest, let all come and settle in my land!

Let the weary come and lay his burdens here!

So live here, my brother, that you may cross with ease to that other shore.

It is a land without earth or sky, without moon or stars;

For only the radiance of Truth shines in my Lord's Durbar.

Kabir says: 'O beloved brother! naught is essential save Truth.'

I. 109. *sāṅ ke sāṅat sāṅur āi*

I CAME with my Lord to my Lord's home: but I lived not with Him and I tasted Him not, and my youth passed away like a dream.

On my wedding night my women-friends sang in chorus, and I was anointed with the unguents of pleasure and pain:

But when the ceremony was over, I left my Lord and came away, and my kinsman tried to console me upon the road.

Kabir says, 'I shall go to my Lord's house with my love at my side; then shall I sound the trumpet of triumph!'

I. 75. *samajh dekh man mīt piyarwā*

O FRIEND, dear heart of mine, think well! if you love indeed, then why do you sleep?

If you have found Him, then give yourself utterly, and take Him to you.

Why do you lose Him again and again?

If the deep sleep of rest has come to your eyes, why waste your time making the bed and arranging the pillows?

Kabir says: 'I tell you the ways of love! Even though the head itself must be given, why should you weep over it?'

II. 90. *sāhab ham men, sāhab tum men*

THE LORD is in me, the Lord is in you, as life is in every seed. O servant! put false pride away, and seek for Him within you.

A million suns are ablaze with light,

The sea of blue spreads in the sky,

The fever of life is stilled, and all stains are washed away; when I sit in the midst of that world.

Hark to the unstruck bells and drums! Take your delight in love!

Rains pour down without water, and the rivers are streams of light.

One Love it is that pervades the whole world, few there are who know it fully:

They are blind who hope to see it by the light of reason, that reason which is the cause of separation—

The House of Reason is very far away!

How blessed is Kabir, that amidst this great joy he sings within his own vessel.

It is the music of the meeting of soul with soul;

It is the music of the forgetting of sorrows;

It is the music that transcends all coming in and all going forth.

II. 98. *ritu phāgun niyar ānī*

THE MONTH of March draws near: ah, who will unite me to my Lover?
How shall I find words for the beauty of my Beloved? For He is merged
in all beauty.

His colour is in all the pictures of the world, and it bewitches the body
and the mind.

Those who know this, know what is this unutterable play of the Spring.

Kabir says: 'Listen to me, brother! there are not many who have found
this out.'

II. 111. *Nārad, pyār so antar nāhī*

OH NARAD! I know that my Lover cannot be far:

When my Lover wakes, I wake; when He sleeps, I sleep.

He is destroyed at the root who gives pain to my Beloved.

Where they sing His praise, there I live;

When He moves, I walk before Him: my heart yearns for my Beloved.

The infinite pilgrimage lies at His feet, a million devotees are seated
there.

Kabir says: 'The Lover Himself reveals the glory of true love.'

II. 122. *kōi prem kī peng jhulāo re*

HANG UP the swing of love to-day!

Hang the body and the mind between the arms of the Beloved, in
the ecstasy of love's joy:

Bring the tearful streams of the rainy clouds to your eyes, and cover
your heart with the shadow of darkness:

Bring your face nearer to His ear, and speak of the deepest longings
of your heart.

Kabir says: 'Listen to me, brother! bring the vision of the Beloved in
your heart.'

APPENDICES

The Fugitive (1919?)

Lekhan

The Fugitive (1919?)

THE DAYS were lengthening with the end of winter months, and my dog played in the sun with the pet deer in his own wild manner, fondly forgetting to wonder at the strangeness of her responses.

The crowds going to the market gathered by the fence, and laughed to see the love of these playmates struggling in languages dissimilar.

With the spring came the warm south wind, and a quiver ran through the young leaves fluttering like flames. In the deer's dark eyes danced a gleam when she started and bent her neck at the movement of her own shadow, or raised her ears to listen to some whisper in the wind.

One afternoon, when the light, like a tune from strings, thrilled forth from the *amlak* leaves, and the air seemed in pain with the riot of perfumes, the deer began to run like a meteor that knew not its destination. Bounds of life and death grew dim to her and lost all dread of the unknown.

It grew dark, and lamps were lighted in the house; the stars came out and night was upon the fields, but the deer never came back.

My dog ran up to me whining, questioning me with his piteous eyes which seemed to say, 'I do not understand.'

But who does ever understand?

The message comes floating with the errant wind, with the rustle and glimmer abroad in the April sky; it speaks not, it sings in the blood.

It sings of the first ache of youth in the world, when the first flower broke out from its bud, and love went forth seeking that which it knew not, leaving its world of the known.

WE CAME together, friends, and now at the bend of the road I stop to bid you farewell.

I feel I can no longer walk with you to seek what you seek, or build memorials of regret.

Your road is wide and straight, but my call comes from the wayside, from the wilderness of the unreached.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

I follow the impulse of the wind, and the clouds; I follow the stars to the daybreak behind the hills; I follow the lovers who, as they walk, make a wreath of their days with the one thread of song, 'I love.'

3

THE KING'S son roamed in strange lands over the sea.

He met with maidens, some bold and some of the down-cast eyes, some with smile of a sharp glittering edge, and some soft as tears.

He rode across a desert and reached the sleeping land

He entered the speechless palace and crowned with his wreath the king's daughter while she slept, and came away.

Years passed. The spell of sleep was broken in the land.

The king's daughter woke and sat up on her bed lit by the glow of a gem.

A letter lay on her breast, strung with a golden thread. She opened it and read a name strange to her; she wondered for hours who it was that came with his wreath when she slept.

April's kiss had startled the woodland at the purple slope of the hill.

The flowers woke with a shock of joy, the birds revelled in unwearyed wonder at her own songs, and the insistent south wind burst into the room of the king's daughter in a boisterous struggle to speak.

She sat on her bed and spread the letter upon her lap and read it and read it over again.

The brook murmured and the bees hummed, leaving the one great secret mute in the centre of the spring chorus.

The seasons pass; the summer steals away behind the resonant shadow of rains; the autumn spends its last gold in the sad ceremonial of sunsets, giving way to the winter of long nights and blurred stars.

The king's daughter sits alone at her window and wonders who it was that came with his wreath when she slept.

4

THE DAY WAS done, and it grew dark when I asked her, 'What strange land is this where I have come?'

A P P E N D I X

She said no words, but lowered her eyes, and, with a gurgle in her water jar, she walked away.

In the gloom, the trees grow vague on the bank, and the land appears as though from some storied past.

The water is dumb, the bamboos darkly still, while a wristlet tinkles against the water jar along the lane.

Row no more, but fasten the boat at this tree,—for I love the look of this land.

The evening star goes down behind the temple dome, and the marble of the river-landing glimmers in the dusk.

The window lights, weirdly wrought in the wayside shadows, draw sighs from the late passers by, while the wristlet tinkles against the water jar, and retreating steps rustle along the lane strewn with withered leaves.

The night deepens, the palace-towers loom spectre-like, and the hum of the town is weary and low.

Row no more, but fasten the boat at the tree.

Let me seek rest in his strange land, lying dim under the stars, where darkness quivers with the tinkle of a wristlet knocking against the water jar.

5

BEHIND THE rusty iron gratings of the neighbouring window, sits the girl Raneë, dark and plain of face, looking like a boat stranded on the sand-bank, when the river is shallow in the summer.

I come back to my room after my day's work, and my tired eyes are lured to her.

She seems to me like a lake with its dark water touched at the edge by the lonely moon.

She has her window for her freedom, where the morning light meets her musings, and her dark eyes, like lost stars, seem to seek back their sky.

But I have my freedom in my own bamboo reed, whose simple music fills the distance between us.

In this world of strangers, a meeting of perfect recognition is caught for me only in the few notes of my flute.

WHEN THE king's son went to his lessons, once upon a time, there went the daughter of the neighbouring king.

It is written in the ancient tale that often they met on their way.

The king's daughter would drop a rose from her hair unawares, while moving away with a start. The king's son would pick it up and give it back to her, keeping a blushing petal for himself.

Thus went to their lessons, once upon a time, the king's son and the daughter of the neighbouring king.

The king's daughter sat on the balcony above and the king's son down below.

They opened their books and read; they wrote figures on the floor with chalk.

The king's daughter looked away, forgetting to read and by chance would drop her book down below.

The king's son forgot his lessons to run up and give it back to her hands.

Thus they toiled at their books, the king's daughter in the balcony above and the king's son down below.

The king's son walked back to his house after his lessons, and slowly walked home the daughter of the neighbouring king.

She loitered in the wayside shade and played with her pearl chain.

She dropped it and in forgetfulness left it behind.

The king's son took it up, and forgetfully lost his own ruby chain for the king's daughter to discover.

Thus went back home the king's son and the daughter of the neighbouring king, when the lesson was over.

At night the king's daughter lay on her bed and thought of an absent face.

On his couch sat up the king's son and thought of an absent smile.

The rain pattered on the roof; the wind, like a wounded leopard, lashed its tail against the forest, and there sat dreaming the king's son on a desolate night of June, and in her lonely bed dreamed the daughter of the neighbouring king.

APPENDIX

7

IF I WERE BORN in the royal town of Ujjain, in those days when Kalidas was the king's poet, I know I should be a willing captive to the charm of some maiden of Malwa. She would glance at me, through the shadow of the jasmine bower, and allow her veil to be caught in the branches, seeking her chance to linger and look back.

It was in some past, whose track is hidden under time's dead leaves.

The scholars fiercely fight today about dates that play hide and seek.

I am not a fool to break my heart over those figures of vanished years, but alas and alas again, that those Malwa maidens have also followed them.

To what heaven, I wonder, have they carried, in their flower baskets, those days that tingled with lyrics of the king's poet?

This morning my heart is heavy with the sadness of separation from those whom I never met in all time.

Yet April carries the same flowers with which they decked their hair, and the same south breeze fluttered their veils which brings its whispers to the modern roses.

And, to tell the truth, consolation is not completely lacking in the recent spring time, when Kalidas sings no more; and I know that, if he can watch me from the land of the Immortals, he has reasons to be envious.

8

SOMEONE GOES by in the road playing on his flute and suddenly it comes to me that I am alone in the house.

Someone has let fly his heart in the immensity of a song. I know not of what it speaks, but suddenly I feel, with a pain, that my heart longs for its freedom.

The evening flowers in my garden were as a lover's sleepless phantasies. But they fade, and the moon pales in the West like the vanishing smile of a child as it falls asleep.

In the fresh morning air someone passes by in the road, playing on his flute, and suddenly my heart aches to know that I am here to sit alone and wait.

SHE CAME FOR a moment and walked away, stirring a throb of pain in the wind and a flutter among the lowly flowers as she walked away.

I searched for the mystery of her thoughts in her eyes and in her lips, silent with the burden of songs.

The moonlight fell like an answering kiss, as she flung her glance at the sky, and walked away.

While her steps left a trail of tremor along the grass, I wondered if the secret she held in her heart was happy, or sad, if she would ever come back, or follow the track of dreams as she walked away.

TWO LITTLE bare feet flit on the earth, carrying the sweet metaphor of summer's footfalls; the roses' touch is on them and the kiss of the jasmynes.

They lightly impress on the dust the annals of their fleeting adventure, to be wiped away by the passing breeze.

But come straying into my heart, two little tender feet, and let your steps leave an everlasting mark of songs in my dreamland paths.

FRIEND, I WISH I had some secret of my own, like unshed rain in summer clouds,—some secret which I could whisper to someone and carry folded in my silence.

I envy you, when your muffled talk spreads an undertone of sadness in the noon by the slow water under the trees dozing in the sun.

And when, in the evening, which seems hushed at the sound of an unseen step, you ask me for the cause of my tears, I do not know how to answer you, for my secret is a secret unto me.

LEAVE YOUR lute, my love, let your arms be free to surrender themselves to me.

Let your touch bring my overflowing heart to my body's utmost brink.

APPENDIX

Do not bend your neck and turn away your face, but offer up your kiss to me, which is like some perfume closed in the bud.

Do not smother this moment under vain words, but let our hearts quake with a rush of silence sweeping all thoughts to the shoreless delight.

13

SHE DID NOT speak when I was about to go away. But I felt, from a slight quiver, the yearning of her arms which seemed to say: 'Ah no, not yet.'

I have often heard her voice in the pleading of her hands, in a moment's touch, unaware of its meaning.

I have known those hesitating arms to tremble while holding up youth's garland to put around my neck.

Their little gestures come like truants to play with her secrets in the shadow of still hours.

14

MY SONGS ARE like bees, they follow in the air some fragrant trace of your remembrance, and they hum around your shyness seeking its hidden store.

When the dawn droops in the sun, when in the noon the air is hung low with the heaviness of the forest's silence, my songs return home, their wings languid with golden dust.

15

THE RIVER IS grey and the air dazed with blown sands.

In the morning, dark with a deep disquiet, when the birds are mute, their nests shaking in the gust, I sit alone and ask myself, 'Where is she?'

Days had passed, and while we sat too near each other we laughed and jested, and the awe of love's majesty found no words in our meeting.

I made myself small, and she trifled away every moment with the pelting of talk that was trivial.

Today, I wish in vain that she were by me, in the gloom of the coming storm, to sit in the solitude of soul.

I THOUGHT I would write love's words in their own colour, but the colour lies deep in the heart and the tears are pale.

Would you know it, friend, if the words were simple?

I thought I would sing love's words in their own tune, but the tune flows hidden in my heart and my eyes are dumb.

Would you know it, friend, if my words were silent?

IN THE NIGHT the song came upon me, when you were away.

It spoke of that for which I had struggled all my days, and in a still moment of the dark the words burned with music like stars, when you were away.

My hope was that, in the morning, I should sing it to you before I left, but try as I may, my music misses its words, when you are by me.

LIKE A CHILD that frets and pushes away its toys, my heart today shakes its head at all my utterings and says, 'No, not this.'

The words, in the agony of their vagueness, haunt my mind, like vagrant clouds hovering over hills waiting for some chance winds to unburthen them of their rain.

My soul, your breath, finding no reed, vanishes in mere sighs, and in place of tune you have tears.

But leave your vain efforts, for the stillness will ripen in the dark its own music.

My life today is like a cloister where some penance goes on and the spring is afraid to walk there or to whisper.

This is not the time, my love, when you must come to my gate,—for nothing but your own anklet bells sing in my garden path, making its echoes ashamed.

But know that tomorrow's songs are in bud today, and when they see you walk by them they struggle to burst their hearts in an untimely surrender.

THE NIGHT deepens and the flame in the lamp flickers to its death.

I forgot to notice when the evening, like a village girl who had filled at the river her last vessel of the day, had stepped into her hushed chamber closing the dark gate.

I was speaking to you, my love, with a mind barely conscious of its voice,—and I ask you, had it any meaning? Did it give you any message which lies hidden beyond life's reach, in the cellar of eternity?

But now, when the voice ceases, I feel the night throbbing with thoughts that gaze in awe at the abyss of their dumbness.

I BELIEVE your vision had come to me before we ever met, like some prophecy of April before the spring broke in flowers.

It came in the haze of the odour of *sal* blossoms; in the twilight twinkle of the river by the yellow of its sands; in the vagueness of blended sounds of a summer afternoon; it had laughed and evaded me in many a nameless gleam of moments.

I THINK I shall stop startled, if ever we meet in our next birth walking in the light of a far away world.

I shall know that those dark eyes are the morning stars, which once belonged to an evening of an unremembered sky in my life.

I shall know that the magic of your face is not all its own, but, from an immemorial meeting, it has stolen the passionate light that was once in my eyes, and gathered from my love a mystery that has forgotten its source.

YOU HAVE made me great, beloved, with your love though I am but one among the many, drifting in the common tide, rocking in the fluctuating favour of the world.

You have given me a seat where pets of all time bring their song tributes and lovers of deathless names greet one another across the ages.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

Men pass me by in haste in the market, never knowing that my body has grown precious with your caress, that I carry in me your kiss, as the sun carries in its orb the fire of the divine touch that shines for ever.

24

I FORGET THE day when you entered my heart and took your seat as a queen.

Your smile was like sunlight mellowed with dew, your voice had the peace of the midnight river when the boats are moored by the bank.

I felt the endless depth of your eyes where light was one with darkness.

I do not know if it was the season of mango flowers and if birds sang in meaningless mirth. But the blue in the sky deepened, and a wind through the jasmynes spoke of a joy that had the secret of an unnamed sadness.

25

LOVERS COME to you, my Queen, and proudly lay their riches at your feet, but my tribute is made up of unspoken words and dreams unfulfilled.

Shadows have stolen into the heart of my world and the best in me has lost its light.

While the fortunate laughs at my penury, I ask you to give to my failings the value of your tears, making precious their incompleteness.

The instrument I bring to you is silent.

You know I neither trifled nor strayed from the path.

I strained to reach the note, which was too high in my heart, and thus the strings broke.

While masters laugh at the snapped cords, I ask you to take my lute in your hands and fill with your own songs the emptiness of its music.

26

FOR ONCE BE careless, timid traveller, and utterly lose your path; let the wide-awake light of your day be waylaid by the lure of mist.

The garden of Lost Hearts waits at the end of the wrong road, where the grass is strewn with wrecked red flowers, and disconsolate water heaves in the troubled sea.

A P P E N D I X

Long have you watched over the store slowly gathered by weary years.
Let it be stripped, like a tree of its leaves in a storm, leaving you bare,
with the triumph of losing all in heedless haste.

27

YOU GIVE yourself to me, like a flower that blossoms at night, which is
known by the dripping of its dew, by the odour which is felt, as the steps
of Spring felt by the buds.

You break upon my thought, like waves at the high tide, and my heart
is drowned under a surging love which scatters itself in spray of tears.

You come to my heart, like the first thrill of awaking at the verge of the
watching gloom. The clouds are aflame, and my sky fills with the flood
of a great revealment.

28

MY LOVE IS but the seeking of my truth in you.

It is to find—with the added mystery of your presence,—my flowers
and clouds, the patient earth with its busy days, the inscrutable silence
of the sky.

I know, beloved, that there is a world, at the meeting of hearts, where
immortal moments shine; where my songs fly to measure the immeasur-
able with every wing-beat.

Let me live there, to gather life's precious joys which blossom
everywhere behind the leaves of commonplace hours.

29

ALL THAT I had I gave to you, keeping but the barest veil of reserve.

It is so thin that you secretly smile at it and I feel ashamed.

The gust of the spring breeze sweeps it away unawares, and the flutter
of my own heart moves it as the waves move their foam.

My love, do not grieve if I keep it to myself,—only this flimsy mist
of distance.

This frail reserve of mine is no mere woman's coyness, but a slender

stem on which my flower blossoms towards you with its reticent grace of surrender.

30

I HAVE DONNED this new robe today because my body feels it would sing.

It is not enough that I am given to my love once and for ever, but out of that surrender I must fashion new gifts every day; and do I not seem a fresh offering to my lover dressed in a new robe?

My heart, like the evening sky, has its endless passion for lights of all colours, and therefore I change my veils, which now have the green of the cool young grass and now of the winter rice.

Today my robe is tinted with the rain-rimmed blue of the sky.

It brings to my limbs the colour of the boundless, the colour of the oversea hills; and it carries in its folds the delight of the summer clouds flying in the winds.

31

WHENCE DO you bring your unquiet, my love?

Let my heart touch yours and kiss out the pain from your silence.

The dark night has left for us only this sky within our shut doors, that love may build a new world for us two, lighted by this solitary lamp.

We have for our music but a single reed to share between our lips, for our crown only one garland with which you must bind my hair after I have put it on your forehead.

Tearing the veil from my breast I shall make our bed on the floor; and one kiss and one sleep of bliss will fill our small world that is boundless.

32

YOU ARE LIKE a rivulet, swift and sinuous; you laugh and dance, your steps sing as you trip away.

I am like a bank, rugged and steep; I stand still and darkly gaze at you speechless.

I am like a big and foolish storm; I come rushing of a sudden, trying to rend my being into pieces and scatter them in a whirl of passion.

You are like a lightning flash, slender and keen, piercing the heart of the turbulent darkness to disappear in a slim line of laughter.

33

LEAVE HER heart alone, my heart, in the secrecy of the dark.

What if her beauty be of the figure and her smile merely of the face, let me take without question the simple meaning of her glances and be happy.

I care not if it be a web of delusion that her arms wind about me, for the web itself is rich and rare, and the untruth can be smiled at and forgotten.

Who knows what a heart is?

Hidden are its ways and none has the full freedom to give it or withhold.

Leave her heart alone, my heart; be content with the music, that is true, of words which it may not be wise to believe, and enjoy the grace that dances like a lily on the rippling surface of her deception.

34

DO NOT STAND before my window with those hungry eyes and beg for my secret.

It is but a tiny gem of glistening pain crossed by a blood-red streak of passion.

What gifts have you brought in both your hands to fling before me in the dust?

I fear to accept this debt lest I may never pay it back while losing all that is mine.

Do not stand before my window with your youth and flowers to shame my destitute life.

35

YOU DESIRED my love and yet you did not love me.

Therefore my life clings to you like a chain whose clank and clasp grow harsher the more you struggle to be free.

My despair has become your deadly companion clutching at the faintest of your favours, trying to drag you away into the cavern of tears.

You have shattered my freedom and with its wreck built your own prison.

36

I AM GLAD that you stop not for me with the lingering pity of your look.

It is only the spell of the night and my farewell words, startled at their own tune of despair, which bring these tears to my eyes. But the day will dawn, my eyes will dry and my heart, and there will be no time for weeping.

You were afraid of the truth because of your kind heart. Be brave and break the tie to which cling such fear and doubt, and lightly think of my pain; better forget than desecrate love with untruth.

Who says it is hard to forget?

The mercy of death works at life's core, bringing it respite from its own foolish persistence.

The storm in the sea is lulled at last in its rocking cradle, the forest fire falls to sleep on its bed of ashes.

You and I shall part, and the cleavage will be hidden under the living grass and flowers laughing in the sun.

37

OF ALL DAYS you have chosen this one to come to my garden.

But the storm passed over my roses last night and the grass is strewn with torn leaves.

I do not know what has brought you, when the hedges are laid low and rills run in the lanes, when the prodigal wealth of spring is scattered away, and the scent and the song of yesterday are wrecked.

Yet stand for a while; let me find some remnant in the ruins, though I doubt if your skirt can be filled.

The time will be short, for the clouds thicken and the rain comes down again.

APPENDIX

38

I FORGOT MYSELF for a moment, and I came.

But raise your eyes and let me know if there still lingers some shadow of other days, like a pale cloud on the horizon robbed of its rain.

For a moment bear with me if I forget myself.

The roses are still in bud; they do not yet know our neglect in flower-gathering, in this present summer.

The morning star has the same expecting look; the early light of dawn is troubled in the branches overshadowing your window, as on those other days.

That the time has changed, I forget for a moment, and I come.

I forget if you ever shamed me by looking away when I bared open my heart.

I only remember the words impaled in the tremor of your lips; I remember in your dark eyes the passing shadows of passion, like the swift wings of a homeless bird of the dusk.

I forget that you do not remember, and I come.

39

ON THIS SIDE of the water there is no landing; the girls do not come here to fetch water; the land along its edge is shaggy with stunted shrubs; a noisy flock of *saliks* dig their nests in the steep bank under whose frown the fisher-boats find no shelter.

You sit there on the unfrequented grass, and the morning wears on. Tell me what you do on this bank gaping with cracks.

She looks in my face and says, 'Nothing, nothing whatsoever.'

On this side of the river the bank is deserted, and cattle do not come to water. Only some stray goats from the village browse all day among the scanty green, and the solitary water-hawk watches on an uprooted *peepal* aslant upon the mud.

You sit there alone in the miserly shade of a *shimool* and the morning wears on.

Tell me, for whom do you wait?

She looks in my face and says, 'No one, no one soever!'

IN THE STILLNESS of twilight I floated my soul from the harsh world in a boat of easeful dreams, shutting her windows to all splash of trouble.

I kissed her eyes and filled her hands with all that was precious, till her grasp grew limp, her touch dumb, and she became dim and distant to me under the monotony of lavishment.

At last the storm comes. It breaks through the suffocation of languor. The tumult of tears heaves around the sleeper.

She wakes up and clings to me in hard embrace, she knows me in full, and I see her face to face across the bareness of death.

COME, SPRING, with your reckless wooing of the earth, making the heart of the forest pant with the urge of utterance.

Come in a turmoil of joy along the outbreak of flowers and impatient hustle of new leaves.

Burst, like a rebellion of light, into the night's vigil, into the lake's dark dumbness, into the dungeon of dust, proclaiming freedom to the shackled seeds.

Like laughter of lightning, like the shout of a storm, break into the midst of the noisy town and field, into the hush of words and efforts unawake.

Come, Youth, with locks flying in the air, like uncontrolled flame, rush into the fight and conquer death.

THE CROWD came hurrying from Kashi and Kanchi, from Kanauj and Koshal.

'Where do you go?' we ask them. They answer, 'To the Queen's court.'

When questioned, 'Why do you go?' their eyes burn with fire, and they cry, 'To win the wreath of victory.'

They sped on knowing no rest by day or by night.

I was swept away by the rush, while youth's flame sprang up in me like a sword and I cried in joy, 'Queen, I shall empty your casket, and win the wreath of victory.'

APPENDIX

There was a pilgrim among us whose young face had the peace of a lamp in a lonely temple on the mountain peak. His eyes were like stars about to sink in the depth of dawn.

When the others ran, in panting haste, he sat by the road, and the sky seemed to ask him what was the name treasured in his silence.

I asked him if his aim was to win the wreath and he said: 'I do not wish for the wreath of victory.'

They laughed at him who, they thought, lacked courage to claim the prize, and accepted defeat before the fight began.

He made room for all else, but was ever awake to some call which seemed to come from his own heart.

He had an empty basket in his hand and yet said, 'I do not seek the wreath of victory.'

The Queen sat on her throne.

Music broke forth from my lyre, now like a shower of meteors, and now a flame swaying in the cadence of storm.

It burst like a summer gale crying away its heart in rain, while the flash of its passion tore its dark veil and danced.

Others, with heads bent, walked back to their homes, being sure that the wreath of victory waited for me at the end of my songs.

The young pilgrim sat still on the dust at the foot of the throne.

When some chance rose dropped from the Queen's hair he picked it up in secret.

I said to him, when the day came to its end, 'The time for the lighting of lamps is at hand, but why do you linger by the throne?'

He answered smiling, 'My service has no end, for I never seek the wreath of victory.'

May came in April's wake and fled over the withered grass, like a deer panting with thirst.

The season of the rain sailed away with its tattered clouds spread in the sky. The autumn followed, and the last flower of *siuli* was shed on its funeral.

When I had sung my songs of varied seasons, giving meaning to their

flower-changes, the Queen left her throne and crowned me with the wreath of victory.

'Queen, have you no other gifts but this for my reward? It grows a burden to me each day, its glitter is like the glare of desert sands. It dries up the shy flowers of leisure and life's simple joy.'

I resolved to go once more to the Queen's court and find if still she had some missing gem for which my wreath of victory mourned.

When I went back, the night was dark, the crowd had gone home; only the young pilgrim was walking to the Queen's garden singing to himself.

I asked him why he was there, and he said, 'When all the giving and receiving are done for the day, the Queen sits in the garden and I sing to her in the loneliness of night.'

'What is your reward?' I asked.

'It lies on my heart,' he said. 'The Queen had the wreath of victory in her jewelled casket; but this she kept in her lotus leaf, this flower-wreath of her acceptance.'

43

AT THE SLEEPY village, the noon was still like a sunny midnight when my holidays came to their end.

My little girl of four followed me all the morning from room to room watching my preparations in grave silence, till wearied she sat at the door-post strangely quiet.

This was the time when sleep would overcome her after the meal, but today her mother forgot to notice her and the child was too unhappy to complain.

At last when I stretched out my arms to her to say farewell she moved not, but sadly looking at me said, 'You must not go.'

But the world was stronger and the moment came when I did go, leaving my child to her defeated tears.

As I went along the road, the wind was quiet among the trees and flocks of white clouds were moveless in the sky, like new-born lambkins fed to the full with their mothers' milk.

Far as I went, that cry rang in my ears, 'You must not go.'

APPENDIX

It seemed to come from the world's aching heart; it voiced, in face of change and death, the eternal claim of love, who, like my little daughter, would not understand defeat.

44

IN THE evening, my little girl heard a call from her companions from below her window.

She timidly went down the dark stairs holding a lamp in her hand, guarding it behind her veil.

I was sitting on my terrace, in the star-lit night of March, when at a sudden cry from my girl I ran to see her.

Her lamp had gone out in the dark spiral of the stairs. I asked, 'Child, why do you cry?'

She said from below in distress, 'Father, I miss myself.'

When I came back to my terrace, in the star-lit night of March, I looked in the sky and it seemed to me that a child like my own was walking guarding her lamps behind her veils.

If the light went out, she would suddenly stop and a cry would sound from sky to sky, 'Father, I miss myself.'

45

I AM LIKE THE night to you, little flower,

I can only give you peace and watchful silence from behind the dark.

When in the morning you open your eyes, I shall leave you to the world humming with its bees and singing with its birds.

My last gift to you will be a tear-drop in the depth of your youth, which will make your smile all the sweeter, and its mist will screen you from the pitiless mirth of the day.

46

FOR YOUR holiday, my child, there is the blue sky and the bare field, the barn and the ruined temple under the ancient tamarind.

But my holiday finds itself in yours; its light trembles in the dance of your eyes, its music is in your noisy shouts.

The autumn comes smiling to you, with its promise of holiday joys.

but it is you who bring them to me bursting into my room making work impossible.

For my endless freedom of holiday is in love's tumult of disturbance.

47

HE IS TALL AND lean, withered to the bone with long repeated fever. Like a dead tree he seems unable to draw in a single drop of joy for his sap from all existence.

In despairing patience, his mother carries him like a child and brings him out in the sun where he sits by the roadside with the shortening shadows of the forenoon.

The world passes by him,—the woman to fetch water, the herd-boy with his cattle to the pasture, the laden cart to the distant market,—and the mother hopes that some least stir of life may touch the awful torpor of her dying son.

48

THE EVENING stood bewildered among street lamps, its gold tarnished by the city's dust.

A woman, gaudily decked and painted, stood leaning over the rails of her balcony, like a living fire waiting for its moths.

Suddenly an eddy was formed in the road round a street-boy crushed by carriage wheels, and the woman in the balcony fell down screaming on the floor in agony, stricken with the grief of the Great Mother, white-robed, who sits in the world's inner shrine.

49

I REMEMBER the scene on the barren heath,—the girl sitting alone on the grass before her gipsy-camp braiding her hair in the afternoon shade.

Her little dog jumped and barked at her busy hands, making light of her employment.

In vain did she rebuke it, calling it names, saying that it was a pest, that she was tired of its perpetual silliness.

She struck it on its nose with her reproving forefinger, which seemed to amuse it all the more.

APPENDIX

She looked menacingly grave for a few moments in warning of its impending doom, and then leaving her hair alone she quickly snatched it up in her arms, laughed and pressed it to her heart over and over again.

50

THE FERRY-BOAT plies between the two villages facing each other over the narrow stream.

It is not far to cross, nor deep,—a mere break in the path that sweetens the small adventures of daily life, like a stream of tune to which words give way in joy.

While towers of wealth rise high to come down to their ruin, while power flashes forth from living storm-clouds to merge again in the dark, the two villages talk to each other across the garrulous stream, and the ferry-boat plies between them, age after age, from the season of seed-sowing to the season of harvest.

51

IF THE RAGGED villager, trudging home from the market, could only glide down the slope of a distant century, men would stop in their work and shout and run to him in delight.

For they would not minimise the man into a peasant, but find in him the mystery of life and the spirit of his age.

Even his poverty and pain would grow out great from the shallow contempt in the heart of the limited time, and the paltry things in his basket would find their full dignity of pathos.

52

MY WORLD, you were like a neighbouring girl to me when I was a child, a stranger timid in her love.

Then you grew bold and talked to me across the fence, offering to me your toys and flowers and shells.

You coaxed me away from my task, you tempted me into the land of mysteries at the weedy corner of some garden in the midday loneliness.

Then you told me stories of things that happened in an eternal past, which the present ever longs to meet, rescued from its prison of moments.

THE KING-FISHER sits still on the prow of an empty boat, while at the shallow margin of the stream a buffalo lies in tranquil bliss, its eyes half closed with the luxury of cool mud.

Undismayed by the barking of the village cur, the cow browses on the bank followed by a hopping group of starlings, hunting moths.

I sit at the tamarind grove, where meet the cries of dumb life,—the cattle's lowing, the sparrows' chatter, the shrill scream of a kite overhead, the crickets' chirp and the splash in the water by the sudden stir of a fish.

I peep into the primæval nursery of life, where the mother Earth thrills with the first living clutch at her breast.

HOW OFTEN, great Earth, I have felt in me the longing to spread over you without limit, like the sunlight, kissing your buds into flowers and sharing in the happiness of each grass blade that raises its signal in answer to the beckoning blue of the sky.

I feel as if I had belonged to you ages before I was born, revolving round the sun for countless years. That is why in the days when the autumn light shimmers on the mellowing ears of rice, I seem to remember a past when my mind was everywhere, and to hear the voice of my playfellows of remote time coming to me from behind the screen.

When, in the evening, the cattle return to their folds, raising dust in the meadow paths, and the moon rises above the smoke ascending from the village huts, I feel in me a sadness as of a great separation, that happened in the first morning of existence.

I FEEL THAT my heart will leave for ever its own colour in all your scenes, my Earth, when I take my farewell.

In your seasons' symphony will be added some notes which are mine, and my thoughts will blossom unknown in man's world through its cycle of shadows and sunshine.

Summer will come in far distant days in the garden of lovers, but they will not know that their flowers had borrowed from me some snatches of

A P P E N D I X

my songs and their love for this world has deepened because I had loved it.

56

I HAVE looked on this picture in many a month of March when the mustard is in bloom,—this lazy line of the water and the grey of the sand across, the rough path along the river bank carrying the comradeship of the field to the village heart.

I have tried to capture in rhyme the wistfulness of the idle whistle of the wind, the sound of the oar-strokes of a passing boat.

I have wondered in my mind how simply it stands before me, this great world, with what fond and familiar ease it fills my heart, this meeting of the Eternal Stranger.

57

MY EYES FEEL the deep peace of this sky, and I seem to know in all my limbs what a tree feels when it holds out leaves to fill its cups with sunshine.

A thought rises in my mind, like the warm breath from the grass in the sun; it mingles with the gurgle of the lapping water and the sigh of the weary wind in the village lane,—the thought that I have lived along with all the life of this world and have given to it my own love and sorrows.

58

THIS MORNING, which raises its gold-bordered veil behind the row of *casuarinas* on the river bank, breathes so close to my life that I know that the world, like a lotus, is floating upon a limitless mind.

I know that I am a voice among all voices, a wave among all waves of life; a flame among all flames of being, coming out from the rent heart of the dark.

59

THE FLASHING scimitar of the hill stream lies sheathed in the evening gloom, when suddenly a flock of birds passes overhead, their loud laughing wings hurling their flight like an arrow among stars.

It startles a passion of speed in the heart of the motionless, and for

the moment the hills seem to feel in their bosom the anguish of the storm clouds, and the trees long to break their rooted shackles.

For me the flight of these birds has rent a veil of stillness revealing an immense flutter in the bottom of this silence.

I see these hills and forests flying across time to the unknown, and darkness thrilling into fire with wing-beats of stars.

I feel in my own being the rush of the homeless bird, winging its way beyond the limits of life and death, while the migrant world cries in its myriad voices, 'Not here, but somewhere else, in the bosom of the Far-away.'

60

DARKLY YOU sweep on unseen, Eternal Runaway, at whose bodiless rush stagnant space frets into forms and eddying bubbles of light.

Is your heart lost to the Lover calling you across his immeasurable loneliness?

And is it for the aching urge of your hurry that your tangled tresses break into stormy riot and fire-pearls roll in your path torn from your necklace?

Your fleeting steps kiss the dust of the world into sweetness, sweeping away its waste; the dance-storm shaken from your limbs freshens life with the sacred shower of death.

If in a sudden weariness you stopped for a moment the world would howl into a heap of encumbrance growing to its own self a barrier, and the smallest speck of dust would pierce the sky through its infinity with an unbearable pressure of pause.

It has quickened my poet's thoughts, this rhythm of the unseen feet shaking their anklets of light.

For their steps are echoing in my heart-beats and in my blood swells the psalm of the ancient sea.

I hear the thundering flood of my life tumbling from world to world and form to form, scattering my being in endless spray of gifts, in sorrowings and songs.

The tide runs high, the wind blows, the boat dances like thine own desire,
my heart!

Leave behind the hoarding of the shore and sail on thy voyage over
the unfathomed dark towards light without limit.

61

YOUR HILLS, holy Himalaya, like chanted hymns swelling in waves, spread
from the morning's gate towards the nest of the night. The thunder of
your rapture that stopped of a sudden, reaching its utmost height, melts
in roaring streams to carry your call to the sea.

In the youth of the world your fiery heart raged for the freedom of
clouds till you found your limits and stood still to salute the limitless.

The Spirit of Ravage was your one companion when, from the rent breast
of the earth, you hurled your burning challenge to the sun. Then you
said to yourself, 'No more, no further,' and the breath of beauty came
to play upon your breast and the trust of the world surrounded your pause
with the joy of flowers and birds.

You sit in your solitude like a great reader on whose lap lies open some
ancient book with its countless pages of stone. What story is written on
them I wonder,—is it the eternal wedding of the divine ascetic, Shiva with
Bhavani, the divine love? the drama of the Terrible wooing the power of
the Frail?

In the ecstasy of light the sage had cried, 'I have known.' And you
seem to me that voice turned into silence.

62

I FEEL THAT they were not left behind,—the brief days of love in your life
of scanty years.

I seek to know, beloved, where you keep them now, away from the
slow-thieving dust, and I find in the sunset clouds some songs of your
evening that died yet felt the deathless, and the sighs of unsated hours
laid nestled in the warm quiet of the winter noon.

Your desires come from the honied hive of the past to haunt my
heart, and I sit still to listen to their hum of wings.

LOVE DWELT in my house, but he opened the door and went away.

The one last guest who must come now will put out the lamp and take me in his chariot to drive me through the path of the homeless stars.

I shall keep my door open till then, and let him beckon me from the gate when the bell is silent at the end of the evening worship.

For love whispered to me when in the night he unbarred the door to depart, 'There is another to come.' And he added, 'Pluck out thorns from your flowers and make ready your garland to crown him.'

YOUR BATH is done in the dark sea. You are veiled in a new bride's robe and through death's arch you come back to repeat our wedding in the soul.

The lute and the drum are not struck, the crowds are away and wreaths are not hung on the gate.

Your unuttered words meet mine in the ceremonial of the unlighted lamps.

THE EVENING beckons me and I would fain follow the travellers who sail in the last ferry of the ebbtide to cross the dark.

Those who are for home have gone home in the dusk, and those who are for the farther shore have ventured to sail away.

But I sit alone at the landing, who have left my home and missed my boat, whose summer is gone and whose winter harvest is lost.

I wait for the love which gathers failures to sow them in tears in the dark for the fruit time of the new-risen day.

I HAVE SAT ON the bank in idle contentment and not yet stepped into the boat to launch it for the farther shore.

Others travel to the distant shadows, but my call does not sound in their rumbling wheels.

My boat is for crossing the deep water.

APPENDIX

Perchance in the dead of night when the breeze springs up, like a start of surprise in the dark, the captain will come himself to his helm.

67

IN THE MORNING when the dew glistened upon the grass you came to me giving a push to my swing, and rocking between smiles and tears I did not know you.

Then came April's noon of gorgeous glamour of light, and I think you beckoned me to follow you.

But when I would see your face, there passed between us the procession of flowers, and men and women flinging their songs to the south wind.

Daily I passed you by unheeded on the road.

But there were days full of the faint smell of oleanders, when the wind was wilful among the complaining palm leaves, and I would stand before you wondering if you ever had been a stranger to me.

68

SAILING ACROSS the dark night I came on my pilgrimage to this earth, I know not whence.

I spent my noisy day with the crowd on the road, in the inn, I fought for my place in the market till the daylight waned.

Suddenly I remember with a pang that I have not entered the temple.

Before I leave, call me to your presence where you are alone and fill my last hour with your solitude.

When in the evening the outer gate is shut in your temple, call me from distractions of light to your darkness, where to see you I must hold up my own little lamp with its unflickering flame.

69

OUR LIFE SAILS on the uncrossed sea whose waves in an eternal hide-and-seek chase each other.

It is the restless sea of change, feeding its flocks of foam to lose them

over and over again, ever beating its hands against the calm of the sky.

In the centre of this circling war-dance of the light and the dark,
Love, you have your green island, where the sun kisses the shy forest shade
and silence is wooed by birds' songs.

70

WHY ARE YOU mute, my heart, in this world echoing with voices?

Have your eyes seen no vision of soul through the lifted curtain of
the dust?

The sea heaves at your door singing the psalm of tears imprisoned
in the heart of existence, and the rivers run by like the melting silence
of the hills.

Has not the light, the wing of the morning song, touched your
forehead?

71

AS THE BIRDS of exile, wintering among the wind-shaken palms of the south
shore, fly back to their haunts by the mountain lake at the return of the
flowers, so let my straying songs come back round you, my Master, at the
first touch of yours upon my lute.

And let them speak to you of all the wanderings and strange delights
and heart-aches under the alien sky full of far-away voices.

72

WHEN THE noontide work, like a flood, rushes along its branching
channels, and the pulse of the city throbs and aches with the heat of its
crowded striving, I shut my eyes and suddenly feel the calm of thy solitude
spread over all houses and hearts, over all thoughts and noisy endeavours.

73

IN MY YOUTH, my mind was fed at nature's breast growing languid in her
arms.

The day comes at last when I stand in the man's world of strife.

Put in my hands thine own arrows and guide my aim.

Let thy love strengthen me on errands of danger, honour me with

APPENDIX

pain, and lead me to that difficult height where sacrifices are daily brought up to thee.

74

SPEAK TO ME of him my friend, and say that he has whispered to you in the hushed centre of storm and in the depth of peace where life puts on its armour in silence.

Shrink not to call his name in the crowd, for we need to turn our eyes to the heart of things, to see the vision of truth and love building the world anew out of its wreckage.

Speak to me, my friend, of him, and make it simple for me to feel that he is.

75

IN THE EVENING, when they have brought their cattle home, they sit on the grass before their huts to know that you are among them unseen, to repeat in their songs the name which they have fondly given to you.

They never shrink to spread their rags upon the dust for you to take your seat, and lacking in wealth and honour they yet have the pride of their love to ask you only for your touch.

While kings' crowns shine and burst like falling stars, your name rises in the still night round village huts from the simple hearts of your lovers of the unknown names.

76

I CAN NEVER believe that you are lost to us, my King, though our poverty is great and deep our shame.

Your will works behind the veil of despair, and in your own time opens the gate of the impossible.

You come, as unto your own house into the unprepared hall, on the unexpected day.

Dark ruins at your touch become like a bud nourishing unseen in its bosom the fruition of fulfilment.

Therefore I still have hope,—not that the wrecks will be mended, but that a new world will arise.

GIVE ME THE supreme courage of love, this is my prayer,—the courage to speak, to do, to suffer at thy will, to leave all things or be left alone.

Give me the supreme faith of love, this is my prayer,—the faith of the life in death, of the victory in defeat, of the power hidden in the frailness of beauty, of the dignity of pain that accepts hurt, but disdains to return it.

BREAK MY door-lock and take me out with thee into freedom, my Friend.

My days pass and my nights and my heart is weary with watching.

Is that the morning light which touches the far end of my path, and is it the time when thy chariot may carry thee to my door?

Night waits at the roadside of the dawn to offer up her lights, and through the dark I feel that flowers are opening and the first note trembles in all the golden strings of the sky.

WHEN I FIRST met you it was in the solitude of a pathless dark. My wish was to light my one lamp to you, even though you had no need.

I have seen in the market the men throwing dirt at your robe while you strewed the path of insult with songs. My wish was to crown you with a wreath, even though you had no need.

The crowds were noisy in your praise, they knocked at your gate with their prayers, they cursed and cried. My wish was to give myself up to you for nothing, even though you had no need.

I ASK NO rewards for the songs I sang to you. I shall be content if they live through the night, until like a shepherd maiden, Dawn calls away the stars, frightened of the sun.

But there were moments when you sang your songs to me, and, as my pride knows, my Poet, you shall ever remember that I had listened and lost my heart.

Lekhan

The lines in the following pages had their origin in China and Japan where the author was asked for his writings on fans or pieces of silk.

7 November 1926
Balatonsfűd, Hungary

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

My fancies are fireflies
Specks of living light—
twinkling in the dark (FF.1)

The same voice murmurs
in these desultory lines
which is born in wayside pansies
letting hasty glances pass by. (FF.2d)

The butterfly does not count years but moments
and therefore has enough time. (FF.8d)

In the drowsy dark caves of the mind
dreams build their nest
with bits of things
dropped from day's caravan. (FF.3d)

My words that are slight
may lightly dance upon time's waves
while my works heavy with import sink. (FF.6d)

Spring scatters the petals of flowers
that are not for the fruits of the future
but for the moments' whim. (FF.4)

My thoughts, like sparks,
ride on winged surprises
carrying a single laughter. (FF.9)

The tree gazes in love at the beautiful shadow
who is his own and yet whom he never can grasp. (FF.10)

Let my love, like sunlight, surround you
and give you a freedom illumined. (FF.11)

Joy freed from the bound of earth's slumber
rushes into the leaves numberless
and dances in the air for a day. (FF.5)

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

Days are coloured bubbles
that float upon the surface
of fathomless night. (FF.12)

My offerings are too timid
to claim your remembrance,
and therefore you may remember them. (FF.13)

April, like a child, writes hiroglyphies [*sic*]
on dust with flowers,
wipes them and forgets. (FF.15)

From the solemn gloom of the temple
children run out to sit in the dust.
God watches them play and forgets the priest. (FF.17)

White and pink oleanders meet
and make merry in different dialects. (FF.31)

The sky, though holding in his arms his bride, the earth,
is ever immensely away. (FF.24d)

One who was distant came near to me in the morning,
and came still nearer when taken away by night. (FF.30)

Wishing to hearten a timid lamp
great night lightens all her stars.

Mind's underground moths grow filmy wings
and take a farewell flight
in the sun set sky till their hum is hushed.

The lake lies low by the hill,
a tearful entreaty of love
at the foot of the inflexible. (FF.33)

APPENDIX

There smiles the Divine Child
among his play things of unmeaning clouds
and ephemeral lights and shadows. (FF.34)

Clouds are hills in vapour,
hills are clouds in stone,—
a phantasy in time's dream. (FF.40)

While God waits for his temple
to be built of love
men bring stones. (FF.41)

Wind tries to take flame by storm
only to blow her out. (FF.55d)

The two separated shores mingle their voices
in a song of unfathomed tears.

God among stars waits for man to light
his lamps.

I touch God in my song
as the far away hill touches the sea
with its waterfall. (FF.42)

Dawn—the many-coloured flower—fades,
and the sun comes out,
the fruit of the simple white light. (FF.53d)

Darkness is the veiled bride
silently waiting for the errant light
to return to her bosom. (FF.59)

My flower, seek not thy paradise in a fool's buttonhole.*

Life's play runs fast,
life's playthings fall behind one by one
and are forgotten. (FF.56d)

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

Thou hast risen late, my crescent moon,
but my night bird is still awake to greet you. (FF.58d)

Breezes come from the sky,
the anchor desperately clutches the mud,
and my boat is beating its breast against the chain. (FF.63d)

The blue of the sky longs for the earth's green.
The wind between them sighs, 'Alas'. (FF.65)

Flower, have pity for the worm,
it is not a bee,
its love is a blunder and burden. (FF.70)

The lamp waits through the long day of neglect
for the flame's kiss in the night. (FF.72)

Day's pain muffled by its own glare
burns among stars in the night. (FF.66)

My untuned strings beg for music
in their anguished cry of shame. (FF.146)

In the shady depth of life are the lonely nests
of unutterable pains. (FF.96d)

Light accepts Darkness for his spouse
for the sake of creation. (FF.151)

The picture—a memory of light
treasured by the shadow. (FF.135)

In the bounteous time of roses love is wine.
It is food in the famished hour
when the petals are shed. (FF.145)

Through the silent night
I hear the knockings at my heart

APPENDIX

of the morning's vagrant hopes
sadly coming back. (FF.218d)

By the ruins of terror's triumph
children build their dust castle. (FF.71d)

The cloud gives all its gold
to the departed sun
and greets the rising moon
with only a pale smile. (FF.68d)

Feathers lying in the dust
have forgotten their sky. (FF.73d)

I lingered on my way
till thy cherry tree lost its blossoms,
but the azalea brings to me, my love,
thy forgiveness. (FF.83)

The shy little pomegranate bud,
blushing today behind her veil
will burst into a passionate flower
tomorrow when I am away. (FF.84)

The sea of danger, doubt and denial
around man's little island of certainty
challenges him across into the unknown. (FF.89d)

The same sun is newly born in new lands
in a ring of endless dawns. (FF.92)

The glow worm while exploring the dust
never knows that the stars are in the sky. (FF.94)

God honours me when I work,
he loves me when I sing. (FF.97)

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

I came to offer thou a flower,
but thou must have all my garden.
It is thine. (FF.134)

Spring in pity for the desolate branch
left one fluttering kiss in a solitary leaf. (FF.102d)

While the Rose said to the Sun
'I shall ever remember thee'
her petals fell to the dust. (FF.107)

I leave no trace of wings in the air,
but I am glad I had my flight. (FF.104)

The shy shadow in the garden
loves the sun in silence.
Flowers guess the secret and smile,
while the leaves whisper. (FF.103)

God watches with the same smile
the single night of a firefly
as the age-long rights of a star.

The mountain remains unmoved
at its seeming defeat by the mist. (FF.106)

Hills are the silent cry of the earth
for the unreachable. (FF.108d)

Though the thorn pricked me in thy flower
O Beauty,
I am grateful. (FF.109)

Let not my love be a burden on you, my friend,
know that it pays itself. (FF.111)

The world ever knows
that the few are more than the many. (FF.110)

APPENDIX

Truth smiles in beauty when she beholds her face
in a perfect mirror. (FF.113)

I see an unseen kiss from the sky
in its response in my rose.

In the swelling pride of itself
the bubble doubts the truth of the sea
and laughs and bursts into emptiness. (FF.129)

Thou hast left thy memory as a flame
to my lonely lamp of separation. (FF.133d)

My clouds sorrowing in the dark
forget that they themselves
have hidden the sun. (FF.131)

Man discovers his own wealth
when God comes to ask gifts of him. (FF.132)

The reed waits for his Master's breath,
Master goes seeking for his reed. (FF.152)

The morning star whispers to Dawn:
'Tell me that you are only for me.'
'Yes,' she answers, 'and also
only for that nameless flower.'¹

The sky remains infinitely vacant
for earth to build there its heaven with dreams.

Beauty smiles in the confinement of the bud,
in the heart of a sweet incompleteness. (FF.169)

Leaves are masses of silence
round flowers which are their words. (FF.171d)

¹ The Bengali version of this does not precede the English as is the system followed in the original work, but occurs a few pages later.

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

Let the evening forgive the mistakes of the day
and thus win peace for herself. (FF.168)

Love attracts and unites,
Power binds with chains.

The tree bears its thousand years
as one large majestic moment. (FF.172)

My offerings are not for the temple
at the end of the road,
but for the wayside shrines
that surprise me at every bend. (FF.173)

The first flower that blossomed on this earth
was an invitation to me to sing. (FF.52)

The world suffers most from the disinterested
tyranny of its well-wisher. (FF.75)

The world is the ever changing foam
that floats on the surface of a sea of silence. (FF.80)

We gain freedom when we have paid
the full price for our right to live. (FF.76)

The clumsiness of power spoils the key
and uses the pick axe. (FF.85)

Birth is from the mystery of night
into the greater mystery of day. (FF.86)

Migratory songs from my heart are on wings
seeking their nests in love's voice in thee. (FF.88)

Your moments' careless gifts,
like the meteors of an autumn night
catch fire in the depth of my being. (FF.77d)

APPENDIX

My paper boats sail away in play
with the burden of my idle hours. (FF.87)

Springs hesitates at winter's door,
but the flower rashly runs out to him
and meets her doom. (FF.79)

Love punishes when it forgives
and the injured beauty by its awful silence. (FF.90)

God's world is ever renewed by death
a Titan's ever crushed by its own existence. (FF.93)

The tree is of today, the flower is old.
She brings with her the message
of the immemorial seed. (FF.95)

My love of today finds herself homeless
in the deserted nest of the yesterday's love. (FF.98d)

Each rose that comes brings me greetings
from the Rose of an eternal spring. (FF.96)

The fire of pain traces for my soul
a luminous path across her sorrow. (FF.99)

Since thou hast vanished from my reach
I feel that the sky carries an impalpable touch
in its blueness,
and the wind the invisible image of a movement
among the restless grass. (FF.101)

Dawn plays her lute before the gate of darkness
till the sun comes out and sees her vanish. (FF.112)

The dewdrop knows the sun only within its own tiny orb. (FF.114)

The desert is imprisoned in the wall
of its unbounded barrenness. (FF.116)

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

The earth's sacrificial fire flames up in her trees
scattering sparks in flowers. (FF.119)

The sky tells its beads all right
on the countless stars
in memory of the sun. (FF.122)

My work is rewarded in daily wages,
I wait for my own final value in love. (FF.139)

The darkness of night is in harmony with day,—
the morning of mist discordant. (FF.142)

An unknown flower in a strange land
speaks to the poet:
'Are we not of the same soil, my lover?' (FF.144)

The worm thinks it strange and foolish
that man does not eat his books. (FF.147)

The greed for fruit misses the flower. (FF.155)

The clouded sky today bears the vision
of a divine shadow of sadness
on the forehead of brooding eternity. (FF.148)

Flushed with the glow of sunset
earth seems like a ripe fruit
ready to be harvested by night. (FF.150)

The butterfly has the leisure
to love the lotus,
not the bee busily storing honey. (FF.161)

The mist weaves her net round the morning
captivates him and makes him blind. (FF.164)

A P P E N D I X

Your smile, love
Like the smell of a strange flower,
Seems simple
and yet inexplicable. (FF.171)

Death laughs when we exaggerate
the merit of the dead,
for it swells his store
with more than he can claim. (FF.172)

The sigh of the shore follows in vain
the breeze that hastens the ship
across the sea. (FF.176)

Truth loves its limits,
for there she meets the beautiful. (FF.177)

The Eternal Dancer dances
in the flower in spring,
in the harvest in autumn,
in thy limbs, my child,
in thy thoughts and dreams.

Day offers to the silence of stars
his golden lute to be tuned
for the endless light. (FF.181)

Faith is the bird that feels the light
and sings when the dawn is still dark. (FF.191)

The day's cup that I have emptied
I bring to thee, night,
to be cleaned with thy cool darkness
for a new morning's festival.

Let my love feel its strength
in the service of day,
its peace in the union of night. (FF.197)

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

Stars of night are the memorials for me
of my day's faded flowers. (FF.199)

Open thy door to that which must go,
for the loss becomes unseemly when obstructed. (FF.200)

The shore whispers to the sea:
'Write to me what thy waves struggle to say.'
The sea writes in foam again and again
and wipes off the lines
in a boisterous despair. (FF.202)

My new love comes bringing to me
the eternal wealth of the old. (FF.219)

The earth gazes at the moon and wonders
that he should have all his music in his smile. (FF.220)

The centre is still and silent
in the heart of an eternal dance of circles. (FF.183)

The judge thinks that he is just
when he compares the oil of another's lamp
with the light of his own. (FF.184)

Its store of snow is the hill's own burden,
its outpouring of streams
is borne by all the world. (FF.186)

Let your love see me
even through the barrier of nearness. (FF.188)

I have the prayer to the sun
from the myriad buds in the forest:
'Open our eyes.' (FF.187)

APPENDIX

Leave out my name from the gift
if it be a burden
but keep my song.[†] (FF.14, S.72)

Memory, the priestess,
kills the present
and offers its heart to the shrine
of the dead past.[†] (FF.16, S.251)

My mind starts up at some flash on the flow
of its thoughts
like a brook at a sudden liquid note of its own
that is never repeated.[†] (FF.18, S.64)

In the mountain, stillness surges up
to explore its own height;
in the lake movement stands still
to contemplate its own depth.[†] (FF.19, S.249)

The departing night's one kiss
on the closed eyes of morning
glows in the star of dawn.[†] (FF.20, S.125)

The lonely light of the sky comes through the window
and borrows the music of joy and sadness from my life.

Sorrow that has lost its memory
is like the dumb dark hours
that have no bird songs
but only the cricket's chirp.[†] (FF.22, S.214)

Bigotry tries to keep truth safe in its hand
with a grip that kills it.[†] (FF.25, S.74)

God seeks comrades and claims love,
the Devil seeks slaves and claims obedience.[†] (FF.25, S.231)

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

The soil in return for her service
keeps the tree tied to her
the sky leaves it free.' (FF.28, S.197)

The immortal like a jewel
does not boast of a large surface in years
but of a shining point in a moment." (FF.29)

The child ever dwells in the mystery
of an ageless time
unobscured by the dust of history." (FF.26)

There is a light laughter in the steps of creation
that carries it swiftly across time." (FF.27)

When peace is active sweeping its dirt
it is storm." (FF.32)

The breeze whispers to the lotus:
'What is thy secret?'
'It is myself' says the lotus,
'steal it and I disappear.' (FF.35, S.165)

The freedom of the wind and the bondage of the stem
join hands in the dance of swaying branches." (FF.36)

The jasmine's lisp of love to the sun is her flowers." (FF.37)

Gods, tired of paradise, envy man. (FF.39)

The tyrant claims freedom to kill freedom
and got to keep it for himself." (FF.38)

Unimpassioned benevolence
insults [*sic*] the taste of the tongue,
only pitying the stomach's need."

APPENDIX

The night's loneliness is maintained
by the silent multitude of stars.*

My heart today smiles at its past night of tears
like a wet tree glistening in the sun
after rain is over.* (FF.44)

Life's errors cry for the merciful beauty
that can modulate their isolation
into a harmony with the whole.* (FF.47)

They expect thanks for the banished nest
because their cage is shapely and secure.* (FF.48)

In my love I pay my endless debt to thee
for what thou art.* (FF.49)

The bottom of the pond, from its dark,
sends up its lyrics in lilies,
and the sun says, they are good.* (FF.50)

Your calumny against the great is impious,
it hurts yourself;
against the small it is mean,
for it hurts the victim.* (FF.51)

The muscle that has a doubt of its wisdom
throttles the voice that would cry.* (FF.54)

Mother with her ancient trees
points to the sky in endless wonder.*

My self's burden is lightened
when I laugh at myself.* (FF.61)

The weak can be terrible
because he furiously tries to appear strong.* (FF.62)

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

Realism boasts of its burden of sands
and forgets its loss in the current.*

I decorate with futile fancies my idle moments
and see them float away in the air
like derelict clouds with their cargo of colours
drifting from somewhere to no destination.*

The Devil's wares are expensive
God's gifts are without price.*

The [sic] owns the world who knows its law,
he who feels its truth loves it.

Forests, the clouds of earth
hold up to the sky their silence
and clouds from above come down
in resonant showers.* (FF.120)

The darkness of night, like pain, is dumb,
and darkness of dawn, like peace, is silent. (FF.123)

Pride engraves his frowns in stones,
love hides them in flowers.* (FF.124)

The obsequious brush curtails truth
in deference to the canvas which is narrow.* (FF.125)

The hill in its longing for the far away sky
wishes to be like the cloud
with its endless urge of seeking.¹ (FF.126)

To justify their own spilling of ink
they spell the day as night.* (FF.127)

¹ Its Bengali counterpart, though not preceding it as expected, can be found in the first edition (page 21), *grāṁ dūmā udibāṁ*.

APPENDIX

Profit laughs at goodness
when the good is profitable.* (FF.128)

It is easy to make faces at the sun;
he is exposed by his own light.* (FF.136)

History slowly smothers its truth
but hastily struggles to revive it
in the terrible penance of pain.* (FF.138)

Beauty knows to say, 'Enough',
barbarism clamours for still more.* (FF.140)

God loves to see in me not his servant
but himself who serves all.* (FF.141)

The morning lamp on the lamp post
mockingly challenges the sun
with the light it has borrowed from him.*

I am able to love my God
because he gives me freedom to deny him.* (FF.145)

Wealth is the burden of bigness,
welfare the fullness of being.* (FF.159)

Between the shores of me and Thee
There is the loud ocean, my own surging self,
which I long to cross.* (FF.178)

The right to possess foolishly boasts
of its right to enjoy.* (FF.179)

The rose is a great deal more
than a blushing apology for its thorn.* (FF.180)

To carry the burden of the instrument,
count the cost of its material,

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and never to know that it is for music,
is the tragedy of life's deafness.* (FF.190)

The mountain fir keeps hidden
the memory of its struggle with the storm
murmuring in its rustling boughs
a hymn of peace.* (FF.193)

God honoured me with his fight
when I was rebellious
he ignored me when I was languid.* (FF.194)

The man proud of his sect
thinks that he has the sea
ladled into his private pond.* (FF.195)

Life sends up in blades of grass
its silent hymn of praise to the unnamed light.* (FF.198)

True end is not in the reaching of the limit
but in a completion which is limitless.* (FF.201)

Let thy touch thrill my life's strings
and make the music thine and mine.* (FF.201d)

The inner world rounded in my life,
like a fruit matured in sun and shower, in joy and sorrow,
will drop into the darkness of the original soil
for some further course of creation.* (FF.204)

Form is in Matter, rhythm in Force,
meaning in the Person.* (FF.205, S.163)

There are seekers of wisdom and seekers of wealth,
but I seek thy company so that I may sing.* (FF.206)

Like the tree its leaves, I scatter my speech on the dust.
Let my words unuttered flower in thy silence.* (FF.207d)

A P P E N D I X

My faith in truth, my vision of the perfect,
help thee, Master, in thy creation.* (FF.208)

The shade of my tree is for passersby,
its fruit for the one for whom I wait. (FF.149)

The fire restrained in the tree fashions flowers,
Released from bonds, the shameless flame
dies in barren ashes. (FF.157)

The sea smites his own barren breast
because he has no flowers to offer to the moon. (FF.154)

To the blind pen the hand that writes is unreal,
its writing unmeaning. (FF.153)

Too ready to blame the bad,
too reluctant to praise the good.

The sky sets no snare to capture the moon,
it is his own freedom which binds him. (FF.158)

The light that fills the sky
seeks its limit in a dew drop on the grass.

The razor blade is proud of its keenness
when it sneers at the sun. (FF.160)

All the delights that I have felt
in life's fruits and flowers
let me offer to thee
at the end of the feast
in a perfect unity of love.* (FF.209)

Some have thought deep
and explored the meaning of thy truth,
and they are great;

ENGLISH WRITINGS OF TAGORE

I have listened to catch the music of thy play
and I am glad.* (FF.210)

The lotus offers its beauty to the heaven,
the grass its service to the earth.* (FF.212)

The sun's kiss mellows the miserliness
of the green fruit clinging to its stem
into an utter surrender.* (FF.213)

Mistakes live in the neighbourhood of truth
and therefore delude us.* (FF.215)

Day with its glare of curiosity
makes the stars disappear.* (FF.221)

The cloud laughed at the rainbow
saying that it was an upstart gaudy in its emptiness.
The rainbow calmly answered,
'I am as inevitable as the sun himself.*' (FF.216)

Let me not grope in vain in the dark
but keep my mind still in the faith
that the day will break
and truth will appear in the majesty of its simplicity.* (FF.217)

My mind has its true union with thee, O sky,
at the window which is mine own,
and not in the open
where thou hast thy sole kingdom.* (FF.222)

Vacancy in my life's flute
waits for its music
like the primal darkness
before the stars came out.* (FF.226d)

Emancipation from the bondage of the soil
is no freedom for the tree.* (FF.227)

APPENDIX

The tapestry of life's story is woven
by the joining and breaking of the threads of life's ties.* (FF.228)

Those thoughts of mine that soar free in the air
come to perch upon my songs.* (FF.229)

My soul tonight loses itself
in the silent heart of a tree
standing alone among the whispers of immensity.* (FF.230)

Pearl shells cast up by the sea
on death's barren beach—
a magnificent wastefulness of creative life.* (FF.231)

My life has its play of colours through thwarted hopes
and gains incomplete
Like the reed that has its music through its gaps.* (FF.233d)

Let not my thanks to thee rob my silence
of its fuller homage.* (FF.234)

Life's aspiration comes in the guise of a child.* (FF.235)

The fruit that I have gained for ever
is that which has been accepted by love.* (FF.238)

In my life's garden my wealth has been
of shadows and lights
that are never gathered and stored.* (FF.237d)

Light is young, the ancient light,
shadows are of the moment, they are born old.* (FF.240)

My songs are to sing that I have loved thy singing.* (FF.250d)

Men form constellations with stars that are their own stories
grown from the fiery mist of their passions, power and dreams,
eddy into living spheres.*

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The one without second is emptiness
the other one makes it true. (FF.46)

Try to break the differences and it is multiplied.
By acknowledging it unity is gained.

The spirit of death is one, the spirit of life is many.
When God is dead religion becomes one. (FF.64, SB. 84)

Darkness smothers the one into uniformity.
Light reveals the one in its multifariousness. (SB.90d)

Let him take note of the thorn
who can see the flower as a whole. (SB.230)

If you kick the dust it troubles the air,
sprinkling of water helps you best.

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NOTES TO SECTION I

Gitanjali (1912)

First published by the India Society, London, in 1912. It had as frontispiece a portrait of the poet from a drawing of William Rothenstein, to whom the book is dedicated. The work includes 103 poems translated into English by the author from the original Bengali. Only 53 of these poems occur in the Bengali work under the same title published in 1910. The rest come from several other works: 16 poems from *Gītīmālya* (1914), 16 from *Naivedya* (1901), 11 from *Kheyā* (1906), 3 from *Śiśu* (1903), 1 each from *Kalpanā* (1900), *Smaran* (1903), *Caitālī* (1896) and *Utsarga* (1914), and 1 song from the play *Acālāyatan* (1918). The English work, therefore, can be considered as an anthology of Tagore's poems written over one decade.

The arrangement of the poems in *Gitanjali* is neither in chronological order of their publication nor according to any sequence in the growth of mood or idea. They are self-contained, independent lyrics, though they have a slender thematic connection, all of them being addressed to a god who reveals himself in myriad forms and shapes, in the beauty of nature, in the everyday situations of human relationships. Tagore adopts the framework of medieval Indian mystic poetry where the infinite seeks its expression in the bondages of the finite: it is not that man alone longs for God, but God too longs for man. The recurring images in these poems are derived from familiar situations: the crossing of the river, the call of the boatman, the flight of cranes, dark clouds gathering in the sky, the lingering shadows of the evening, lovers waiting for the beloved, and so on. All these metaphors, coming as they do from the rural experience of the poet as well as from the religious poetry of the pre-British period, have acquired a cosmic dimension. Tagore's own construct of the imagery of the king became the most dominant one in his religious poetry and later in his plays.

The *Gitanjali* poems indeed have deep links with the Upanishadic conception of Godhead, as has often been claimed by Indian critics, but they have neither the authoritarian voice of the Upanishadic seers nor their apocalyptic vision. They are more indebted so far as verbal texture is concerned, to the Bhakti poems of medieval India in general and the love-symbolism of the Bengali Vaishnava poets in particular. Free from all sectarian and theological doctrines, these poems have so intricately woven the sacred with the secular that the *Gitanjali* poems are conspicuous by their complete coalescence. The dominant note of *Gitanjali* is life-affirmation: it creates a world of light and colour and abundance. If one hears a voice of melancholy in one lyric, there is expression of joy in

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another; if there is despondency in one, there is another celebrating the joy of fulfilment.

The original poems are marked by simplicity of diction, structural compactness and effortless rhyming and cadence; almost each and every lyric is an example of Tagore's mastery of craftsmanship. The translations, though in prose, retain the haunting quality of the original to a great extent as is evidenced by the enthusiasm with which the book was welcomed by W.B. Yeats and Ezra Pound in England and the phenomenal popularity it enjoyed for at least one decade. The translations are more or less faithful to the Bengali original; the deviations, which are not many, that one might point out are not only legitimate but satisfying too. Once and only once, did Tagore succeed in translating his own poems.

The book was later published by Macmillan, in March 1913. There were slight variations between the India Society edition and the Macmillan edition, as shown below:

| | <i>India Society</i> | <i>Macmillan</i> |
|---------|---------------------------|--|
| Poem 30 | My Lord | My lord |
| Poem 51 | Someone has said | Some one has said (fifth paragraph) |
| Poem 52 | Shy and soft demeanour | Coyness and sweetness of demeanour (last paragraph) |
| Poem 87 | My Lord | My lord |

The variants in the India Society edition were prompted by C.F. Andrews which made Yeats extremely unhappy (Yeats to Tagore, 9 January 1913). Tagore apologized and requested Yeats to revise the proofs of the Macmillan edition (Tagore to Yeats, 26 January 1913). Yeats was particularly unhappy with the change in poem no. 52. Tagore asked Rothenstein to request Macmillan to submit the proofs of the second edition of *Gitanjali* to Yeats for 'necessary restoration' (Tagore to Rothenstein, 14 February 1913).¹

The Gardener (1913)

First published by Macmillan, London, in October 1913. The book was dedicated to W.B. Yeats.

This work contains prose translations of 85 Bengali poems from 15 odd works written and published over a span of nearly thirty years. Tagore's idea, perhaps, was to present his poems written earlier than the *Gitanjali*.

¹ See Mary M. Lago, *Imperfect Encounter*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1977, pp. 94-100.

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period, poems free from religious symbolism and mystic emotions, and marked with greater human concerns, love being their main motif. The majority of the poems come from *Kṣanikā* (1900): 26 poems have been selected from this work alone, a delightful work distinguished by its abundance, spontaneity and irony, its tripping and sprightly metre that Tagore used with great skill. But it also included poems of much earlier works such as *Kaḍi o Komal* (1886), *Mānasī* (1890) and even *Māyār Khelā* (1888), a sentimental play written in the late eighties of the last century.

Unlike *Gitanjali*, it is a more or less haphazard collection of poems and a few songs, arranged without any plan or order. This is the first work of his where Tagore admitted that his translations were not always literal and that the originals were 'sometimes abridged and sometimes paraphrased'. Such abridgement and paraphrasing as a policy of translation, howsoever justifiable, did not help Tagore in doing justice to his poems. Some of his memorable verses were reduced to total insipidity and became inconsequential. The poems selected in this volume are undoubtedly different from those included in *Gitanjali*, in theme, mood, structure and metre, yet the first impressions that Tagore made as a religious and mystic poet lingered on. The diction that Tagore adopted for the translation of his poems unfortunately did not vary according to the mood and tone of the original, but became more and more banal with a few noted exceptions. The initial response to the work was therefore a mixed one. The *Irish Citizen* described its position as 'not far from the summit of English literature',¹ but Ezra Pound in his review of this book² felt obliged to counteract the contemporary opinion of Tagore as a 'sanctimonious moralist'. Among the British admirers of this book was May Sinclair who described it, in a letter dated 17 October 1913, as 'the most wonderful book of modern secular love-poems'.

The Crescent Moon (1913)

Published by Macmillan, London, in November 1913 with eight illustrations in colour by Surendranath Ganguli, Abanindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose, three distinguished artists of what is popularly known as the Bengal School of painting. The book was dedicated to Sturge Moor.

This is the only work of Tagore in English where all the poems have titles. The book contains 40 poems, translated from the Bengali by Tagore, 35 of which have been selected from the Bengali work *Śiśu* (which means

¹ Quoted in Krishna Kripalani, *Rabindranath Tagore: A Biography*, Oxford University Press, London, 1962, p. 231.

² 'Rabindranath Tagore: His Second Book into English', *The New Freewoman: An Individualist Review*, London, 1913, pp. 187-88.

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'the child') published in 1903. The rest of the poems come from *Kudī o Kamāl* (1886), *Sonār Tārī* (1894), *Kṣāṇikā* (1900) and *Gītimālyā* (1914). The second poem in the work, entitled 'On the Sea Shore', first included in *Gitanjali* (no. 60), appears here with one modification: the 'timid buds of enchantment' of *Gitanjali* is changed to the 'shy buds of enchantment'. 'The Source' (translated from 'Khokā' of *Sisu*) was also included in *Gitanjali* (no. 61). Poem no. 9, 'When and Why', also first included in *Gitanjali* (poem 62), has certain modifications, as follows:

| <i>Gitanjali</i> | <i>The Crescent Moon</i> |
|--|--|
| When I bring to you | When I bring you |
| What the pleasure is that streams | What pleasure streams |
| What delight that is which the summer breeze brings | What delight the summer breeze brings |

The first poem 'Home', translated from the Bengali 'Saiśab Sandhyā' (literally, 'Childhood-evening'), is a descriptive and nostalgic verse different in tone and temper from the majority of the poems in the book, as are 'My Song' (poem no. 38) and 'The Child Angel' (poem no. 39), which are poems on the child, rather than for 'children', didactic in nature. The last poem, 'The Last Bargain' (no. 40), which comes from *Gītimālyā*, a work closely related to the religious *Gitanjali*, is a song with deep spiritual import and hardly in consonance with the spirit of the majority of the poems.

The Bengali poems in *Sisu* were written during a period of great sorrow and suffering for the poet. His wife died in November 1902 and his second daughter only nine months later. During the ailment of his daughter, Tagore took his two other children, then motherless, to a hill station. These poems were born there: they were written to entertain the children and probably to conceal his own deep grief. Some of these, 'The Hero' (no. 31), to give an example, are extremely popular in Bengal. *The Crescent Moon*, coming as it did immediately after *Gitanjali*, certainly did create a contrast, but the enthusiasm for the earlier work was so overwhelming that the beauty and simplicity of these child poems remained partly unappreciated.

The quality of the translation cannot be rated very high considering the fact that the original poems show subtle variations in rhythm and rhyme, metrical structure and stylistic levels. *The Times Literary Supplement* (14 May 1914) criticized the poems as 'more childish than childlike'. Despite the limitations, which are understandable, *The Crescent Moon* is a representative work of Tagore. *The Globe* in its review (27 November 1913) described it as 'a revelation more profound and more subtle than that in the "Gitanjali"', and *The Nation* (13 December 1913) found in it 'a vision of childhood which is only paralleled in our literature by the work of

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William Blake'. It deeply moved many contemporary poets including Juan Jimenez, who translated the book into his own language, with the help of his wife Zenobia. This book made a deep impression on some of the poets in China in the mid-twenties.

Fruit-Gathering (1916)

First published by Macmillan, London, in 1916. It was also issued together with *Gitanjali* under the title *Gitanjali and Fruit-Gathering* by Macmillan, New York, in September 1918, with illustrations by Nandalal Bose, Surendranath Kar, Abanindranath Tagore and Nabendranath Tagore.

Poem no. 48 ('Bring beauty and order') was included in *Lover's Gift* (no. 45) with two changes: 'mend all that' and 'has been neglected' of the *Fruit-Gathering* version changed to 'mend all' and 'neglects' respectively in *Lover's Gift*. Among the 86 poems contained in this book more than 50 are of a religious temper collected from *Gūṁālyā* (17), *Gītāli* (14), *Utsarga* (7), *Kheyā* (5), *Naivedya* (3) and *Gītāñjali* (1)—their numbers are indicated within brackets. The rest of the poems come from *Kathā* (7), a book containing ballad-like verses celebrating the courage, sacrifice and dedication of men and women from Indian history, published in 1900; and *Balākā* (15), which according to many critics is the best that Tagore had written till that time. The *Balākā* poems are strikingly different from those in *Gītāñjali* or *Naivedya* in their robustness of form and rhythm and equally powerful philosophy. The speed and the sweep, the opulence of imagery and the breadth of vision, the grand architectural beauty of some of its poems, the metrical innovations with far-reaching impact and its celebration of the youth and the new made *Balākā* one of the landmarks in the history of Bengali poetry. The *Kathā* poems, too, are entirely different from the tenderness and limpidity of the *Gītāñjali* lyrics. They are stories told beautifully and admirably showing the metrical skill of a master. Unfortunately these three worlds of Tagore poems, as represented by the religious poems, the *Kathā* poems and the *Balākā* poems, so different from one another in their metrical structure, diction and ideation, have been totally submerged in the monotony of a languid diction. Despite his constant variation in thought and expression, his continuous experimentations with rhythm and structure, the translations included in *Fruit-Gathering* present the same old mystic Tagore with only one voice.

We reproduce fully the first printed versions of three poems (nos. 18, 35, 84) published in *The Nation* (7 February 1914) and *The Times* (26 October 1914 and 28 January 1916) under the titles 'Fulfilment', 'The Trumpet'

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and 'The Oarsmen' respectively. The second poem was published with an introductory note by the editor.¹

Fulfilment

No; it is not yours to open buds into blossoms
Shake the bud, strike it; it is beyond your power to make blossom.
Your touch soils it, you tear its petal to pieces, and strew it on the
dust.
But no colors appear, and no perfume.
Ah! it is not for you to open the bud into a blossom.
He who can open the bud into a blossom does it so simply.
He gives it a glance of his eyes, and the life sap stirs through its veins,
for he who can make the bud blossom does it so simply.
At his breath the flower spreads its wings and flutters in the wind.
Colors flush out like heart-longings, the perfume betrays sweet
secrets.
He who can open the bud does it so simply.

The Nation (7 February 1914)

The Trumpet

The author of this poem, Mr Rabindranath Tagore, is the famous Indian poet, whose lyrics, plays and essays have brought in recent years a new delight to lovers of English literature. Mr Tagore, who is personally not unknown in this country, himself translates many of his works from the original into English; and his command of our language has done much to make the West acquainted with the finest Indian thought.

Thy trumpet lies in the dust.
The wind is weary, the light is dead. Ah, the evil day!
Come fighters, carrying your flags and singer with your songs!
Come pilgrims, hurrying on your journey!
The trumpet lies in the dust waiting for us.
I was on my way to the temple with my evening offerings,
Seeking for the heaven of rest after the day's dusty toil;
Hoping my hurts would be healed and stains in my garments washed
white,
When I found thy trumpet lying in the dust.

Has it not been the time for me to light my lamp?
Has my evening not come to bring me sleep?

¹ Source: *Rabindranath and the British Press (1912-1941)*, edited by Kalyan Kundu, Shakti Bhattacharya and Kalyan Sarkar, The Tagore Centre (UK), London, 1990.

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O, thou blood-red rose, where have my poppies faded?
I was certain my wanderings were over and my debts all paid
When suddenly I came upon thy trumpet lying in the dust.

Strike my drowsy heart with thy spell of youth!
Let my joy in life blaze up in fire.
Let the shafts of awakening fly piercing the heart of night and a thrill
of dread shake the palsied blindness,
I have come to raise thy trumpet from the dust.

Sleep is no more for me—my walk shall be through showers of arrows.
Some shall run out of their houses and come to my side—some shall
weep,
Some in their beds shall toss and groan in dire dreams:
For to-night thy trumpet shall be sounded.

From thee I had asked peace only to find shame.
Now I stand before thee—help me to don my armour!
Let hard blows of trouble strike fire into my life.
Let my heart beat in pain—beating the drum of thy victory.
My hands shall be utterly emptied to take up thy trumpet.

The Times (26 October 1914)

The Oarsmen

Do you hear the roar of death through the listening hush of distance.
And that awful call midst fire-floods and poison clouds and the wrestle
of earth and sky in mortal combat.
—The Captain's call to steer the ship towards a shore yet unnamed?
For that time is over—that stagnant time in the port—
Where the same old store is bought and sold in an endless round.
Where dead things gather in the exhaustion and emptiness of truth.
They wake up in sudden fear and ask, 'Comrades, what is the hour
of the night? When shall open the golden gate of the new dawn.
The murky clouds have blotted out all stars—
Who are there to see the beckoning finger of the day.
They rush out with oars in hand, the beds are emptied in the house,
the mother prays [,] the silent wife watches by the door.
The wail of separation sweeps the sky like rushing wings of night birds.
And there rings the Captain's voice in the dark,
'Come, sailors, for the time in the haven is over!'

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All the black evils in the world have overflowed their banks,
Yet, oarsmen, take your places with the blessing of sorrow in your
souls!

Whom do you blame, brothers! Bow your heads down!
The sin has been yours and ours.

The heat growing in the heart of God for ages—

The cowardice of the weak, the arrogance of the strong, the greed
of fate prosperity, the rancor of the deprived, pride of race, and
insult to man—

Has burst God's peace, raging in storm.

Like a ripe pod, let the tempest break its heart into pieces, scattering
thunders,

Stop your bluster of abuse and self-praise, my friends,

And with the calm of silent prayer on your brows sail forward to the
shore of the new world.

We have known sins and evils every day and death we have met.
They pass over our world like clouds mocking us with their transient
lightning laughter.

Suddenly they have stopped, growing stupendous,
And men must stand before them saying—

'We do not fear you, O Monster! For we have lived every moment of
our life by conquering you.

'And we die with the faith that peace is true, and God is true, and
true is the eternal One!'

If the deathless dwell not in the heart of death,

If glad wisdom bloom not bursting the sheath of sorrow,

If aim do not die of its own revelation,

If pride break not under its load of decoration,

Then whence comes the hope that drives these men from their homes
in [: :] ars rushing to their death in the morning light?

Shall the value of the martyrs' blood and mothers' tears be utterly lost
in the dust of the earth, not buying Heaven with their price?

And when Man bursts his moral bounds, is not the Boundless revealed
that moment?

The Times (28 January 1916)

Lover's Gift and Crossing (1918)

First published by Macmillan, London in 1918. The book as indicated by

the title is divided into two parts: 'Lover's Gift' consisting of 60 poems and 'Crossing' consisting of 74 poems. Among the poems in 'Lover's Gift' the largest number, 12 to be precise, come from *Balākā* and 12 from *Kṣanikā*, two radically different works. The rest come from *Citrā* (5), *Smaran* (4), *Kalpanā* (3), *Kheyā* (5) and several other books. The poems in 'Crossing' are mainly religious and they come from *Naivedya*, *Kheyā*, *Gītāñjali*, *Gītimālyā* and *Gītāli*. The quality of translation is poor, many of the poems in English are paraphrases of the original Bengali and some of the poems have been so radically changed in the translation that it is quite difficult to locate the source.

There are four poems (nos. 21, 31, 50, 53) in 'Lover's Gift', which are not Tagore's, but translations from three other Bengali poets. Poem no. 21 was originally written by Debendranath Sen (1855–1920), a distinguished contemporary of Tagore, to whom he dedicated his *Sonār Tarī*. This poem occurs in his Bengali work *Aśok Guṇḍā* (1901). The author of poems 31 and 53 is Satyendranath Datta (1882–1922), a younger contemporary of Tagore, noted for his various experimentations in metre. Poems 31 and 53 are 'Toḍā' and 'Campā' respectively, both to be found in *Phuler Phasal* (1911), a collection of poems on flowers.

Poem no. 50 is translated from 'Nūtan Mātā' ('The New Mother'), included in *Ālekhyā* (1907) by Dwijendralal Ray (1863–1913), a popular dramatist and poet. This translation is particularly conspicuous because Dwijendralal, once a great admirer of Tagore, turned into his bitter enemy. Tagore's translation of this poem is a tribute to the memory of a friendship.

Poem no. 51, reproduced below, was first published in *The Nation* (4 January 1914) under the title 'Happiness'.¹

Happiness

The early autumn day is cloudless.
The river is full to the brim, washing the naked roots of the tottering tree by the ford.

The long narrow path, like the thirsty tongue of the village, dips down into the stream.
The babbling of the water mingles into the laughing gossip of the women at their bath.

The fisherman, wearing his net, sits in his boat tied to a bamboo pole,
and the naked boy plunges into the water with loud shouts.

¹ Source: *Rabindranath and the British Press*, edited by Kalyan Kundu et al.

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My heart is full, and I feel that happiness is simple, like a meadow flower.

We grasp it with a cruel eagerness, and crush it, we jump beyond it in our mad pursuit, and miss it forever.

I look around me and see the silent sky and the flowing water, and feel that happiness is spread abroad so simply as a smile as a child's face.

The Nation (4 January 1914)

Poem no. 33 which was first published in *Indian Ink*¹ is also reproduced here:

The boisterous spring, who once came into my life with the lavish laughter

Burdening her hours with improvident roses, Setting skies aflame with the red kisses of newborn *ashoka* leaves,

Now comes stealing into my solitude

Through the lonely lanes, along the brooding shadow heavy with silence,

And sits still in my balcony gazing across the fields

Where the earth all green swoons exhausted in the utter paleness of the sky.

Tagore sent the first version of poem no. 52, quoted below, to Rothenstein (in a letter dated 9 February 1915), requesting him to publish it and 'out of its proceeds buy something for our soldiers in the trenches'.²

Summer's Pioneers

Tired of waiting, you burst your bonds,

Impatient flowers, before the winter had gone.

Glimpses of the unseen corner came into your wayside watch

And you rushed out running and panting,

O restless jasmynes, O troop of riotous roses!

You were the first to march to the breach of death.

Your clamour of colour and perfume troubled the air.

You laughed and pressed and pushed each other,

Bared your breasts and dropped to the ground in heaps.

The summer will come in its time

Sailing in the flood tide of the South Wind.

¹ Edited by Everard Digby, Thacker and Spinck, Calcutta, 1915.

² *Lago, Imperfect Encounter*, p. 189.

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But you never counted slow moments to be sure of him.
You recklessly spent your all in the road in terrible joy of faith.

You heard his footsteps from afar
And flung your mantle of death for him to tread on.
Your bonds break even before the rescuer is seen,
You make him your own ere he can come and claim you.

The Fugitive (1921)

First published by Macmillan, New York, in 1921. Apart from the English translations of his own Bengali poems, Tagore has included translations of 17 religious lyrics composed by others under three heads: 'Vaishnava Songs', 'Baul Songs' and 'Hindi Songs of Jnanadas'.

The first section contains 5 songs written by sixteenth-century Bengali poets. The first 4 poems represent the longing and love of Radha for Krishna. The last poem is on child Krishna.

The second section includes 9 songs of the Bauls, a religious sect in Bengal. Tagore was greatly impressed by their catholicity and humanism and moved by the music and words of their songs. The *Baul* (literally, a mad-cap), a singing mendicant, became a recurring symbol in Tagore's writings. Tagore mentioned this sect and talked about its religious attitude in his Hibbert lecture ('The Man of My Heart', *The Religion of Man*, 1930). Barring no. 5 and no. 7, all the other Baul songs included here are to be found in 'An Indian Folk Religion' (*Creative Unity*, 1922) also.

Tagore has also included 3 songs of Jnanadas, an obscure poet in Hindi. It was Kshitimohan Sen who introduced Jnanadas Baghelkhandi to Tagore.¹ In his article 'An Indian Folk Religion' Tagore quotes one poem of Jnanadas ('I had travelled all day and was tired') which first appeared in *The Fugitive*.²

The rest of the poems are arranged in three groups but it is difficult to see the justification of this division. Like his other works, the poems collected here come from different Bengali works; the earliest was written before 1893 ('Rāhur Prem': *Fugitive I*, 13, 'You desired my love') and the latest belongs to *Lipikā* (1922), from which Tagore has selected 18 poems.

Lipikā is the result of Tagore's first conscious experiments with rhythmic prose. Till 1932 Tagore was diffident about poems written in prose (which he called *gadya-kabitā*, prose-poems) and he included some of the *Lipikā* pieces in *Samkalan* (1925), the first anthology of his prose writings. It is interesting, therefore, that he decided that a maximum number of 'poems' from *Lipikā* be included in *The Fugitive*. His hesitation about the status of

¹ Kshitimohan Sen, *Dādū*, Visva-Bharati, 1935, Introduction by Tagore.

² For the original, see *Rabindra Bikṣā*, Vol. 11.

Lipikā remained throughout his life as he did not include any of the 'poems' in his largest anthology of poems *Saṅcayitā* (1931).

The other notable feature of this collection is the inclusion of 5 dramatic poems, *Bidāy Abhisāp* (1894) and 4 poems from *Kāhinī* (1900). Tagore's fondness for them can be seen from the fact that he included all of them, barring 'Amba and Vinayaka' (*Satī*) in *Saṅcayitā* (1931). The poems 'The Mother's Prayer', 'Somak and Ritvik', and 'Karna and Kuntī' are translations of the Bengali poems 'Gāndhārīr Ābedan', 'Narakbās' (literally, Living in Hell) and 'Karna-Kuntī Sambād' respectively. 'Kaca and Devayānī' is the translation of 'Bidāy Abhisāp' (literally, The Farewell-Curse), which was translated more faithfully by Edward Thompson under the title *The Curse at Farewell*.¹

It is important to note that Tagore translated quite a number of Bengali Vaishnava lyrics and Hindi lyrics into English.² The Vaishnava poems were taken from *Pada-ratnāvalī*.³

Collected Poems and Plays of Rabindranath Tagore (1936)

This was the last work of Rabindranath published by Macmillan, London and it has had many reprints since 1936. It contains *Gitanjali*, *The Crescent Moon*, *The Gardener*, *Chitra*, *Fruit-Gathering*, *The Post-Office*, *Lover's Gift*, *Crossing*, *Stray Birds*, *The Cycle of Spring*, *The Fugitive and Other Poems*, *Sacrifice and Other Plays* (*Sanyasi*, *Malini*, *Sacrifice*, *The King and the Queen*, *Karna and Kuntī*).

The most conspicuous, and most offensive, feature of this publication is its total silence on the sources of these writings. There is no editorial comment of any kind and the reader has no way of knowing that all the works included here are translations from the Bengali and that some of them (*The Post Office* or *The Cycle of Spring*) were not translated by Rabindranath. The former was translated from *Dākghar* by Debabrata Mukhopadhyay and the latter by C.F. Andrews and Nishikanta Sen. Neither is the date of publication of any one of the works mentioned nor are all of Tagore's writings in English—plays and poems—included here. For example, *Fireflies* (1928) published by Macmillan, New York, and *The Child* (1931) published by Allen and Unwin, London, are not included. Interestingly, *Lover's Gift* and *Crossing* were treated as separate works for this publication.

Among the books of poems *Gitanjali*, *The Crescent Moon* and *The*

¹ Published by G. Harrap, London, in 1924.

² See *Rabindra Bikāś*, Vol. 11, 7 August 1984, pp. 27-57: 'Bāul gān o Prācin Hindi gāner Ingreji rūpāntar'.

³ Edited by Rabindranath and Srischandra Majumdar, 1885.

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Gardener have been included without any change. But 7 poems (nos. 3, 17, 22, 23, 67, 68 and 71) from *Fruit-Gathering*, 23 from *Lover's Gift* and 40 from *Crossing* have been left out. One poem from *Stray Birds* (no. 263, 'This sadness of my soul is her bride's veil') is not included in this collection but this omission has not been indicated. *The Fugitive* has also been drastically edited. Five Bengali Vaishnava lyrics, 9 Bengali Baul songs and 3 Hindi poems have not found place in this collection. In addition to that 9 poems from Part I, 7 from Part II, and 6 from Part III were also deleted. 'Karna Kuntī Sambād' which was in Part III (no. 28, 'Karna and Kuntī') is now put under *Other Plays*. 'Bidāy Abhiśāp' (*The Fugitive I*, no. 20), 'Sati' (*The Fugitive II*, 29) and 'Mother's Prayer' (*The Fugitive II*, 32) have been omitted. But this collection contains 10 new poems which we have included.

Poems (1942)

This collection of poems of Rabindranath translated into English by the poet himself was edited by Krishna Kripalani in collaboration with Amiya Chakravarty, Nirmal Chandra Chattopadhyay and Pulinbihari Sen and published by Visva-Bharati in 1942 soon after the poet's death.

This book, divided into four sections, 'which roughly corresponds to four major divisions in the poet's writings', contains 130 poems excluding the introductory poem. This is the first attempt to present Tagore's poems (in English translation) in chronological order, except the introductory, as well as the last poem, which in the words of the editor, 'have been so placed because of their special appropriateness'. The last poem in this volume was composed in December 1939 and it was Tagore's wish that it should be sung after his death.

There are 12 poems in this work (nos. 114, 120-130) which were translated by Amiya Chakravarty. Since our intention is to present exclusively the English writings of Tagore, these poems have not been included here.

The last few pages of *Poems* contain valuable information and reference to the Bengali originals. Among the poems included here 'Ahalyā Prati' (no. 7, *Mānasī*, 1980) was first published in *The Nation* (25 April 1914) under the title 'The Return', which is reproduced below. A comparison between the two versions might be of some interest to students of Tagore.

The Return

Ahalya, sinning against the purity of married love, incurred the curse of her husband, and was turned into a stone, to be restored to her humanity by the touch of Ramchandra.

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Amidst the glow of your flaming passion, Ahalya, the curse struck your tumultuous life and stilled it into a stone, clean and impressive.

You took your sacred bath of dust and plunged into the primitive peace of the earth.

You heard the hum of all growing life and felt the beat of the great mother's heart.

When in the morning the warmth of the sun's kiss sent a stir underground in the countless roots of grass and trees and waving corn that clung to the earth like the eager fingers of the infant clutching the mother's breast—the rush of the mute gladness touched you with its throbs and thrills.

In the night when the tired children of the dust came back to the dust, the rhythmic breath of the slumbering life fanned you and stirred in you the large placid motherliness of the earth.

Creepers twined round you the undisturbed bonds of flowering intimacy, and moths hummed inaudible tunes in their hushed household hidden under your shelter.

You became one with the great path where the slow ages pass in procession.

You bent your head low, kept your ear on the ground and waited in calm patience to catch the sounds of the steps of the unseen comer at whose touch the shroud of night vanishes and silence wakes up into morning music.

Woman, the sin has stripped you naked, the curse has washed you pure.

You have risen into the perfect life.

The den of the bottomless night trembles on your eyelids and the green mosses of eternal years cling to your hair.

You have the wonder of the new birth and the wonder of old time in your awakening. You are young as the freshborn flower and old as the hills.

The Nation (25 April 1914), p. 137

NOTES TO SECTION II

Stray Birds (1916)

First published by Macmillan, New York, in 1916, with a frontispiece in colour by Willy Pogany. The book was dedicated to T. Hara of Yokohama, who was the author's host in Japan during his visit there in 1916. This work consisting of epigrams and short verses has two sources. The first source is *Kanikā* (literally, fragments) published in 1899. Most of the verses included in this slender work are epigrammatic in nature and didactic in tone. And all of them can be directly linked with the epigrammatic and didactic traditions of Sanskrit and also of Persian poetry prevalent in nineteenth-century Bengali literature. An idea of their structure and tone may be obtained from the translations of Edward Thompson given below:¹

We shut the door, lest Error enter in
But Truth asks, 'How shall I admission win?'

Labour and Rest are bound by closest ties
For Rest falls lid like upon Labour's eyes.

The other source is more interesting. In 1926, Tagore published a collection of short verses, under the title *Lekhan* (see Appendices). It had two prefaces, one in English and the other in Bengali; and most of the poems included here had two versions, Bengali and English. We have no clue to suggest whether the English version preceded the Bengali or vice versa, although conjectures can be made. Tagore wrote in the preface: 'The lines in the following pages had their origin in China and Japan where the author was asked for his writings on fans or pieces of silk.' A few poems included in *Lekhan* were first published in *Stray Birds*. Since Tagore visited China in 1924, *Stray Birds* cannot have been the poems written in China. All the other poems which are not to be found in *Kanikā* in all possibility were written in Japan. It has been possible to trace the Bengali version of some of the poems (both included in *Lekhan*) but quite a significant number of poems were written directly in English (see Appendices).

Krishna Kripalani suggests the possibility of the influence of Japanese Haiku on these poems.² Undoubtedly Tagore's admiration for Haiku was great. In fact he analysed the famous poem of Bashō: 'A mud puddle/

¹ Rabindranath Tagore, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1991, p. 142.

² Rabindranath Tagore: A Biography, p. 255.

A frog jumps in/Splash', in his travelogue *Jāpān Yātrī* (Japan-Traveller) written in 1916. He was impressed by the brevity, economy and intensity of these poems though there is no evidence to show that he acquired their metrical subtleties or that he wanted to introduce them in his own language.

However, he found in the structure of Haiku a congenial medium to express himself admirably. These verses or sentences continued to accumulate and they were published later in *Lekhan*, which was not available outside Bengal, and in *Fireflies* (1928), a book of similar nature. In fact, the four books, *Stray Birds* (1916), *Lekhan* (1926), *Fireflies* (1928) and *Sphulīṅga* (literally, 'Sparks', 1946), form one significant unit. Quite a number of verses in *Stray Birds* were prompted by the contemporary political situation, particularly the rise of militant nationalism in the West and in Asia. One incident related by C.F. Andrews, a British friend of Tagore who accompanied the poet in Japan, is worth quoting:

... he [Tagore] was asked on one occasion to write a short poem concerning a deed of violence which had been committed by two chiefs of rival clans. They had fought from dawn till evening on a grassy plateau, high up in the hills near Hakone. A great rock overshadowed the place. When the sun had set on that day of battle, both the warriors had fallen dead, smitten with many wounds and the ground had been covered with their blood. The leader of the Japanese people, who had come to the spot with the Poet, asked him to write an epigram in a few words commemorating the heroic occasion. I could see, at that moment, the strained anguish of the Poet's face as he quickly grasped the incident just as it had occurred and shrunk back from it in his own mind in horror. In a moment with a quick gesture, he wrote these words: 'They hated and fought and killed each other! And God in shame covered their blood with His own grass.' The beauty of the thought was only equalled by its daring. ...¹

Recently many more epigrammatic writings of Tagore have been collected in *Rabindra Bikṣā* ('Tukro lekha', Vol. 14, 23 December 1985; and 'Short Autography Poems in English', Vol. 18, 23 December 1987).

Fireflies (1928)

First published by Macmillan, New York, in 1928, with decorations by Boris Artzybasheff.

It contains 256 short verses and epigrams, some are translations from the Bengali and some written directly in English. It belongs to the same category of literary works as the bilingual *Lekhan* (1926) and *Stray Birds* (1916). The Bengali versions of most of these poems are to be found in *Lekhan* and also in *Sphulīṅga*, published in 1946, five years after the death

¹ Quoted in Kripalani, *Rabindranath Tagore: A Biography*, p. 256.

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of Tagore. The title of this work comes from the first verse in *Lekhan*:

My fancies are fireflies
sparks of living light
twinkling in the dark.

NOTES TO SECTION III

The Child (1931)

First published by Allen and Unwin, London, in 1931.

This is the only major poem by Tagore written directly in English. Two years later he translated it into Bengali under the title *Śiśu Tīrtha* (literally, 'The Child-Pilgrimage') included in *Punaśca* (1932).

The poem was written in July 1930 when Tagore visited the village Oberammergau, about forty miles away from Munich, to watch the passion play that is enacted there since 1634 once every ten years. This is a major work in modern Indian poetry on a biblical theme although the relation between *The Child* and the text of *The Oberammergau Passion Play* by Joseph Alois Daisenberger which Tagore had seen performed is very slender indeed.

Contrary to popular belief, *The Child* is not the only poem of Tagore written directly in English. We quote a number of specimens of his experiments with English poems. The earliest, and probably the only rhymed verse that Tagore wrote in English, is as follows:

The bee is to come and the bee is to hum
Till the heart of the flower comes out.
The bud says 'yea', and the bud says 'nay',
She sways with a fear and a doubt.
O errant of wayward wings,
O guest of sumptuous summer,
Give up thy hope, yet keep, yet keep up thy heart,
O Sunny day's new comer!
Whisper in tearful tunes untired
And wait with a faith devout
For the bud says 'yea' and the bud says 'nay',
She sways with a fear and a doubt.

This was written at the request of George Calderon who dramatized his story *Dāliyā*¹ and staged it at the Royal Albert Hall on 30 July 1912. The poem was included in the text.

Tagore wrote another rhymed verse at the request of Satyendranath Datta who translated it into Bengali and included it in his *Mani Mañjuṣā* (1915), a companion volume to *Tīrtha Salil* (1908) and *Tīrtha Renu*

¹ The Bengali story *Dāliyā* was first published in 1891. Calderon's dramatization was published under the title *The Maharani of Ayakan: A Romantic Comedy in One Act*, by Francis Griffiths, London, 1915.

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(1910)—two anthologies of verses translated from various languages. This poem in Bengali translation begins with the sentence: *pākhā gāito niti hṛday-kholā kheyāle khusi*. We have not been able to trace the English original.

Edward Thompson gives five examples of Tagore's experiments with 'unrhymed English verse' which he thought were not published elsewhere.¹

1

When the evening steals on western waters,
Thrills the air with wings of homeless shadows,
When the sky is crowned with star-gemmed silence
And the dreams dance on the deep of slumber;
When the lilies lose their faith in morning
And in panic close their hopeless petals,
There's a bird which leaves its nest in secret,
Seeks its song in trackless paths of heaven.

2

Breezy April, vagrant April,
Rock me in your swing of music.
Thrill my branches with enchantment
At your touch of sweet surprises.

In my life dream, by the wayside
You come, startling me from slumber:
Wilful in your mood fantastic—
Courting, teasing, and inconstant.

Breezy April, vagrant April,
Living with my lonesome shadows,
I know all your fitful fancies,
Leafy language, flitting footsteps.
All my boughs break into blossom
At your passing breath and whisper;
All my leaves break into tumult
Of surrender at your kisses.

3

Once, when we were both together, Spring came to our cottage.
'Let me in', he cried.
He had brought for us the whispered secrets of his gladness.

¹ *Rabindranath Tagore*, pp. 269-70.

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Lyrics of new leaves,
 I was busy with my fancies, you sat at your spinning;
 He went back unheeded.
 Suddenly we started when we saw his parting shadow
 And his remnant roses,
 Now you are away, beloved, Spring comes to our cottage.
 'Let me in', he cries.
 He has brought for me the fitful shiver of the shadows,
 Doves' despondent cooings.
 I sit idle at the window, and a phantom spinning
 Spins to me sad dreams.
 Now that Spring has for his gift the gift of secret sorrow,
 All my doors are open.

4

Come, my Lover, in thy lavish splendour!
 Hurt the wind with shock of thy arrival.
 No more secret meetings in uncertain
 Gleams of twilight; let thy burning torches
 Toss through midnight their tumultuous laughter.
 Grasp me by my right hand; rescue me
 From all trivial ties of clinging moments,
 Coils of sluggish dreams; and let all sleepers
 Wake and come, and see me glad and helpless,
 Held in might of thy majestic silence.

5

As the tender twilight cover in its fold of dust-veil
 Marks of hurt and wastage from the dusty day's prostration,
 Even so let my great sorrow for thy loss, Beloved,
 Spread one perfect golden-tinted silence of its sadness
 O'er my life. Let all its jagged fractures and distortions
 And unmeaning scattered scraps and wrecks and random ruins
 Merge in vastness of some evening stilled with thy remembrance,
 Filled with endless harmony of pain and peace united.

The first poem ('When the evening steals on western waters') occurs in Tagore's *Chanda*.¹ Sen conjectures its date of composition to be 1921. It was first published in *The Modern Review*, in September 1921. This poem as well as the second one, 'Breezy April, vagrant April', have been quoted by Lotika Basu in her *Indian Writers of English Verse* with the comment: 'These

¹ Edited by Prabodh Chandra Sen, Visva-Bharati, 1962, p. 302.

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poems are only desultory experiments in unrhymed verse, yet we are led to think that had Tagore taken it seriously and made it the medium of his translations his readers would have experienced more of the beautiful melody of Tagore's Bengali verse.¹

Another poem has recently surfaced and been published in *Rabindra Bikṣā* (no. 4, Śrāban 1385/1978, p. 128). The date of its composition is 31 January 1918.

The lamp is trimmed.

Comrades, bring your own fire to light it.

For the call comes again to you to join the star pilgrims

Crossing the dark to the shine of sunrise.

The day was when you want faith in your glad adventure of light and
the star of hope thrilled in the sky and kissed your banner.

But as the dusk deepened you fell behind in the march and slept with
your lights gone out

While your dreams grew discordant like the ominous cries of night
birds.

Yet, though it is dark, and the wind in the forest is as the wails of
lost souls,

has not the breath of that prayer already touched your foreheads
which comes from the past echoing from age to age

'Lead me to Light from the dark,

from death to Everlasting life?'

Sleepers, arise from your stupor to dim desolation, and know once
more that you are Children of Light.

In addition to all these specimens attention must be drawn to several poems in *Fruit-Gathering*, *Crossing* and, of course, in *Stray Birds*, *Lekhan* and *Fireflies* which were originally written in English. Whatever be the merit of these compositions the corpus of Tagore's poems in English is not very small.

¹ Published by University of Calcutta, 1933, p. 138.

NOTES TO SECTION IV

One Hundred Poems of Kabir (1914)

Translated by Tagore and first published by India Society, London, in 1914. Only 750 copies of that edition were printed of which 400 were for sale to the public. Later it was reprinted by Macmillan, London (1917) as well as by Macmillan, New York (1917). The New York edition had a slightly different title: *Songs of Kabir*.¹ Tagore was assisted by Evelyn Underhill, who wrote a long and informative, though not always dependable, essay introducing Kabir, one of the greatest saint-poets of medieval India.

The text from which the English translations were made by Tagore and Underhill is *Kabir* by Kshitimohan Sen, published in four parts from Bolpur in 1910-11. Sen, a keen student of medieval Bhakti poetry and a fine scholar of Sanskrit and medieval Hindi literature, had collected the verses of Kabir from different sources. The authenticity of the texts of the Kabir poems, however, has been questioned by many Hindi scholars, as only a few poems included in Sen's volume resemble the poems in *Bijak*, the authentic collection of Kabir. Ahmed Shah, the author-translator of *The Bijak of Kabir* (Hamirpur, 1917) doubted the authenticity of the Sen text, and consequently the accuracy of Tagore, who translated from the Bengali translations provided by Sen. It may be mentioned here that several translations of Kabir into Bengali and at least one in English² were available when Tagore published his translations.

Ch. Vaudeville, the greatest living authority on Kabir observes, on Tagore's translations, that 'The authenticity of these poems is very questionable; it appears that most of them were probably not composed by Kabir. . . .' She further writes that this work was 'for a long time the only one available to the Western public; it was widely read in the West and re-translated into French by Mme Mirabaud-Thorens. The question of authenticity was never apparently raised, either by Tagore himself or by his Indian Western admirers.'³ Professor Vaudeville also complains that 'Evelyn Underhill—and probably Tagore himself—shows a surprising ignorance of some tenets supposedly held by Kabir; for example, on p. xiv of her introduction Miss Underhill writes: "Again and again he (Kabir) extols the life of home, the value and reality of diurnal existence." Nothing could be further from the truth.'⁴

Underhill, in the concluding paragraph of her introduction, mentions

¹ *Songs of Kabir*, translated by Rabindranath Tagore, assisted by Evelyn Underhill.

² Premchand, *A Translation of Kabir's Complete Bijak into English*, Calcutta, 1911.

³ *Kabir*, Vol. I, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1974, pp. 18-19.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

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a manuscript containing the English translation of 116 songs of Kabir (from Sen's text) made by Ajit Kumar Chakravarti and an essay on Kabir also by Chakravarti, which she and Tagore used: 'A considerable number of readings from the translation have been adopted by us.'¹

It has been recently pointed out by Nityapriya Ghosh in a closely argued article entitled 'Sādhu, Yiye tan t̃het̃ tambur ka', written in Bengali² that it was the manuscript containing Chakravarti's English translation of Kabir which Tagore made the basis of his translation. In fact, in the initial stage of the preparation of the work, Tagore informed Chakravarti that India Society would publish his (Chakravarti's) translation, and that he (Tagore) was only making a few changes. It appears that although the work was published under the names of Tagore and Underhill, the magnitude of the contribution of Chakravarti was much greater than the acknowledgements indicate.

These translations are also important in the history of the Tagore-Ezra Pound relationship. It may be mentioned that ten poems of Kabir translated by Pound, with the help of Kalimohan Ghosh, were published in *The Modern Review* in June 1913.

¹ The manuscript of Chakravarti, prepared by W.B. Pearson and corrected by Tagore, is preserved in the Tagore archives, Santiniketan. See *Rabindra Bikṣā*, Vol. 10 (23 December 1983, pp. 2-36) and Dr Rameshwar Mishra, *Madhyayugin Hindi Sant Sāhitya aur Rabindranāth* (University Publication, Varanasi, 1989), p. 153.

² *Dikgharer Harkatā*, Prama Publications, Calcutta, 1985, pp. 101-16.

NOTES TO APPENDICES

The Fugitive (1919?)

The exact date of publication of the Bolpur edition of *The Fugitive* is not known. Pulin Behari Sen informs that it was meant for private circulation and conjectures 1919 as its date of publication. Some of these poems were later included in *The Fugitive* (1921) published by Macmillan, after substantial changes. In the absence of any evidence one can assume that the changes were made by Tagore himself. In any case this edition of *The Fugitive* provides interesting materials for a study of the evolution of the text of *The Fugitive*. Not all the poems included in this book, however, were included either in *The Fugitive* (1921) or in any other work.

Lekhan

Despite its inclusion in the collected Bengali works of Tagore,¹ *Lekhan* cannot be claimed as an exclusively Bengali work (see Notes on *Stray Birds* and *Fireflies*). It was first printed in 1926 at Balatonfüred, Hungary, in the poet's own handwriting. The book contains 420 short verses or poetic compositions, 150 of them have two versions, Bengali and English, one being translated from the other. But there are 72 pieces in English and 48 in Bengali which do not have any corresponding translation in this work (though the possibility of the existence of translations of some of them either in English or in Bengali in the Tagore Archives cannot be totally ruled out). The book as it is available now in the *Rabindra Racanāvali* contains only the Bengali section, i.e. 48+150=198 verses. A considerable part of the remaining pieces in English (72+150=222) has been included in *Fireflies* (1928), often with changes in punctuation, word order, vocabulary and arrangement of lines. The versions included in *Fireflies*, it being a later work, must be considered as final. Nonetheless, *Lekhan* will always have an interesting place in Tagore studies. The best thing would have been to print the whole text as it was conceived, designed and circulated by Tagore. Since this volume is devoted exclusively to the English writings of Tagore and the Bengali section of *Lekhan* is now a part of Tagore's Bengali works, we think at least the English section of the book should be made available to students of Tagore.

It is interesting to mention that Tagore inadvertently included five short poems of Priyambada Debi (1871-1935), a distinguished Bengali

¹ Visva-Bharati edition, Vol. XIV, and West Bengal Government edition, Vol. IV.

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poetess, in *Lekhan*. All of them were already in print and included in her work *Patralekhā* (1908). However, once the poetess, herself a great admirer of Tagore, brought this to his notice they were withdrawn from the next edition.¹

The general structure of the original work is a sequence of Bengali verses, each of them followed by an English version (though there is no definite proof that the Bengali verses were written first). This order, however, has not been followed strictly throughout the book. We have arranged the verses in the order they first appeared in the 1926 edition. Those which are to be found in *Stray Birds* (SB) and in *Fireflies* (FF) have been indicated within brackets at the end of the line. The letter 'd' within brackets stands for 'different reading' which is to be found in the footnotes to *Fireflies*. The verses in English, the expected corresponding Bengali versions of which could not be traced, are indicated by an asterisk. It is quite possible that they were written directly in English. The Bengali counterparts of the verses which are to be found in *Sphuliṅga* (S) and not in *Lekhan* have been indicated by †.

¹ See editorial notes, *Rabindra Racanābhāṣā*, Vol. XIV, Visva-Bharati, 1953, pp. 527-32.

SOURCES OF ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

It is not easy to identify the Bengali sources of all the poems that Tagore translated into English. His translations are not always faithful to his own Bengali. He admitted in the preface to *The Gardener* that his 'translations are not always literal—the originals being sometimes abridged and sometimes paraphrased'. On several occasions he has used more than one Bengali poem to create a single poem in English. Poem 95 of the English *Gitanjali*, for example, is a translation of two Bengali poems of *Naivedya* (nos. 89 and 90). Some of his translations are so remote from the original that they should be considered as distinctly separate poems with a very slender connection with their Bengali counterparts. Tagore himself was very aware of this problem.

In a letter to Ajit Kumar Chakravarti (13 March 1913) written from Illinois, USA, Tagore wrote, 'What I try to capture in my English translation is the heart and core of my original Bengali. That is bound to make for a fairly wide deviation. If I were not there to help you out, you might probably find it impossible to identify the original in the translation.'¹ In another letter written two months later from London (12 May 1913) he admits that 'the forms and features of the original become difficult in my translations—the way I do them these days. My translations are more a reflection than an exact replica of the original image.'²

The comments of Krishna Kripalani on the English translation of poem 14 in *Utsarga* (1914), which is to be found in *Poems* (1942) included in this volume, are worth quoting if only because of the near impossibility of identifying the original source of many translations of Tagore:

This translation is an interesting illustration of how the Poet faced the almost impossible task of giving a full and faithful rendering of some of his original compositions. The first sentence is a translation of only the last two lines of the third stanza of the original; the next four sentences a rendering of the fourth stanza; the sixth sentence of the first two lines of the eighth stanza; the seventh and eighth sentences of the first four lines of the ninth stanza; and the last two sentences of the last four lines of the tenth stanza.³

Despite our best attempts we have failed to identify the originals of all the poems. *Crossing* appears to be the most problematic work: 17 poems remain unidentified. It is likely that at least some of the unidentified poems are not translations from the Bengali at all, but poems written in English. We are indebted to the index of English translations of Tagore, *Rabindra-racānār ingreji anubād-sūci* (*Kabitā o gān*), edited by Sudhamayi Mukhopadhyay (Santiniketan, 1976), and to the bibliography, 'Works of Rabindranath Tagore: English,' compiled by Pulin Bihari Sen and Sobhanlal Ganguli (*Jadavpur Journal of Comparative Literature*, Vols. 8 and 9).

¹ Translated by Kshitish Ray, *Jadavpur Journal of Comparative Literature*, Vol. 9, p. 124.

² Ibid.

³ *Poems*, Visva-Bharati, 1942; reprinted 1970, pp. 223–24.

SOURCES

Arrangement

The serial number on the left indicates the order of the poem in the English work. It is followed either by the first line or the title of the Bengali poem (if there is any) which is the source of the English translation. The title of the book where the Bengali poem occurs, along with the number of the poem if there is any, is given within brackets.

The order deviates slightly in the case of *The Crescent Moon*, the only English work of Tagore where all the poems have titles. Here the title of each poem has been mentioned immediately after the number and the Bengali source is within brackets. All Bengali words have been transliterated into Roman.

List of Abbreviations

| | | | |
|-----|-----------------------|-----|-----------------------|
| AC | <i>Acālāyatan</i> | LPK | <i>Līpikā</i> |
| BIC | <i>Bicitrītā</i> | MHY | <i>Mahuyā</i> |
| BIS | <i>Bisarjan</i> | MK | <i>Māyār Khela</i> |
| BIT | <i>Bithikā</i> | MNS | <i>Mānasī</i> |
| BLK | <i>Balākā</i> | NAI | <i>Nāivedya</i> |
| BS | <i>Brahma Sangit</i> | NJ | <i>Nabajātak</i> |
| CC | <i>Chadār Chabi</i> | PAR | <i>Pariseṣ</i> |
| COG | <i>Chabi o Gān</i> | PLT | <i>Palātakā</i> |
| CTL | <i>Caitālī</i> | PNS | <i>Punāśca</i> |
| CTR | <i>Citrā</i> | PRB | <i>Purabī</i> |
| GB | <i>Cātāhātān</i> | PRC | <i>Prāyaścitta</i> |
| GL | <i>Gītālī</i> | PRN | <i>Prāntik</i> |
| GM | <i>Gātimālya</i> | PTP | <i>Patrapuṭ</i> |
| GMR | <i>Gātamālikā</i> | RB | <i>Rabindra Bīkṣā</i> |
| GML | <i>Gātimālā</i> | RJ | <i>Rājā</i> |
| GT | <i>Gītāñjali</i> | RS | <i>Rog Śayyā</i> |
| KAH | <i>Kāhinī</i> | S | <i>Sphulingā</i> |
| KAN | <i>Kānikā</i> | SJ | <i>Śeṭṭi</i> |
| KAT | <i>Kathā</i> | SM | <i>Smaran</i> |
| KHY | <i>Kheyā</i> | SS | <i>Śiśu</i> |
| KRH | <i>Kathā o Kāhinī</i> | SSB | <i>Śiśu Bholanāth</i> |
| KLP | <i>Kalpanā</i> | SSP | <i>Seṣ Sapta</i> |
| KOK | <i>Kodī o Komal</i> | ST | <i>Sonār Tarī</i> |
| KSN | <i>Kṣāṇikā</i> | SY | <i>Syāmālī</i> |
| LKN | <i>Lekhan (1926)</i> | UTS | <i>Utsarga</i> |

SOURCES

Gitanjali

- 1 āmāre tumi aśeṣ karecha (GM: 23)
- 2 tumi yakhan gān gāhite (GT: 78)
- 3 tumi kemaṇ kore (GT: 22)
- 4 āmār sakal aṅge (NAI: 75)
- 5 tumi ekṭu kebaḷ (GM: 20)
- 6 chinna kore lāo he (GT: 87)
- 7 āmār e gān cheḍeche tār (GT: 125)
- 8 rājār mato beṣe (GT: 127)
- 9 ār āmāy āmi nijer sīre (GT: 105)
- 10 yethāy thāke sabār adham (GT: 107)
- 11 bhajan pūjan sādhan (GT: 119)
- 12 anek kāler yātrā (GM: 14)
- 13 hethā ye gān (GT: 39)
- 14 āmi bahu bāsanāy (GT: 2)
- 15 āmi hethāy thāki śudhu (GT: 31)
- 16 jagate ānanda yajñe (GT: 44)
- 17 premer hāte dharā debo (GT: 151)
- 18 megher para megh (GT: 16)
- 19 ogo mauna, nā yadi kao (GT: 71)
- 20 yedin phuṭṭa kamal (GM: 17)
- 21 ebār bhāsiye dite habe (GM: 16)
- 22 āji śrāban ghana (GT: 18)
- 23 āji jhaḍer rāte (GT: 20)
- 24 dības yadi sāṅga hola (GT: 157)
- 25 mājhe mājhe kabhu (NAI: 98)
- 26 se ye pāśe ese bosechila (GT: 61)
- 27 kothāy ālo kothāy ore ālo (GT: 17)
- 28 jaḍāye āche bādha (GT: 145)
- 29 āmār nāmtā diye (GT: 143)
- 30 ekla āmi bāhir holem (GT: 103)
- 31 bandi (KHY)
- 32 samsārete ār yāhārā (GT: 152)
- 33 tāra diner belā (GT: 8)
- 34 tomāy āmār prabhu (GT: 138)
- 35 citta yethā bhayaśūnya (NAI: 72)
- 36 taba kache ei mama (NAI: 99)
- 37 bhebechinu mane (GT: 124)
- 38 cāi go āmi tomāre cāi (GT: 88)
- 39 jīban yakhan śukāye yāy (GT: 58)
- 40 dīrghakāl anābr̥ṣṭi (NAI: 86)
- 41 pracchanna (KHY)
- 42 kathā chila ek tarite (GT: 63)

SOURCES

- 43 takhan karini nāth (NAI: 33)
- 44 āmār ei path cāoyātei (GM: 7)
- 45 torā śmisni ki tār (GT: 62)
- 46 āmār milan lāgi (GT: 34)
- 47 jāgaran (KHY)
- 48 nūrudyan (KHY)
- 49 taba śimhāsaner āsan (GT: 56)
- 50 kṛpan (KHY)
- 51 āgaman (KHY)
- 52 dān (KHY)
- 53 sundar bate taba aṅgad khāni (GM: 30)
- 54 kuyār dhāre (KHY)
- 55 ekhano ghor bhāne nā tar (GM: 18)
- 56 tāi tomār ānanda (GT: 121)
- 57 ālo āmār ālo ogo (AC)
- 58 yena śeṣ gāne mar sab rāgini (GT: 134)
- 59 eito tomār prem (GT: 30)
- 60 jagat pārābārer tīre (SS)
- 61 khokā (SS)
- 62 kena madhur (SS)
- 63 kata ajānāre (GT: 3)
- 64 anābaśyak (KHY)
- 65 he mor debatā (GT: 101)
- 66 jibane yā ciradin (GT: 149)
- 67 ekādhāre tumi-i ākāś (NAI: 81)
- 68 taba rabikar āse (GM: 29)
- 69 e āmār śarīrer (NAI: 26)
- 70 pārbi nā ki yog dite (GT: 36)
- 71 āmi āmāy karba baḍo (GM: 15)
- 72 ke go antaratara se (GM: 22)
- 73 bairāgya sādhanē mukti (NAI: 30)
- 74 ār nāi re belā (GT: 26)
- 75 martyabāsider tumi yā diyecha (NAI: 44)
- 76 pratidin āmi he jiban svāmī (NAI: 1)
- 77 debatā jene dūre (GT: 92)
- 78 hārāadhan (KHY)
- 79 yadi tomār dekhā (GT: 24)
- 80 līlā (KHY)
- 81 mājhe mājhe kato bār (NAI: 24)
- 82 he rājendra, taba hāte (NAI: 39)
- 83 tomār sonār thālāy (GT: 10)
- 84 heri aharaha tomārī biraha (GT: 25)
- 85 prabhugṛha hate āsile yedin (GT: 123)
- 86 pāthāile āji mṛtyur dūt (NAI: 18)

SOURCES

- 87 āmār gharete ār nāhi (SM: 5)
- 88 bhagna mandir (KLP)
- 89 kolāhal to bāran hola (GM: 8)
- 90 maraṇ yedin diner šeṣe (GT: 114)
- 91 ogo āmār ei jībaner (GT: 116)
- 92 durlabh janma (CTL)
- 93 peyechi chuṭi (GM: 26)
- 94 ebar torā āmār yābār belāte (GM: 21)
- 95 jībaner siṃha dvāre (NAI: 89) *and* mṛtyuo-ajñāta (NAI: 90)
- 96 yābār dine ei kathāṭi (GT: 142)
- 97 āmār khelā yakhan chila (GT: 68)
- 98 hār mānā hār parāba (GM: 24)
- 99 āmi hāl chādle tabe (GM: 6)
- 100 rūp sāgare dūb diyechi (GT: 47)
- 101 gān diye ye (GT: 132)
- 102 tomāy cini bale āmi (UTS: 6)
- 103 ekṭi namaskāre prabhu (GT: 148)

The Gardener

- 1 ābedan (CTR)
- 2 kabir bayas (KSN)
- 3 anādrta (ST)
- 4 abārta (KHY)
- 5 āmi cañcala he (UTS: 8)
- 6 dui pākhi (ST)
- 7 tyāg (KHY)
- 8 bhraṣṭa lagna (KLP)
- 9 grha śatru (CTR)
- 10 atithi (KSN)
- 11 cirāyamānā (KSN)
- 12 hṛday-yamunā (ST)
- 13 piyāsī (KLP)
- 14 pathe (KSN)
- 15 pāgal haiyā bane bane (UTS: 7)
- 16 sojāsujī (KSN)
- 17 ek gāye (KSN)
- 18 dui bon (KSN)
- 19 kṣanek dekhā (KSN)
- 20 sakarunā (KLP)
- 21 sakhi, āmāri duāre (GB *Prem*: 150)
- 22 añcaler bātās (KOK)
- 23 līlā (KLP)

SOURCES

- 24 tomār gopan kathāṭi (GB *Prem*: 63)
- 25 ogo, dekhi ākhitule (MK)
- 26 sakhi sādḥ kore (MK)
- 27 bhālobese dukh seo sukh (MK)
- 28 durbodh (ST)
- 29 bhālo kore bole yāo (MNS)
- 30 mānas pratimā (KLP)
- 31 hṛday akāś (KOK)
- 32 pranay praśna (KLP)
- 33 mārjanā (KLP)
- 34 nā bole yeonā cole (PRC)
- 35 tomāre pāche sahaje bujhi (UTS: 4)
- 36 sparaddhā (KLP)
- 37 utsṛṣṭa (KSN)
- 38 kṣati puran (KSN)
- 39 apaṭu (KSN)
- 40 bidāy rīti (KSN)
- 41 bhīrutā (KSN)
- 42 mātāl (KSN)
- 43 pratijñā (KSN)
- 44 yugal (KSN)
- 45 udbodhan (KSN)
- 46 anabasar (KSN)
- 47 samkoc (KLP)
- 48 bandī (KOK)
- 49 hṛdayer dhan (MNS)
- 50 pūrṇa milan (KOK)
- 51 tabe śeṣ kore dāo (GB *Prem*: 149)
- 52 durākāṅkāṣā (CTR)
- 53 bhartsanā (KSN)
- 54 akāle (KSN)
- 55 biraha (KSN)
- 56 byakta prem (MNS)
- 57 sthāyi-asthāyi (KSN)
- 58 nārīr dān (CTR)
- 59 mānasi (CTL)
- 60 prastar mūrti (CTR)
- 61 bidāy (KLP)
- 62 svapna (KLP)
- 63 pathik (KHY)
- 64 dīna śeṣ (KHY)
- 65 aśeṣ (KLP)
- 66 paraś pāthar (ST)
- 67 duḥsamay (KLP)

SOURCES

- 68 śeṣ (KSN)
- 69 torā ye yā balis bhāi (RJ)
- 70 khelā (KSN)
- 71 kṛtārtha (KSN)
- 72 deul (ST)
- 73 akṣamā, daridrā and ātma samarpaṇ (ST)
- 74 aiśvarya (CTL)
- 75 pairāgya (CTL)
- 76 sukh duḥkha (KSN)
- 77 didi and paricay (CTL)
- 78 pūṭi (CTL)
- 79 dui bandhu (CTL)
- 80 yadi icchā kara (UTS: 32)
- 81 ata cupi cupi kena (UTS: 45)
- 82 jhulan (ST)
- 83 āmaḍer ei pallikhāni (UTS: 44)
- 84 āj dhāner kṣete (GT: 8)
- 85 1400 sāl (CTR)

The Crescent Moon

- 1 Home (śaiśab sandhyā, ST)
- 2 On the Sea Shore (jagat pārābārer tīre), also included in English *Gitanjali* (no. 60)
- 3 The Source (khokā), also included in English *Gitanjali* (no. 61)
- 4 The Baby's Way (cāturi)
- 5 The Unheeded Pageant (khelā)
- 6 Sleep-Stealer (ghum corā)
- 7 The Beginning (janma kathā)
- 8 Baby's World (khokār rājya)
- 9 When and Why (kena madhur), also included in English *Gitanjali* (no. 62)
- 10 Defamation (apayaś)
- 11 The Judge (bicār)
- 12 Playthings (nīrlipṭi)
- 13 The Astronomer (jyotiṣ śāstra)
- 14 Clouds and Waves (mātr batsal)
- 15 The Champa Flower (lukocuri)
- 16 Fairyland (rājār bādi)
- 17 The Land of the Exile (chuṭir dine)
- 18 The Rainy Day (āśādh, KSN)
- 19 Paper Boats (kāgajar naukā)
- 20 The Sailor (naukā yātra)

SOURCES

- 21 The Further Bank (mājhi)
- 22 The Flower School (bajñānik)
- 23 The Merchant (duḥkhahārī)
- 24 Sympathy (samabyathī)
- 25 Vocation (bicitra sādhi)
- 26 Superior (bijñā)
- 27 The Little Big Man (choṭa baḍa)
- 28 Twelve O'Clock (praśna)
- 29 Authorship (samālocak)
- 30 The Wicked Postman (byākul)
- 31 The Hero (bīr puruṣ)
- 32 The End (bidāy)
- 33 The Recall (ākul āhvān)
- 34 The First Jasmines (sneha smṛti)
- 35 The Banyan Tree (purāno baṭ)
- 36 Benediction (āśirbād)
- 37 The Gift (upahār)
- 38 My Song (maṅgal gīt: 3, KOK: parts of it)
- 39 The Child Angel (based on the eighth stanza of maṅgal gīt: 1 and 2, KOK).
- 40 The Last Bargain (ke nibi go kine āmāy, GM: 31)

Fruit-Gathering

- 1 baloto ei bārer mato (GM: 85)
- 2 jīban yakhan chila phuler mato (GM: 37)
- 3 basante ki śudhu (RJ)
- 4 nā jāni kāre (UTS: 11)
- 5 tomār iṅgit khāni (NAL: 40)
- 6 ekhāne to bādhā pather (GL: 92)
- 7 path diye ke yāygo cale (GM: 21)
- 8 ye thāke thāknā (GL: 23)
- 9 yataḥsan sthir haye thāki (BLK: 18)
- 10 yakhan āmāy hāte dhare (BLK: 22)
- 11 e maṇihār āmār nāhi sāje (GM: 34)
- 12 niṣphal upahār (KAH)
- 13 pāntha tumi (GL: 95)
- 14 yā debe tā debe tumi (GL: 93)
- 15 oder kathāy dhādhā lāge (GM: 73)
- 16 jāni nāi go sādhan tomār (GM: 72)
- 17 gharer theke enechilem (GL: 76)
- 18 phul phoṭāno (KHY)
- 19 mūlya prāpti (KAT)

SOURCES

- 20 rātri (KLP)
- 21 jīban āmār ye amṛta (GL: 96)
- 22 bāsi (KHY)
- 23 bhelār mato buke tāni (GM: 38)
- 24 mor hṛdayer gopan bijan ghare (GL: 50)
- 25 bhorer pākhi ḍāke kothāy (UTS: 1)
- 26 sārthak nairāśya (KHY)
- 28 tumi debe tumi more debe (BLK: 12)
- 29 hār (KHY)
- 30 ore bhīkhārī sājaye (GM: 106)
- 31 nagar lakṣmī (KAT)
- 32 āmār kāche rājā āmār (BLK: 27)
- 33 tomāy sṛṣṭi karba (GL: 79)
- 34 dīn dān (KAH)
- 35 tomār śaṅkha (BLK: 4)
- 36 he mor sundar (BLK: 11)
- 37 abhisār (KAT)
- 38 e nay madhur khelā (GM: 41)
- 39 bheñecha duyār (GL: 101)
- 40 āgun āmār bhāi (PRC)
- 41 matta sāgar dila pādī (BLK: 35)
- 42 ei dehaṭir bhelā niye (BLK: 30)
- 43 pūjārini (KAT)
- 44 krame mlāna haye āse (NAI: 29)
- 45 āji prabhāteo śrānta nayane (SM: 1)
- 46 se yakhan bēcechila go (SM: 2)
- 47 dekhilām khān kay purātan cīṭhi (SM: 14)
- 48 sansār sājaye tumi āchile ramanī (SM: 18)
- 49 yakhan tumi bhādhchile tār (GL: 17)
- 50 kemaṇ kore taḍit āloy (GL: 104)
- 51 jānigo dīn yābe (GM: 40)
- 52 cirakāl e ki līlāgo (UTS: 38)
- 53 āmi ye besechi bhālo (BLK: 19)
- 54 megh baleche yāba yāba (GL: 65)
- 55 svāmīlabh (KAT)
- 56 ye bhābe ramanī rūpe (SM: 22)
- 57 āmār āmāre āche ke go (UTS: 10)
- 58 andhakārer utsa hote (GL: 99)
- 59 śudhu tomār bānī nay go (GL: 25)
- 60 kūḍir bhitare kādiche gandha (UTS: 9)
- 61 bālikā badhū (KHY)
- 62 hāy gagan nahile (UTS: 12)
- 63 ye bhakti tomāre laye (NAI: 45)
- 64 brāhmaṇ (KAT)

SOURCES

- 65 edin āji kōn ghare go (GL: 90)
 - 66 ogo ke bājay, bāsī (KOK)
 - 67 dādiye ācha tumi āmār (GM: 70)
 - 68 āmār maner jānālāti (BLK: 34)
 - 69 āmār hiyār māche (GM: 92)
 - 70 eto ālo jvāliyecha (GM: 66)
 - 71 bipul tarāngare (BS 3; GB *Pūjā*: 322)
 - 72 tār anta nai go (GM: 94)
 - 73 utsab (CTR)
 - 74 ār nahe ār nay (GB *Pūjā*: 383)
 - 75 se to sediner kathā (UTS: 46)
 - 76 prāṇe khuṣīr tuphān (GM: 36)
 - 77 nitya tomār pāyer kāche (BLK: 31)
 - 78 pākhīre diyechā gān (BLK: 28)
 - 79 bipade more (GT: 4)
 - 80 ye din tumi āpni chile (BLK: 29)
 - 81 jāni āmār pāyer śabda (BLK: 33)
 - 82 tomārī nām balba nānā chale (GM: 32)
 - 83 (i) āji yata tārā taba (BS 2; GB *Pūjā*: 66)
 - (ii) antaratama (KSN)
 - (iii) duyāre dāo more rākhiyā (BS 1; GB *Pūjā*: 117)
 - 84 dūr hote ki śunis (BLK: 37)
 - 85 The Song of the Defeated
 - 86 Thanksgiving
- (Probably both 85 and 86 were originally written in English.)

Lover's Gift and Crossing

Lover's Gift

- 1 e kathā jānite tumi (BLK: 7)
- 2 he priya āji e prāte (BLK: 10)
- 3 āji mōr drākṣākuṇja bane (CTL)
- 4 palligrāme (CTL)
- 5 sīmā (CTL)
- 6 śudhu akarāṇ pulake (KSN)
- 7 svalpaśeṣ (KSN)
- 8 yātrī (KSN)
- 9 pasārinī (KLP)
- 10 ei maumāchider (AC)
- 11 ebāre phālguner dine (BLK: 26)
- 12 basanta (KLP)
- 13 rātre o prabhāte (CTR)
- 14 abīnay (KSN)

S O U R C E S

- 15 kṛṣṇakalī (KSN)*
- 16 āmī yāre bhālobāsi (UTS: 34)
- 17 prakāś (KLP)
- 18 āsābdhān (KSN)
- 19 śāstra (KSN)
- 20 yathāsthān (KSN)
- 21 from the Bengali of Debendranath Sen. See Notes
- 22 janmāntar (KSN)
- 23 dui tīre (KSN)
- 24 anāhata (KHY)
- 25 nisphal kāmānā (MNS)
- 26 gān śonā (KHY)
- 27 śeṣ upahār (CTR)
- 28 svapna (CTL)
- 29 kata kathā tāre chila balite (GML; GB *Poems* 37)
- 30 gitocchvās (KOK); also in *Poems* (no. 2) in a different form
- 31 from the Bengali of Satyendranath Datta. See Notes.
- 32 ye bhābe ramanī rūpe (SM: 22)
- 33 ye basanta ekdīn (BLK: 25)
- 34 mantrē se ye pūta (UTS: 40)
- 35 naṣṭa svapna (KSN)
- 36 ore śikal tomāy (PRC)
- 37 parāmarśa (KSN)
- 38 prauḍha (CTR)
- 39 eikṣane mor hṛdayer prānte (BLK: 40)
- 40 pauser pātā-jharā tapobane (BLK: 13)
- 41 ghāṭer path (KHY)
- 42 tumi ki kebalī chabī (BLK: 6)
- 43 tumi mor jībaner mājhe (SM: 13)
- 44 āpanār mājhe āmī (SM: 12)
- 45 saṁsār sājaye (SM: 18), also included in *Fruit-Gathering* (no. 62)
- 46 megh (KHY)
- 47 āmī pathik, path āmārī sāthī (GL: 83)
- 48 bhāgye āmī path (GM: 5)
- 49 svarga kothāy jānīs kī tā bhāi (BLK: 24)
- 50 from the Bengali of Dvijendralal Ray. See Notes
- 51 sukh (CTR)
- 52 ore toder tvar sahenā (BLK: 21). See Notes
- 53 from the Bengali of Satyendranath Datta. See Notes
- 54 kon kṣane sṛjaner samudra manthane (BLK: 23)
- 55 kuhu dhvani (MNS)
- 56 pūrṇimā (CTR)

*A different but more faithful translation of this poem entitled 'Kṛṣṇakalī' is included in *Collected Poems and Plays of Rabindranath Tagore*.

SOURCES

- 57 ei śarat ālor kamal bane (GL: 15)
- 58 biśver bipul basturāṣi (BLK: 16)
- 59 sab peyechir deśe (KHY)
- 60 patitā (KAH)

Crossing

- 1 ebār āmār yābār samay holo (GB *Pūjā*: 577)
- 2 kheyā (KHY)
- 3 hāoya lāge gāner pāle (GM: 76)
- 4 tumi ebār āmāy laha (GT: 57)
- 6 ei karecha bhālo (GT: 91)
- 7 bhubaneśvar he (BS 4; GB *Pūjā*: 122)
- 8 gharer theke enechilem (GL: 76)
- 9 āmāy tumi bācāo kabe (GL: supplementary 9)
- 11 prabhu tomā lagi (GT: 28)
- 12 niśidin bharsā rākhis (GB *Svades*: 6)
- 13 godhūli lagna (KHY)
- 14 gabhīra rajanī nāmila hṛdaye (BS 1; GB *Pūjā*: 256)
- 15 ājī nirbhaya nidṛita bhubane jāge (GB *Pūjā*: 269)
- 16 tomāre ki bārbār (BLK: 42)
- 17 laha laha tule laha (GMK: 2; GB *Pūjā*: 328)
- 18 jībane yata pūjā (GT: 147)
- 19 sedin ki tumi esechile ogo (UTS: 39)
- 20 durdin ghanāye elo (NAI: 85)
- 21 ye rāte mor duvārguli (GM: 67)
- 22 ebār ye ai elo (BLK: 2)
- 23 yakhan tomāy āghāt kari (GL: 103)
- 24 duḥkha mūrti (KHY)
- 25 āro āro prabhu (PRC)
- 27 āmār e mānaser kānan kāngāl (NAI: 87)
- 28 esohe eso sajal ghana (GT: 35)
- 29 rātri ese yethāy meśe (GM: 1)
- 30 yadi prem dile nā prāne (GM: 42)
- 31 mor kichu dhan āche saṁsāre (UTS: 3)
- 37 tumi yeyonā ekhani (GB *Prem*: 152)
- 38 bhorer belā kakhan ese (GM: 35)
- 39 muktipās (KHY)
- 40 ādhāre āsite rajanīr dīp (NAI: 15)
- 41 āj pratham phuler pāb prasād khāni (GM: 2)
- 42 hā re re re (GB 2; *Bictrā*: 18)
- 43 ke jānita tumi dākibe (GB *Pūjā*: 497)
- 44 niśār svapan. chuṭlare ai (GT: 37)
- 46 śarate āj kon atithi (GT: 38)
- 49 pūrṇakām (KLP)

SOURCES

- 50 samāpti (KSN)
- 52 anek diyecha path (BS I; GB *Pūjā* 407)
- 53 āji pranami tomāre caliba (BS I; GB *Pūjā* 495)
- 54 dāḍāo āmār ākhīr āge (BS 2; GB *Pūjā* 101)
- 55 āmār mukher kathā (GM: 44)
- 56 taba pūjā nā ānile (NAI: 41) *and* sei to premer garba (NAI: 42)
- 57 kālī hāsye parihāse (NAI: 35)
- 58 nirjan śayan mājhe (NAI: 32)
- 59 kāre dūr nāhī kara (NAI: 34)
- 60 āmra tārei jāni (AC)
- 61 yini sakal kājer kaji (AC)
- 62 prabhāte yakhan śānkha (NAI: 38)
- 63 grām chāḍā ai rānā māṭir path (PRC)
- 64 rājpurite bājāy bāsi (GM: 61)
- 65 phuler matan apni phuṭāo gān (GT: 97)
- 66 he rājan tumi āmāre (UTS: 19)
- 68 tomār biṇāy kata tār āche (UTS: 18)
- 69 bicched (KHY)
- 72 he bhuban (BLK: 17)
- 75 ei tirtha debatār dharanūr mandir-prāṅgane (GL: 108)
- 76 kebel taba mukher pāne cāhiyā (UTS: 2)
- 77 he pathik konkhāne (UTS: 1; supplement)
- 78 pathar sāthī, namī bārambār (GTL: 98)

The Fugitive

Fugitive I

- 1 he birāt nadī (BLK: 8)
- 2 bidāy (KHY)
- 3 dina šeṣe (CTR)
- 4 olo sai (GML/GB II, 81)
- 5 ore sābdhāni pathik (*Prajāpatir nirbandha*)
- 6 caraṇ (KOK)
- 7 šeṣ upahār (MNS)
- 8 pratvākhyān (ST)
- 9 sekāl (KSN)
- 10 acenā (KSN)
- 11 urbaśi (CTR)
- 12 tomrā o āmra (ST)
- 13 rāhur prem (COG); only a few lines
- 14 biccheder śānti (MNS)
- 15 durdīn (KSN)
- 16 bhule (MNS)

SOURCES

- 17 sonār tarī (ST)
- 18 śeṣ kheyā (KHY)
- 19 kūle (KSN)
- 20 bidāy abhiśāp
- 21 āgamanī (LPK)
- 22 Vaishnava Songs
 - 1 sakhi hamār dukhaka nāhi or (by Vidyāpati)
 - 2 āj rajanī ham (by Vidyāpati)
 - 3 yāhā pahu aruṇ carāṇe calī yāta (by Gobindadāsa)
 - 4 bādhu he nayane lukāye thoba (by Chandidāsa)
 - 5 phala leha phala leha (by Ghanarama Dāsa)
- Fugitive II
- 1 citrā (CTR)
- 2 bhāṅgā jānāla khānī (PLT)
- 3 ekū dīn (PLT)
- 4 cāuni (LPK)
- 5 gān (CTL)
- 6 bāhu (KOK)
- 7 kalpanā madhup (KOK)
- 8 mānas sundarī (ST: lines 209f)
- 9 mānas sundarī (ST: 266f)
- 10 mānas sundarī (ST: 190)
- 11 premer abhiśek (CTR)
- 12 asamay and mauna (CTL); two poems condensed into one
- 13 sāntvanā (CTR)
- 14 lajjā (ST)
- 15 sarba deher byākulatā (BLK: 38)
- 16 tomār raṅgin pātāy likhbā (GB Prem: 131)
- 17 kāl rāter belā (GB Prem: 9)
- 18 mānas sundarī (ST: rajanī gabhīr hola: lines 314f)
- 19 meghdūt (LPK)
- 20 sādhanā (CTR)
- 21 praśna (LPK)
- 22 kṛtaghna śok (LPK)
- 23 ākāṅkṣā (MNS)
- 24 satero bachar (LPK)
- 25 svalpa āyu e jibane (SM: 16)
- 26 mṛtyur nepathya theke (SM: 11)
- 27 pratham śok (LPK)
- 28 ākās-sindhu mājhe ek thāī (UTS: 15)
- 29 satī (KAH)
- 30 paṭ (LPK)
- 31 biduṣak (LPK)

SOURCES

- 32 gāndhārīr ābedan (KAH)
- 33 kathikā (LPK)
- 34 Baul Songs
 - 1 āji tomār saṅge āmār hori
 - 2 āmāy pathēr mājhe ḍako yadi
 - 5 premer mol (besāt) premire
 - 6 nayan dekhe gāye theke
 - 7 āmār ājab atithi
 - 8 ogo mulādhār
- Fugitive III
- 1 esa esa basanta (GB *Prakṛti*: 189)
- 2 ye-kathā balite cāi (BLK: 41)
- 3 kheyā (CTL)
- 4 ei ye ānināte (GM: 13)
- 5 bhitare bāhire (SS)
- 6 manās sundarī (ST: lines 83f)
- 7 basundharā (ST: based on the lines 'he sundarī basundharā tomā pāne ceye
śudhu śūnye ceye thaki biśād byākal')
- 8 śūnya chila man (UTS: 23)
- 9 bāṇī (LPK)
- 10 madhyāhna (CTL)
- 11 yete nāhi dība (ST)
- 12 ṭhākur dādār chuṭi (PLT)
- 13 hāriye yāoā (PLT)
- 14 karunā (CTL)
- 15 saṅgi (CTL)
- 16 snehadṛśya (CTL)
- 17 sāmānya lok (CTL)
- 18 pratham ciṭhi (LPK)
- 19 rathāyātrā (LPK)
- 20 palātakā (PLT)
- 21 gali (LPK)
- 22 purāno bādī (LPK)
- 23 siddhi (LPK)
- 24 apamān bar (KKH)
- 25 narak bās (KAH)
- 26 bhul svarga (LPK)
- 27 parir paricay (LPK)
- 28 karṇa kuntī sambād (KAH)
- 29 sandhyārāge jhilimili (BLK: 36)
- 30 gānbhaṅga (KKH)
- 31 kṣānta kariyācha tumi and āji heritechi āmi (UTS: 25 and UTS: 26)

SOURCES

- 32 basundharā (ST: lines: 'āmār ānanda laye . . . tādāder premie kichu ki rabanā āmi')
- 33 basundharā (ST: mane mane anubhab kari . . .)
- 34 āmi tomāy yata (GB 1: 5)
- 35 ei duyār ti kholā (GM: 12)
- 36 pāye calār path (LPK)
- 37 From the Hindi Songs of Jnanadas
These poems were collected by Kshītīmohan Sen and Tagore translated them from the Bengali renderings of Sen.
1 khote me tu rain gavāyā kahā rahāre gānā
2 fajarme jay āyā yalcī pusāk sunhli tairi
3 lok lok me

Collected Poems and Plays of Rabindranath Tagore

- 1 The Evil Day: praśna (PAR, 1308/1931)
- 2 Bora-Bodor: borobudur (PAR, September 1927)
- 3 Fulfilment: tomār ei mādhuri (GL: 45)
- 4 The Son of Man: mānabputra (PNS, 1932)
- 5 Raidas, the Sweeper: premer sonā (PNS, 1932)
- 6 Freedom: based on durbhāgya deś hate (NAL: 48)
- 7 The New Year: translation of two stanzas of barṣa še (KLP), (he durdam, he niścīt and ebār āsoni tumi)
- 8 Krishnakali: kṛṣṇakali (KSN). This is a version different from the one included in *Lover's Gift* (no. 15), which has been deleted from this work.
- 9 W.W. Pearson: āpanare tumi sahaje bhuliyā thāka, dedication of *Balākā* (1916)
- 10 Santiniketan Song: āmāder śāntiniketan (1911)

Poems

The information that follows has been collected from the editorial notes in this book.

Introductory (patra, PNS)

I

- 1 maricikā (KOK)
- 2 gītocchvās (KOK)

SOURCES

- 3 niphāl kāmānā (MNS). This is perhaps the first English translation of any poem of his made by Tagore. For an abridged translation see *Lover's Gift* (no. 25).
- 4 bhālobese yadi sukh nāhi (MK)
- 5 bhul karechinu (MK)
- 6 ananta prēm (MNS)
- 7 ahalyār prati (MNS)
- 8 āmāre ke nibi bhāi (BIS)
- 9 bandhan (ST)
- 10 kathā tāre chila balite (GB 2: 37)
- 11 jīban debatā (CTR). A fuller translation is to be found in *The Religion of Man* (1930).
- 12 ṛtu samhār and meghdūt (CTL)
- 13 dharātal (CTL)
- 14 tattva o saundarya (CTL)
- 15 tumi rabe nīrabe (GB 2: 62)
- 16 eso he gṛha debatā (GB 2, *ānusthānik*: 14)
- 17 jhara jhara bāriṣe bāridhārā (GB 2: 28)
- 18 āhā jāgi pohālo bibhābarī (GB 2: 139)
- 19 pūrṇakām (KLP)
- 20 nababarṣā (KSN)
- 21 sab thāi mor ghar āche (UTS: 14)
- 22 yārā kāche āche (NAI: 10)
- 23 tomār asīme (NAI: 14)
- 24 mahārāj, kṣanek darśan (NAI: 37)
- 25 āmra kothāy āchi (NAI: 59)
- 26 taba caraner āśā (NAI: 62)
- 27 koronā koronā lajjā (NAI: 93)
- 28 seto sediner kathā (UTS: 46). Only the second part of the Bengali poem has been translated. For the first part see *Fruit-Gathering*, no. 75.
- 29 ājike gahan kālīmā (UTS: 31)
- 30 sānga hayeche ran (UTS: 43)
- 31 tumi mor jībaner mājhe (SM: 13)
- 32 godhūli nihśabde āsi (SM: 24)
- 33 āche duḥkhā āche mṛtyu (GB 1: 248)
- 34 gabhīr rajanī nāmila (GB 1: 256)
- 35 kī sur bāje āmār prāṇe (GB 2: 297)
- 36 duyāre tomār bhiḍ kare yārā āche (UTS: 20)
- 37 kathā kao, kathā kao (KAT: introductory poem)
- 38 sārthak janam āmār (GB, *Svadeś*: 24)
- 39 ebār tor marā gāṇe (GB, *Svadeś*: 5)
- 40 yadi tor dāk śune (GB, *Svadeś*: 3)
- 41 ye tore pagal bale (GB, *Svadeś*: 26)

SOURCES

- 42 tor āpan jane (GB, *Svades*: 4)
- 43 bānlar māṭi (GB, *Svades*: 20)
- 44 āmāder yātrā holo suru (GB, *Svades*: 13)
- 45 parṣā sandhyā (KHY)
- 46 bicched (KHY)
- 47 āsantaler māṭir pare (GT: 46)
- 48 ābār esecche āsadh (GT: 99)
- 49 yini sakal kājer kaji (AC)
- 50 āmrā cāṣ kari (AC)
- 51 janaganamana (GB, *Svades*: 14)
- 52 asim dhan to ache tomār (GM: 33)
- 53 āmār sakal kārā (GM: 49)
- 54 tumi ye surer āgun (GM: 89)
- 55 ābār śrāban haye ele phire (GL: 13)
- 56 ek hāte or kripān āche (GL: 20)
- 57 klānti āmār kṣamā karo (GL: 59)

II

- 58 puratān bāsarar (BLK: 45)
- 59 deśa deśa nandita kari (GB, *Svades*: 16)
- 60 bijayī (PRB)
- 61 This was written on the occasion of the Calcutta Session of the Indian National Congress held in 1917 and recited by Tagore at its first meeting. Kripalanī writes, 'though not a translation of any single poem of his, it is clearly reminiscent of several verses of *Naivedya*.' (*Poems*, p. 226)
- 62 kabe tumi āshe bale (GB 2: 290)
- 63 śiśu bhoṭānāth (SSB)
- 64 mane paḍā (SSB)
- 65 saṁśayī (SSB)
- 66 eso eso he ṭṭṣnār jal (GB 2: 12)
- 67 ākāś bharā sūrya tārā (GB 2: 8)
- 68 āmār dhalā gāner dhārā (GB 1: 32)
- 69 ānmanā (PRB)
- 70 bhābi kāl (PRB)
- 71 jhad (PRB)
- 72 atithi (PRB)
- 73 kaṅkāl (PRB)
- 74 bādāl (PRB)
- 75 se kon pāgāl jāy (GB 2: 108)* [Baltic]
- 76 chuṭir bāsi bājlo (GB 2: 23)* [Munich]

* These songs were written during a tour of Europe in 1921. The places where they were composed are mentioned within [].

SOURCES

- 77 tor bhitare jāgiyā ke je (GB I: 149)* [Munich]
- 78 nāi nāi bhay habe habe jāy (GB I, *Svadāc*: 12) [Munich]
- 79 sakāl belār āloy bāje (GB II: 166)* [Nuremberg]
- 80 cāhiyā dekha (GB II, *Bicitāc*: 106)* [Cologne]
- 81 tumi uṣār sonār bindu (GB II, *Bicitāc*: 91)* [Cologne]
- 82 āpni āmār kon khāne (GB I: 582)* [Berlin]
- 83 ogo sundar ekadā ki jāni (GB I: 534)* [Prague]
- 84 ākāṣe tor temni āche chuṇ (GB II, *Bicitāc*: 104)* [Vienna]
- 85 bāsi āmī bājāi nī ki (GB II: 24)* [Dardanelles]
- 86 nṛtyera tāle tāle (GB II, *Bicitāc*: 1)
- 87 himer rāter oi gaganer (GB II: 171)

III

- 88 hīmsāy ummatta prthvī (GB I: 406)
- 89 sabalā (MHY)
- 90 svapane dōhe chinu ki mohe (GB 2: 160)
- 91 buddhadeber prati (PAR)
- 92 bismay (PAR)
- 93 mṛtyuñjāy (PAR)
- 94 kopāi (PNS)
- 95 ekjan lok (PNS)
- 96 prabhed (BIC)
- 97 bidāy (BIC)
- 98 snān samāpan (PNS)
- 99 sthīr jēnehīlem (SSP: 1)
- 100 sāotāl meye (BIT)
- 101 cira yātri (SY)
- 102 udbhṛānta sei ādim yuge (PTP: 16)
- 103 This poem, though reminiscent of poems 47 and 48 of *Naivedya*, is not a translation. With this poem Tagore concluded his address delivered at the convocation of the University of Calcutta in 1937.
- 104 janmadin (SJ) (dṛṣṭijāle jadāye ok)
- 105 chabi ākiye (CC)
- 106 biśver ālokluṭa (PRN: 1)
- 107 yedīn caitanya mor (PRN: 17)
- 108 yuddher dāmāmā uṭhla beje (PTP: 17)
- 109 janmadin (SJ) (āj mama janmadin")
- 110 prāyaścitta (NJ). This poem was sent to Professor V. Lesney in Czechoslovakia as Tagore's reaction to the Munich Pact.
- 111 āhvān (NJ): addressed to Canada, was broadcast from Ottawa Radio Station on 29 May 1939. The record is still preserved at the archives of Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) in Toronto. (Source:

*There are two poems under the title 'Janmadin' in *Sejuti*.

SOURCES

Niladri Chaki, 'An Advocate of Multiculturalism', *The Sunday Statesman*, 17 May 1992.)

- 112 ekdin yārā merechila (mānabputra, PNS and The Son of Man, *Collected Poems and Plays*)

IV

- 113 ajasra dinēr ālo (RS: 4)
 115 gahan rajani mājhe (RS: 7)
 116 abasanna aloker (RS: 16)
 117 kakhan ghumiyechinu (RS: 17)
 118 saṁsārer nānā kṣetre (RS: 18)
 119 ārogyer pathe (RS: 23)

Stray Birds

Not all the poems in this work are translations from the Bengali: a considerable number of them were written originally in English. It is quite possible, however, that we have not been able to identify some of the poems translated from the Bengali.

- 6 dhruvāni tasya naśyanti (KAN)
 12 praśner atit (KAN)
 18 (based on) darpaṇe yāhare dekhi (LKN)
 24 birām (KAN)
 30 nati svikār (KAN)
 35 (based on) ākāṅkṣā (KAN)
 53 kuṇumbitā bicār (KAN)
 58 bhār (KAN)
 66 moher āsaṅkā (KAN)
 71 rāstranīti (KAN)
 83 bhalo ye karite pāre (LKN)
 84 mṛtyur dharma-i ek (LKN), also included in *Fireflies* (no. 63).
 86 phul o phal (KAN)
 88 kṣudrer dambha (KAN)
 90 ādhār ekere dekhe (LKN), variant in *Lekhan*
 99 prāṇere mṛtyur chāp (LKN)
 107 ākṛtajña (KAN)
 119 cira nabīnatā (KAN)
 128 (based on) spaṣṭabhāṣī (KAN)
 129 asambhab bhālo (KAN)
 130 ek-i path (KAN)
 132 abakāś karṁe khele (LKN)
 138 paraspar (KAN)
 139 (based on) upalakṣa (KAN)

SOURCES

- 151 (based on) baelr apekṣā balī (KAN)
- 153 kartabya grahan (KAN)
- 156 mājharir satarkatā (KAN)
- 163 (based on) asampurna sambād (KAN)
- 116 (based on) nadir pratī khāl (KAN)
- 171 hay kāj āche taba (LKN)
- 172 (based on) kuṭumbitā bicār (KAN). Also see no. 53 which is more faithful to the original.
- 173 cālak (KAN)
- 176 asphuṭa o parisphuṭa (KAN)
- 184 bhālo karibāre yār (LKN)
- 191 svādhinatā (KAN)
- 194 devatā ye cāy (LKN), also see tārār dīp jvālen yini (LKN). This is also included in *Fireflies*.
- 230 phul dekhībār caksu (LKN)
- 232 sei āmādar deṣer padma (S: 245)
- 234 (based on) nijer o sādharaner (KNK)
- 236 (based on) pār o ātmīya (KNK)
- 240 spardhā (KNK)
- 243 (based on) eki path (KNK)
- 268 jīban (KNK)

Fireflies

All these lines, unless mentioned otherwise, are from the bilingual work *Lekhan* (1926). Like *Stray Birds*, this work of Tagore also includes a considerable number of verses written originally in English.

- 1 svapna āmar jonāki
- 2 āmar likhan phuṭe
- 3 ghumer ādhār koṭarer
- 4 basanta se kuḍī
- 5 mātir supti bandhan hote
- 6 bhārī kājer bojhai tarī
- 7 bāñir pataṅga guhacar
- 8 prajāpati seto
- 9 sphuliṅga tār pākhay
- 10 sundarī chāyār pāne
- 11 āmar prem rabi kiran hena
- 12 atal ādhār niśā-pārābar
- 13 bhīru mor dān
- 14 gānkhāni mor (S: 72)
- 15 phāgun śīśur mato

SOURCES

- 16 smṛti kāpālīni (S: 251)
- 17 deha mandir āninā tale
- 18 kṣanik dvanir svata-ucchvāse (S: 64)
- 19 stābdhata ucchvasi uthe (S: 249)
- 20 nimila nayan bhorbelākār (S: 125)
- 21 apākā kathin phaler matan (S: 11)
- 22 ye byathā bhuleche āpnār itihās (S: 214)
- 23 godāmi satyere cāy (S: 74)
- 24 akāś dharāre bāhute bediyā rākhe
- 25 sakhar kachete prem (S: 231)
- 28 mṛtikā khorāki diye (S: 197)
- 30 dūr esechila kache
- 31 tomār bane phuteche svet karabi
- 33 dādāye giri śir meghe tule
- 39 aruci ghaṭe ye re svargapure (RB: 7)
- 40 megh se bāspa giri
- 41 can bhagabān prem diye tār
- 42 mor gāne gāne prabhu
- 46 ekā ek-śunya mātra
- 52 dharāy yedin pratham jāgila
- 53 nānā rañer phuler mato
- 56 calite calite
- 58 bilambe uthecha tumi
- 59 ādhār se yena birahinī
- 63 akāśe uṭhila bātās
- 64 mṛtyu dharma ek
- 65 akāśer nīl baner śyāmāle
- 68 rañer kheyāle āpanā khoyāle
- 69 bhālo ye karite pāre
- 70 kitere dayā kariyo phul
- 71 jirṇa jay-toran; also atyācārīr bijay toran (S: 3)
- 72 māṭir pradīp sārā dibaser
- 73 skhalita pālak dhūlāy jirṇa
- 74 kātār saṁkhyā irṣā bhare (S: 51)
- 75 hitaiśīr svārthahin atyācār
- 76 naba jibaner purā dām
- 79 akāle yakhan basanta āse
- 80 stabdha atal śabdabihin
- 81 dui tīre tār biraha ghaṭāve
- 82 abakās karne khele
- 83 pathe hala deri
- 84 yakhan pathik elem
- 85 gōyār kebal gāyer jorei
- 86 janma moder rāter ādhār

SOURCES

| | | |
|-----|------------------------------|-----|
| 87 | mor kâgajer khelâr naukâ | 262 |
| 88 | âmâr prâṇer gâner pâkhir dal | 271 |
| 89 | he mahāsagar bipader lobh | 272 |
| 90 | he prem yakhian kṣamâ kara | 273 |
| 92 | gagane gagane naba naba deśe | 274 |
| 93 | debatâr sṛṣṭi | 275 |
| 94 | jonâki se dhuli khûje sârâ | 276 |
| 95 | brkṣa se to âdhumik | 277 |
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- 151 ālo yabe bhālo bese
- 152 gunīr lāgiyā bāsi
- 153 lekhanī jānenā kon
- 154 kānan kusum upahār dey
- 156 tārār dīp jvālen yini
- 157 bahmī yabe bādḥā thāke
- 158 ākāś kabhu pātenā phād
- 160 prabhāt ālore bidrūp kare
- 161 prajāpati pāy abakās
- 163 yata baḍa hok indradhaṇu se (S-201)
- 164 māyājāl diyā kuvāsā jaḍāy
- 165 śuktārā mane kare
- 168 dibaser aparādh
- 169 kundakali kṣudra bali
- 171 phulgulī yena kathā
- 172 mahātaru bahe bahu barāser bhār
- 173 pathar prānte āmār ūrtha nay
- 174 ajānā phuler gandher mato
- 175 mr̥ter yatai bādāi mithyā mūlya
- 176 pārer tarīr pāler hāoyār piche
- 177 satya tār sīmā bhālobāse
- 181 dīn dey tār sonār bīnā
- 183 stabdha haye kendra āche
- 184 dibaser dīpe śudhu thāke tel
- 186 giri ye tuṣār nīje rākhe
- 187 (based on) oī śuna bane bane
- 188 kāche thākār āḍāl khānā
- 196 nibhṛta prāṇer nibiḍ chāyay
- 197 dīner karṇe mōr prem yena
- 199 bhorer phul giyeche yāra
- 200 yābār yā se yābei
- 202 sāgarer kāne joyār belāy
- 218 dīn hoye gela gata
- 219 purāno mājhe yā kichu chila
- 220 milan nīśithe dharaṇī bhābiche

The Fugitive (1919?)

- 1 palātakā (PLT)
- 2 bidāy (KHY)
- 3 nidrita (ST)
- 4 dinaśeṣe (CTR)
- 5 kālo meye (PLT)

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- 6 rājār chele o rājār meye (CTR)
- 7 sekāl (KSN)
- 8 ogo ke yāy (GB *Prem*: 300)
- 9 o dekhā diye ye cale gela (GB: *Prem*: 295)
- 10 carañ (KOK)
- 11 olo sai olo sai (GB *Prem*: 81)
- 12 mānas sundarī: bñā phele diye eso . . . (ST)
- 13 bāhu (KOK)
- 14 kalpanā madhup (KOK)
- 15 ākāṅsā (MNS)
- 16 tomār rapin pātāy (GB *Prem*: 131)
- 17 kāl rāter belāy (GB *Prem*: 9)
- 18 mauna (CTL)
- 19 asamay (CTL)
- 20 mānas sundarī: rajanī gabhīr holo . . . (ST)
- 22 mānas sundarī: jāni āmi jāni sakhi (ST)
- 23 premer abhisek (CTR)
- 24 mānas sundarī: tār pare ekdin . . . (ST)
- 25 sādhanā (CTR)
- 26 ore sābdhāni pathik (GB *Prem*: 66)
- 27 gān (CTL)
- 29 lajjā (ST)
- 30 sarbadeher byākulatā (BLK: 38)
- 31 sāntvanā (CTR)
- 32 tomra o āmrā (ST)
- 33 acenā (KSN)
- 34 pratyākhyān (ST)
- 35 rāhur prem (COG)
- 36 biccheder sānti (MNS)
- 37 durdin (KSN)
- 38 bhule (MNS)
- 39 kule (KSN)
- 41 eso eso basantā dharā tale (GB *Prem*: 189)
- 42 mālā (PLT)
- 43 yete nāhi dība (ST)
- 44 hāriye yāoyā (PLT)
- 45 šeṣ upahār (MNS)
- 46 thākurdādār chuṭi (PLT)
- 47 snehadṛśya (CTL)
- 48 karuṇā (CTL)
- 49 saṅgi (CTL)
- 50 kheyā (CTL)
- 51 sāmānya lok (CTL)

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- 52 mānas sundarī (ST)*
- 53 madhyāhna (CTI.)
- 54 basundharā (ST)*
- 55 basundharā (ST)*
- 56 ye kāthā balite cāi (BLK: 41)
- 57 basundharā (ST)*
- 58 āj prabhātar ākāṣṭi (BLK: 35)
- 59 sandhyārāge jhilmili (BLK: 29)
- 60 he birāt nadī (BLK: 8)
- 61 kṣānta kariyācha: 25; āj heritechī: 26 (UTS: 25, 26)
- 62 svalpa āyu e jibane (SM: 16)
- 63 prem esechila (SM: 3)
- 64 mṛtyur nepathya theke (SM: 11)
- 65 śeṣ kheyā (KHY)
- 66 tarīte pā diinī āmī (GB *Buṭrā*: 32)
- 67 ei duyārṭi kholā (GM: 12)
- 69 ākāś sindhu mājhe (UTS: 15)
- 70 nīrab ācha kena (GB *Pūjā*: 133)
- 71 ābār āmār hāte (NAI: 25)
- 72 madhyāhne nagar mājhe (NAI: 22)
- 73 mātṛsneha bigalita and āghāt samghāt mājhe (NAI: 46, 47)
- 74 balo balo bandhu balo (GB III: pūjā o prārthanā: 74)
- 75 ei ye anīnāte (GM: 13)
- 78 bheñe mor gharer cābi (GB I: 58)
- 79 tomāy kichu deba bale (GB I: 59)
- 80 āmī tomāy yata (GB I: 5)

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