up to the dust without a cry, thus ending the short
story of a perfect moment that has neither past nor
future.

Vasanta. A limitless life of glory can bloom and
spend itself in a morning.

Madana. Like an endless meaning in the narrow span
of a song.

Chitra. The southern breeze caressed me to sleep.
From the flowering Malati bower overhead silent kisses
dropped over my body. On my hair, my breast, my
feet, each flower chose a bed to die on. I slept. And
suddenly, in the depth of my sleep, I felt as if some
intense eager look, like tapering fingers of flame,
touched my slumbering body. I started up and saw the
Hermit standing before me. The moon had moved to
the west, peering through the leaves to espy this wonder
of divine art wrought in a fragile human frame. The air
was heavy with perfume; the silence of the night was
vocal with the chirping of crickets; the reflections of the
trees hung motionless in the lake; and with his staff in
his hand he stood, tall and straight and still, like a
forest tree. It seemed to me that I had, on opening my
eyes, died to all realities of life and undergone a
dream birth into a shadow land. Shame slipped to my
feet like loosened clothes. I heard his call—"Beloved,
my most beloved!" And all my forgotten lives united
as one and responded to it. I said, "Take me, take all I
am!" And I stretched out my arms to him. The moon
set behind the trees. One curtain of darkness covered
all. Heaven and earth, time and space, pleasure and
pain, death and life merged together in an unbearable
ecstasy. . . . With the first gleam of light, the first
twitter of birds, I rose up and sat leaning on my left
arm. He lay asleep with a vague smile about his lips like the crescent moon in the morning. The rosy-red glow of the dawn fell upon his noble forehead. I sighed and stood up. I drew together the leafy lianas to screen the streaming sun from his face. I looked about me and saw the same old earth. I remembered what I used to be, and ran and ran like a deer afraid of her own shadow, through the forest path strewn with shephali flowers. I found a lonely nook, and sitting down covered my face with both hands, and tried to weep and cry. But no tears came to my eyes.

Madana. Alas, thou daughter of mortals! I stole from the divine storehouse the fragrant wine of heaven, filled with it one earthly night to the brim, and placed it in thy hand to drink—yet still I hear this cry of anguish!

Chitra (bitterly). Who drank it? The rarest completion of life’s desire, the first union of love was proffered to me, but was wrested from my grasp! This borrowed beauty, this falsehood that enwraps me, will slip from me taking with it the only monument of that sweet union, as the petals fall from an overblown flower; and the woman ashamed of her naked poverty will sit weeping day and night. Lord Love, this cursed appearance companions me like a demon robbing me of all the prizes of love—all the kisses for which my heart is athirst.

Madana. Alas, how vain thy single night had been! The barque of joy came in sight, but the waves would not let it touch the shore.

Chitra. Heaven came so close to my hand that I forgot for a moment that it had not reached me. But when I woke in the morning from my dream I found
that my body had become my own rival. It is my hateful
 task to deck her every day, to send her to my beloved
 and see her caressed by him. O god, take back thy boon!

Madana. But if I take it from you how can you stand
 before your lover? To snatch away the cup from his lips
 when he has scarcely drained his first draught of
 pleasure, would not that be cruel? With what resentful
 anger he must regard thee then!

Chitra. That would be better far than this. I will
 reveal my true self to him, a nobler thing than this
disguise. If he rejects it, if he spurns me and breaks my
heart, I will bear even that in silence.

Vasanta. Listen to my advice. When with the advent
of autumn the flowering season is over, then comes the
triumph of fruitage. A time will come of itself when
the heat-cloyed bloom of the body will droop and
Arjuna will gladly accept the abiding fruitful truth in
thee. O child, go back to thy mad festival.

SCENE IV

Chitra. Why do you watch me like that, my warrior?

Arjuna. I watch how you weave that garland. Skill
and grace, the twin brother and sister, are dancing play-
fully on your finger-tips. I am watching and thinking.

Chitra. What are you thinking, sir?

Arjuna. I am thinking that you, with this same
lightness of touch and sweetness, are weaving my days
of exile into an immortal wreath, to crown me when I
return home.

Chitra. Home! But this love is not for a home!

Arjuna. Not for a home?
Chitra. No. Never talk of that. Take to your home what is abiding and strong. Leave the little wild flower where it was born; leave it beautifully to die at the day's end among all fading blossoms and decaying leaves. Do not take it to your palace hall to fling it on the stony floor which knows no pity for things that fade and are forgotten.

Arjuna. Is ours that kind of love?

Chitra. Yes, no other! Why regret it? That which was meant for idle days should never outlive them. Joy turns into pain when the door by which it should depart is shut against it. Take it and keep it as long as it lasts. Let not the satiety of your evening claim more than the desire of your morning could earn. . . . The day is done. Put this garland on. I am tired. Take me in your arms, my love. Let all vain bickerings of discontent die away at the sweet meeting of our lips.

Arjuna. Hush! Listen, my beloved, the sound of prayer-bells from the distant village temple steals upon the evening air across the silent trees!

SCENE V

Vasanta. I cannot keep pace with thee, my friend! I am tired. It is a hard task to keep alive the fire thou hast kindled. Sleep overtakes me, and the fan drops from my hand, and cold ashes cover the glow of the fire. I start up again from my slumber and with all my might rescue the weary flame. But this can go on no longer.

Madana. I know, thou art as fickle as a child. Ever restless is thy play in heaven and on earth. Things that thou for days buildest up with endless detail thou dost
shatter in a moment without regret. But this work of ours is nearly finished. Pleasure-winged days fly fast, and the year, almost at its end, swoons in rapturous bliss.

SCENE VI

Arjuna. I woke in the morning and found that my dreams had distilled a gem. I have no casket to inclose it, no king's crown whereon to fix it, no chain from which to hang it, and yet have not the heart to throw it away. My Kshatriya's right arm, idly occupied in holding it, forgets its duties.

(Enter Chitra)

Chitra. Tell me your thoughts, sir!

Arjuna. My mind is busy with thoughts of hunting to-day. See, how the rain pours in torrents and fiercely beats upon the hillside. The dark shadow of the clouds hangs heavily over the forest, and the swollen stream, like reckless youth, overleaps all barriers with mocking laughter. On such rainy days we five brothers would go to the Chitraka forest to chase wild beasts. Those were glad times. Our hearts danced to the drumbeat of rumbling clouds. The woods resounded with the screams of peacocks. Timid deer could not hear our approaching steps for the patter of rain and the noise of waterfalls; the leopards would leave their tracks on the wet earth, betraying their lairs. Our sport over, we dared each other to swim across turbulent streams on our way back home. The restless spirit is on me. I long to go hunting.

Chitra. First run down the quarry you are now following. Are you quite certain that the enchanted deer you pursue must needs be caught? No, not yet. Like a
dream the wild creature eludes you when it seems most nearly yours. Look how the wind is chased by the mad rain that discharges a thousand arrows after it. Yet it goes free and unconquered. Our sport is like that, my love! You give chase to the fleet-footed spirit of beauty, aiming at her every dart you have in your hands. Yet this magic deer runs ever free and untouched.

Arjuna. My love, have you no home where kind hearts are waiting for your return? A home which you once made sweet with your gentle service and whose light went out when you left it for this wilderness?

Chitra. Why these questions? Are the hours of unthinking pleasure over? Do you not know that I am no more than what you see before you? For me there is no vista beyond. The dew that hangs on the tip of a kinsuka petal has neither name nor destination. It offers no answer to any question. She whom you love is like that perfect bead of dew.

Arjuna. Has she no tie with the world? Can she be merely like a fragment of heaven dropped on the earth through the carelessness of a wanton god?

Chitra. Yes.

Arjuna. Ah, that is why I always seem about to lose you. My heart is unsatisfied, my mind knows no peace. Come closer to me, unattainable one! Surrender yourself to the bonds of name and home and parentage. Let my heart feel you on all sides and live with you in the peaceful security of love.

Chitra. Why this vain effort to catch and keep the tints of the clouds, the dance of the waves, the smell of the flowers?

Arjuna. Mistress mine, do not hope to pacify love with airy nothings. Give me something to clasp, some-
thing that can last longer than pleasure, that can endure even through suffering.

Chitra. Hero mine, the year is not yet full, and you are tired already! Now I know that it is Heaven’s blessing that has made the flower’s term of life short. Could this body of mine have drooped and died with the flowers of last spring it surely would have died with honour. Yet, its days are numbered, my love. Spare it not, press it dry of honey, for fear your beggar’s heart come back to it again and again with unsated desire, like a thirsty bee when summer blossoms lie dead in the dust.

SCENE VII

Madana. To-night is thy last night.

Vasanta. The loveliness of your body will return to-morrow to the inexhaustible stores of the spring. The ruddy tint of thy lips freed from the memory of Arjuna’s kisses, will bud anew as a pair of fresh asoka leaves, and the soft, white glow of thy skin will be born again in a hundred fragrant jasmine flowers.

Chitra. O gods, grant me this prayer! To-night, in its last hour, let my beauty flash its brightest, like the final flicker of a dying flame.

Madana. Thou shalt have thy wish.

SCENE VIII

Villagers. Who will protect us now?

Arjuna. Why, by what danger are you threatened?

Villagers. The robbers are pouring from the northern hills like a mountain flood to devastate our village.
Arjuna. Have you in this kingdom no warden?

Villagers. Princess Chitra was the terror of all evildoers. While she was in this happy land we feared natural deaths, but had no other fears. Now she has gone on a pilgrimage, and none knows where to find her.

Arjuna. Is the warden of this country a woman?

Villagers. Yes, she is our father and mother in one.

[Exeunt

(Enter Chitra)

Chitra. Why are you sitting all alone?

Arjuna. I am trying to imagine what kind of woman Princess Chitra may be. I hear so many stories of her from all sorts of men.

Chitra. Ah, but she is not beautiful. She has no such lovely eyes as mine, dark as death. She can pierce any target she will, but not our hero’s heart.

Arjuna. They say that in valour she is a man, and a woman in tenderness.

Chitra. That, indeed, is her greatest misfortune. When a woman is merely a woman; when she winds herself round and round men’s hearts with her smiles and sobs and services and caressing endearments; then she is happy. Of what use to her are learning and great achievements? Could you have seen her only yesterday in the court of the Lord Shiva’s temple by the forest path, you would have passed by without deigning to look at her. But have you grown so weary of woman’s beauty that you seek in her for a man’s strength?

With green leaves wet from the spray of the foaming waterfall, I have made our noonday bed in a cavern dark as night. There the cool of the soft green mosses thick on the black and dripping stone kisses your eyes to sleep. Let me guide you thither.
Arjuna. Not to-day, beloved.

Chitra. Why not to-day?

Arjuna. I have heard that a horde of robbers has neared the plains. Needs must I go and prepare my weapons to protect the frightened villagers.

Chitra. You need have no fear for them. Before she started on her pilgrimage, Princess Chitra had set strong guards at all the frontier passes.

Arjuna. Yet permit me for a short while to set about a Kshatriya’s work. With new glory will I ennable this idle arm, and make of it a pillow more worthy of your head.

Chitra. What if I refuse to let you go, if I keep you entwined in my arms? Would you rudely snatch yourself free and leave me? Go then! But you must know that the liana, once broken in two, never joins again. Go, if your thirst is quenched. But, if not, then remember that the goddess of pleasure is fickle, and waits for no man. Sit for a while, my lord! Tell me what uneasy thoughts tease you. Who occupied your mind to-day? Is it Chitra?

Arjuna. Yes, it is Chitra. I wonder in fulfilment of what vow she has gone on her pilgrimage. Of what could she stand in need?

Chitra. Her needs? Why, what has she ever had, the unfortunate creature? Her very qualities are as prison walls, shutting her woman’s heart in a bare cell. She is obscured, she is unfulfilled. Her womanly love must content itself dressed in rags; beauty is denied her. She is like the spirit of a cheerless morning, sitting upon the stony mountain peak, all her light blotted out by dark clouds. Do not ask me of her life. It will never sound sweet to man’s ear.
Arjuna. I am eager to learn all about her. I am like a traveller come to a strange city at midnight. Domes and towers and garden-trees look vague and shadowy, and the dull moan of the sea comes fitfully through the silence of sleep. Wistfully he waits for the morning to reveal to him all the strange wonders. Oh, tell me her story.

Chitra. What more is there to tell?

Arjuna. I seem to see her, in my mind's eye, riding on a white horse, proudly holding the reins in her left hand, and in her right a bow, and like the Goddess of Victory dispensing glad hope all round her. Like a watchful lioness she protects the litter at her rugs with a fierce love. Woman's arms, though adorned with naught but unfettered strength, are beautiful! My heart is restless, fair one, like a serpent reviving from his long winter's sleep. Come, let us both race on swift horses side by side, like twin orbs of light sweeping through space. Out from this slumbrous prison of green gloom, this dank, dense cover of perfumed intoxication, choking breath.

Chitra. Arjuna, tell me true, if, now at once, by some magic I could shake myself free from this voluptuous softness, this timid bloom of beauty shrinking from the rude and healthy touch of the world, and fling it from my body like borrowed clothes, would you be able to bear it? If I stand up straight and strong with the strength of a daring heart spurning the wiles and arts of twining weakness, if I hold my head high like a tall young mountain fir, no longer trailing in the dust like a liana, shall I then appeal to man's eye? No, no, you could not endure it. It is better that I should keep spread about me all the dainty playthings of fugitive
youth, and wait for you in patience. When it pleases you to return, I will smilingly pour out for you the wine of pleasure in the cup of this beauteous body. When you are tired and satiated with this wine, you can go to work or play; and when I grow old I will accept humbly and gratefully whatever corner is left for me. Would it please your heroic soul if the playmate of the night aspired to be the helpmeet of the day, if the left arm learnt to share the burden of the proud right arm?

Arjuna. I never seem to know you aright. You seem to me like a goddess hidden within a golden image. I cannot touch you, I cannot pay you my dues in return for your priceless gifts. Thus my love is incomplete. Sometimes in the enigmatic depth of your sad look, in your playful words mocking at their own meaning, I gain glimpses of a being trying to rend asunder the languorous grace of her body, to emerge in a chaste fire of pain through a vaporous veil of smiles. Illusion is the first appearance of Truth. She advances towards her lover in disguise. But a time comes when she throws off her ornaments and veils and stands clothed in naked dignity. I grope for that ultimate you, that bare simplicity of truth.

Why these tears, my love? Why cover your face with your hands? Have I pained you, my darling? Forget what I said. I will be content with the present. Let each separate moment of beauty come to me like a bird of mystery from its unseen nest in the dark bearing a message of music. Let me for ever sit with my hope on the brink of its realization, and thus end my days.
SCENE IX

(Chitra and Arjuna)

Chitra (cloaked). My lord, has the cup been drained to the last drop? Is this, indeed, the end? No, when all is done something still remains, and that is my last sacrifice at your feet.

I brought from the garden of heaven flowers of incomparable beauty with which to worship you, god of my heart. If the rites are over, if the flowers have faded, let me throw them out of the temple (unveiling in her original male attire). Now, look at your worshipper with gracious eyes.

I am not beautifully perfect as the flowers with which I worshipped. I have many flaws and blemishes. I am a traveller in the great world-path, my garments are dirty, and my feet are bleeding with thorns. Where should I achieve flower-beauty, the unsullied loveliness of a moment’s life? The gift that I proudly bring you is the heart of a woman. Here have all pains and joys gathered, the hopes and fears and shames of a daughter of the dust; here love springs up struggling toward immortal life. Herein lies an imperfection which yet is noble and grand. If the flower-service is finished, my master, accept this as your servant for the days to come!

I am Chitra, the King’s daughter. Perhaps you will remember the day when a woman came to you in the temple of Shiva, her body loaded with ornaments and finery. That shameless woman came to court you as though she were a man. You rejected her; you did well. My lord, I am that woman. She was my disguise. Then by the boon of gods I obtained for a year the most radiant form that a mortal ever wore, and wearied my
hero's heart with the burden of that deceit. Most surely I am not that woman.

I am Chitra. No goddess to be worshipped, nor yet the object of common pity to be brushed aside like a moth with indifference. If you deign to keep me by your side in the path of danger and daring, if you allow me to share the great duties of your life, then you will know my true self. If your babe, whom I am nourishing in my womb, be born a son, I shall myself teach him to be a second Arjuna, and send him to you when the time comes, and then at last you will truly know me. To-day I can only offer you Chitra, the daughter of a king.

Arjuna. Beloved, my life is full!
FRUIT-GATHERING
FRUIT-GATHERING

I

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 fullness, 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.

II

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.

IV

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.

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.

v

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.

vi

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.
VII

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.

VIII

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!

IX

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 everlasting 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.
x

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.

xi

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.

xii

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.
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.”

181
XIII

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!

xiv

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.

XV

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.

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.

xvi

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.

xviii

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.

XIX

Sūdās, 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."
Sūdās said, "If you pay one golden māśhā 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 māśhā 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 Sūdās 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.
Sūdās 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?"
Sudās cried, "The least touch of your feet."

XX

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.

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.

XXI

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 over-
flowing solitude where all things are seen as by their creator.

xxiv

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.

xxv

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.

xxvi

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!”

**XXVII**

Sanātan 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 Sanātan. “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.”

Sanātan 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 Sanātan and said,
"Master, give me the least fraction of the wealth that
disdaims all the wealth of the world."

And he threw the precious stone into the water.

XXVIII

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 cease-
less 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.

XXIX

YOU have set me among those who are defeated.

I know it is not for me to win, nor to leave the game.

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.
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.

"Who among you will take up the duty of feeding the
hungry?" Lord Buddha asked his followers when
famine raged at Shravasti.

Ratnākar, 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."

Dharmapāl, 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 Supriyā, 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 Supriyā, "that is
my strength. I have my coffer and my store at each of
your houses."
XXXII

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.

XXXIII

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.

XXXIV

"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?”

“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.”

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xxxv

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?
Ο’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.

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.
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.

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 thunderstone; in the shower of blood; in the angry red of the sunset.

XXXVII

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, austerely 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.

... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 194
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.

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.

XXXVIII

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.

xxxix

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!

xl

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.

xli

The Boatman is out crossing the wild sea at night.

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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.

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.
XLII

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.

XLIII

Over the relic of Lord Buddha King Bimbisār 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.

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 Amitā, 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 Shuklā 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.

XLIV

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.

XLV

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.
XLVI

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.

XLVII

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.

XLVIII

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.
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.

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.

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.

Before I go may I linger over my last refrain, comple-
ing its music, may the lamp be lit to see your face and
the wreath woven to crown you.

LI

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.

LIII

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.
LIV

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," Loyle said, "but I wait for you."
Death said, "I ply the boat of your life across the sea."

LV

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.

LVI

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.

LVII

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.

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?"

LVIII

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.

LIX

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.

LX

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.

LXI

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.

LXII

"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."

LXIII

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.

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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.

LXIV

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 Satyakāma.”

“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.”

“Master,” answered the boy, “I know not of what clan I am. I shall go and ask my mother.”

Thus saying, Satyakāma 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 Jabāla'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 Satyakāma.

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 didst come to thy mother Jabāla'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."
LXV

MAYBE 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.

The flowers have opened in hedges and gardens, and
maybe there is one heart that has found in them this
morning the gift that has been on its voyage from
endless time.

LXVI *

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.

. . . . . .

LXIX

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.

* 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.

LXX

WHEN you hold your lamp in the sky it throws its light
on my face and its shadow falls over you.

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When I hold the lamp of love in my heart its light falls on you and I am left standing behind in the shadow.

LXXII

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.

LXXIII

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.

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?

LXXIV

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.

LXXV

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.
LXXVI

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.

LXXVII

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.

LXXVIII

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.

LXXIX

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.

LXXX

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.

LXXXI

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.

LXXXII

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."

LXXXIII

1

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.

2

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.

3

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 languor.
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.

LXXXIV

THE OARSMEN

Do you hear the tumult of death afar,
The call amidst 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,
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?

LXXXV

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.
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.
THE POST OFFICE
THE CHARACTERS

MADHAV
AMAL, his adopted child
SUDHA, a little flower-girl
THE DOCTOR
DAIRYMAN
WATCHMAN
GAFFER
VILLAGE HEADMAN, a bully
KING'S HERALD
ROYAL PHYSICIAN
THE POST OFFICE

ACT I

(Madhav's House)

Madhav. What a state I am in! Before he came, nothing mattered; I felt so free. But how that he has come, goodness knows from where, my heart is filled with his dear self, and my home will be no home to me when he leaves. Doctor, do you think he—

Physician. If there’s life in his fate, then he will live long. But what the medical scriptures say, it seems—

Madhav. Great heavens, what?

Physician. The scriptures have it: “Bile or palsy, cold or gout spring all alike.”

Madhav. Oh, get along, don’t fling your scriptures at me; you only make me more anxious; tell me what I can do.

Physician (taking snuff). The patient needs the most scrupulous care.

Madhav. That’s true; but tell me how.

Physician. I have already mentioned, on no account must he be let out of doors.

Madhav. Poor child, it is very hard to keep him indoors all day long.

Physician. What else can you do? The autumn sun and the damp are both very bad for the little fellow—for the scriptures have it:

“In wheezing, swooning, or in nervous fret,
In jaundice or leaden eyes—”

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Madhav. Never mind the scriptures, please. Eh, then we must shut the poor thing up. Is there no other method?

Physician. None at all: for "In the wind and in the sun—"

Madhav. What will your "in this and in that" do for me now? Why don't you let them alone and come straight to the point? What's to be done, then? Your system is very, very hard for the poor boy; and he is so quiet too with all his pain and sickness. It tears my heart to see him wince, as he takes your medicine.

Physician. The more he winces, the surer is the effect. That's why the sage Chyabana observes: "In medicine as in good advice, the least palatable is the truest." Ah, well! I must be trotting now.

(Exit)

(Gaffer enters)

Madhav. Well, I'm jiggered, there's Gaffer now.

Gaffer. Why, why, I won't bite you.

Madhav. No, but you are a devil to send children off their heads.

Gaffer. But you aren't a child, and you've no child in the house; why worry, then?

Madhav. Oh, but I have brought a child into the house.

Gaffer. Indeed, how so?

Madhav. You remember how my wife was dying to adopt a child?

Gaffer. Yes, but that's an old story; you didn't like the idea.

Madhav. You know, brother, how hard all this getting money in has been. That somebody else's child would sail in and waste all this money earned with so much trouble—Oh, I hated the idea. But this boy clings to my heart in such a queer sort of way——
Gaffer. So that's the trouble! and your money goes all for him and feels jolly lucky it does go at all.

Madhav. Formerly, earning was a sort of passion with me; I simply couldn't help working for money. Now, I make money, and as I know it is all for this dear boy, earning becomes a joy to me.

Gaffer. Ah, well, and where did you pick him up?

Madhav. He is the son of a man who was a brother to my wife by village ties. He has had no mother since infancy; and now the other day he lost his father as well.

Gaffer. Poor thing; and so he needs me all the more.

Madhav. The doctor says all the organs of his little body are at loggerheads with each other, and there isn't much hope for his life. There is only one way to save him and that is to keep him out of this autumn wind and sun. But you are such a terror! What with this game of yours at your age, too, to get children out of doors!

Gaffer. God bless my soul! So I'm already as bad as autumn wind and sun, eh! But, friend, I know something, too, of the game of keeping them indoors. When my day's work is over I am coming in to make friends with this child of yours. [Exit

(Amal enters)

Amal. Uncle, I say, Uncle!

Madhav. Hullo! Is that you, Amal?

Amal. Mayn't I be out of the courtyard at all?

Madhav. No, my dear, no.

Amal. See there, where Auntie grinds lentils in the quern, the squirrel is sitting with his tail up and with his wee hands he's picking up the broken grains of lentils and crunching them. Can't I run up there?
Madhav. No, my darling, no.
Amal. Wish I were a squirrel!—it would be lovely.
Uncle, why won’t you let me go about?
Madhav. Doctor says it’s bad for you to be out.
Amal. How can the doctor know?
Madhav. What a thing to say! The doctor can’t know and he reads such huge books!
Amal. Does his book-learning tell him everything?
Madhav. Of course, don’t you know!
Amal (with a sigh). Ah, I am so stupid! I don’t read books.
Madhav. Now, think of it; very, very learned people are all like you; they are never out of doors.
Amal. Aren’t they really?
Madhav. No, how can they? Early and late they toil and moil at their books, and they’ve eyes for nothing else. Now, my little man, you are going to be learned when you grow up; and then you will stay at home and read such big books, and people will notice you and say, “He’s a wonder.”
Amal. No, no, Uncle; I beg of you, by your dear feet—I don’t want to be learned; I won’t.
Madhav. Dear, dear; it would have been my saving if I could have been learned.
Amal. No, I would rather go about and see everything that there is.
Madhav. Listen to that! See! What will you see, what is there so much to see?
Amal. See that far-away hill from our window—I often long to go beyond those hills and right away.
Madhav. Oh, you silly! As if there’s nothing more to be done but just get up to the top of that hill and away! Eh! You don’t talk sense, my boy. Now listen, since
that hill stands there upright as a barrier, it means you can’t get beyond it. Else, what was the use in heaping up so many large stones to make such a big affair of it, eh!

_Amal._ Uncle, do you think it is meant to prevent us crossing over? It seems to me because the earth can’t speak it raises its hands into the sky and beckons. And those who live far off and sit alone by their windows can see the signal. But I suppose the learned people—

_Madhav._ No, they don’t have time for that sort of nonsense. They are not crazy like you.

_Amal._ Do you know, yesterday I met some one quite as crazy as I am.

_Madhav._ Gracious me, really, how so?

_Amal._ He had a bamboo staff on his shoulder with a small bundle at the top, and a brass pot in his left hand, and an old pair of shoes on; he was making for those hills straight across that meadow there. I called out to him and asked, “Where are you going?” He answered, “I don’t know; anywhere!” I asked again, “Why are you going?” He said, “I’m going out to seek work.” Say, Uncle, have you to seek work?

_Madhav._ Of course I have to. There’s many about looking for jobs.

_Amal._ How lovely! I’ll go about like them too, finding things to do.

_Madhav._ Suppose you seek and don’t find. Then—

_Amal._ Wouldn’t that be jolly? Then I should go farther! I watched that man slowly walking on with his pair of worn-out shoes. And when he got to where the water flows under the fig tree, he stopped and washed his feet in the stream. Then he took out from his bundle some gram-flour, moistened it with water and began to
eat. Then he tied up his bundle and shouldered it again; tucked up his cloth above his knees and crossed the stream. I’ve asked Auntie to let me go up to the stream, and eat my gram-flour just like him.

Madbav. And what did your Auntie say to that?

Amal. Auntie said, “Get well and then I’ll take you over there.” Please, Uncle, when shall I get well?

Madbav. It won’t be long, dear.

Amal. Really, but then I shall go right away the moment I’m well again.

Madbav. And where will you go?

Amal. Oh, I will walk on, crossing so many streams, wading through water. Everybody will be asleep with their doors shut in the heat of the day and I will tramp on and on seeking work far, very far.

Madbav. I see! I think you had better be getting well first; then——

Amal. But then you won’t want me to be learned, will you, Uncle?

Madbav. What would you rather be, then?

Amal. I can’t think of anything just now; but I’ll tell you later on.

Madbav. Very well. But mind you, you aren’t to call out and talk to strangers again.

Amal. But I love to talk to strangers!

Madbav. Suppose they had kidnapped you?

Amal. That would have been splendid! But no one ever takes me away. They all want me to stay in here.

Madbav. I am off to my work—but, darling, you won’t go out, will you?

Amal. No, I won’t. But, Uncle, you’ll let me be in this room by the roadside. [Exit Madbav
Dairyman. Curds, curds, good nice curds.
Amal. Curdseller, I say, Curdseller.
Dairyman. Why do you call me? Will you buy some curds?
Amal. How can I buy? I have no money.
Dairyman. What a boy! Why call out then? Ugh! What a waste of time!
Amal. I would go with you if I could.
Dairyman. With me?
Amal. Yes, I seem to feel homesick when I hear you call from far down the road.
Dairyman (lowering his yoke-pole). Whatever are you doing here, my child?
Amal. The doctor says I'm not to be out, so I sit here all day long.
Dairyman. My poor child, whatever has happened to you?
Amal. I can't tell. You see, I am not learned, so I don't know what's the matter with me. Say, Dairyman, where do you come from?
Dairyman. From our village.
Amal. Your village? Is it very far?
Dairyman. Our village lies on the river Shamli at the foot of the Panch-mura hills.
Amal. Panch-mura hills! Shamli river! I wonder. I may have seen your village. I can't think when, though!
Dairyman. Have you seen it? Been to the foot of those hills?
Amal. Never. But I seem to remember having seen it. Your village is under some very old big trees, just by the side of the red road—isn't that so?
Dairyman. That's right, child.
Amal. And on the slope of the hill cattle grazing.
Dairyman. How wonderful! Cattle grazing in our village! Indeed there are!

Amal. And your women with red sarees fill their pitchers from the river and carry them on their heads.

Dairyman. Good, that's right! Women from our dairy village do come and draw their water from the river; but then it isn't every one who has a red saree to put on. But, my dear child, surely you must have been there for a walk some time.

Amal. Really, Dairyman, never been there at all. But the first day doctor lets me go out, you are going to take me to your village.

Dairyman. I will, my child, with pleasure.

Amal. And you'll teach me to cry curds and shoulder the yoke like you and walk the long, long road?

Dairyman. Dear, dear, did you ever? Why should you sell curds? No, you will read big books and be learned.

Amal. No, I never want to be learned—I'll be like you and take my curds from the village by the red road near the old banyan tree, and I will hawk it from cottage to cottage. Oh, how do you cry—'Curds, curds, fine curds'? Teach me the tune, will you?

Dairyman. Dear, dear, teach you the tune; what a notion!

Amal. Please do. I love to hear it. I can't tell you how queer I feel when I hear you cry out from the bend of that road, through the line of those trees! Do you know I feel like that when I hear the shrill cry of kites from almost the end of the sky?

Dairyman. Dear child, will you have some curds? Yes, do.

Amal. But I have no money.
Dairyman. No, no, no, don't talk of money! You'll make me so happy if you take some curds from me.

Amal. Say, have I kept you too long?

Dairyman. Not a bit; it has been no loss to me at all; you have taught me how to be happy selling curds.

[Exit

Amal (intoning). Curds, curds, fine curds—from the dainty village—from the country of the Panch-mura hills by the Shamli bank. Curds, good curds; in the early morning the women make the cows stand in a row under the trees and milk them, and in the evening they turn the milk into curds. Curds, good curds. Hello, there's the watchman on his rounds. Watchman, I say, come and have a word with me.

Watchman. What's all this row about? Aren't you afraid of the likes of me?

Amal. No, why should I be?

Watchman. Suppose I march you off, then?

Amal. Where will you take me to? Is it very far, right beyond the hills?

Watchman. Suppose I march you straight to the King?

Amal. To the King! Do, will you? But the doctor won't let me go out. No one can ever take me away. I've got to stay here all day long.

Watchman. Doctor won't let you, poor fellow! So I see! Your face is pale and there are dark rings round your eyes. Your veins stick out from your poor thin hands.

Amal. Won't you sound the gong, Watchman?

Watchman. Time has not yet come.

Amal. How curious! Some say time has not yet come, and some say time has gone by! But surely your time will come the moment you strike the gong!
Watchman. That's not possible; I strike up the gong only when it is time.

Amal. Yes, I love to hear your gong. When it is mid-day and our meal is over, Uncle goes off to his work and Auntie falls asleep reading her Ramayana, and in the courtyard under the shadow of the wall our doggie sleeps with his nose in his curled-up tail; then your gong strikes out, "Dong, dong, dong!" Tell me, why does your gong sound?

Watchman. My gong sounds to tell the people, Time waits for none, but goes on for ever.

Amal. Where, to what land?

Watchman. That none knows.

Amal. Then I suppose no one has ever been there! Oh, I do wish to fly with the time to that land of which no one knows anything.

Watchman. All of us have to get there one day, my child.

Amal. Have I too?

Watchman. Yes, you too!

Amal. But, doctor won't let me out.

Watchman. One day the doctor himself may take you there by the hand.

Amal. He won't; you don't know him. He only keeps me in.

Watchman. One greater than he comes and lets us free.

Amal. When will this great doctor come for me? I can't stick in here any more.

Watchman. Shouldn't talk like that, my child.

Amal. No. I am here where they have left me—I never move a bit. But, when your gong goes off, dong, dong, it goes to my heart. Say, Watchman?
Watchman. Yes, my dear.

Amal. Say, what's going on there in that big house on the other side, where there is a flag flying high up and the people are always going in and out?

Watchman. Oh, there? That's our new Post Office.

Amal. Post Office? Whose?

Watchman. Whose? Why, the King's, surely!

Amal. Do letters come from the King to his office here?

Watchman. Of course. One fine day there may be a letter for you in there.

Amal. A letter for me? But I am only a little boy.

Watchman. The King sends tiny notes to little boys.

Amal. Oh, how splendid! When shall I have my letter? How do you know he'll write to me?

Watchman. Otherwise why should he set his Post Office here right in front of your open window, with the golden flag flying?

Amal. But who will fetch me my King's letter when it comes?

Watchman. The King has many postmen. Don't you see them run about with round gilt badges on their chests?

Amal. Well, where do they go?

Watchman. Oh, from door to door, all through the country.

Amal. I'll be the King's postman when I grow up.

Watchman. Ha! ha! Postman, indeed! Rain or shine, rich or poor, from house to house delivering letters— that's very great work!

Amal. That's what I'd like best. What makes you smile so? Oh, yes, your work is great too. When it is
silent everywhere in the heat of the noonday, your gong
sounds, Dong, dong, dong,—and sometimes when I
wake up at night all of a sudden and find our lamp
blown out, I can hear through the darkness your gong
slowly sounding, Dong, dong, dong!

Watchman. There's the village headman! I must be
off. If he catches me gossiping there'll be a great
to-do.

Amal. The headman? Whereabouts is he?

Watchman. Right down the road there; see that huge
palm-leaf umbrella hopping along? That's him!

Amal. I suppose the King's made him our headman
here?

Watchman. Made him? Oh, no! A fussy busybody!
He knows so many ways of making himself unpleasant
that everybody is afraid of him. It's just a game for the
likes of him, making trouble for everybody. I must be
off now! Mustn't keep work waiting, you know! I'll
drop in again to-morrow morning and tell you all the
news of the town. \[Exit

Amal. It would be splendid to have a letter from the
King every day. I'll read them at the window. But, oh!
I can't read writing. Who'll read them out to me, I
wonder! Auntie reads her Ramayana; she may know the
King's writing. If no one will, then I must keep them
carefully and read them when I'm grown up. But if the
postman can't find me? Headman, Mr. Headman, may
I have a word with you?

Headman. Who is yelling after me on the highway?
Oh, it's you, is it, you wretched monkey?

Amal. You're the headman. Everybody minds you.

Headman (looking pleased). Yes, oh yes, they do! They
must!
Amal. Do the King's postmen listen to you?
Headman. They've got to. By Jove, I'd like to see——
Amal. Will you tell the postman it's Amal who sits by the window here?
Headman. What's the good of that?
Amal. In case there's a letter for me.
Headman. A letter for you! Whoever's going to write to you?
Amal. If the King does.
Headman. Ha! ha! What an uncommon little fellow you are! Ha! ha! the King, indeed; aren't you his bosom friend, eh! You haven't met for a long while and the King is pining for you, I am sure. Wait till to-morrow and you'll have your letter.
Amal. Say, Headman, why do you speak to me in that tone of voice? Are you cross?
Headman. Upon my word! Cross, indeed! You write to the King! Madhav is a devilish swell nowadays. He's made a little pile; and so kings and padishahs are every-day talk with his people. Let me find him once and I'll make him dance. Oh, you,—you snipper-snapper! I'll get the King's letter sent to your house——indeed I will!
Amal. No, no, please don't trouble yourself about it.
Headman. And why not, pray! I'll tell the King about you and he won't be long. One of his footmen will come presently for news of you. Madhav's impudence staggeres me. If the King hears of this, that'll take some of his nonsense out of him.

[Exit
Amal. Who are you walking there? How your anklets tinkle! Do stop a while, won't you?

(A Girl enters)

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Girl. I haven't a moment to spare; it is already late!

Amal. I see, you don't wish to stop; I don't care to stay on here either.

Girl. You make me think of some late star of the morning! Whatever's the matter with you?

Amal. I don't know; the doctor won't let me out.

Girl. Ah me! Don't go, then! Should listen to the doctor. People will be cross with you if you're naughty. I know, always looking out and watching must make you feel tired. Let me close the window a bit for you.

Amal. No, don't, only this one's open! All the others are shut. But will you tell me who you are? Don't seem to know you.

Girl. I am Sudha.

Amal. What Sudha?

Sudha. Don't you know? Daughter of the flower-seller here.

Amal. What do you do?

Sudha. I gather flowers in my basket.

Amal. Oh, flower-gathering! That is why your feet seem so glad and your anklets jingle so merrily as you walk. Wish I could be out too. Then I would pick some flowers for you from the very topmost branches right out of sight.

Sudha. Would you really? Do you know as much about flowers as I?

Amal. Yes, I do, quite as much. I know all about Champa of the fairy tale and his six brothers. If only they let me, I'll go right into the dense forest where you can't find your way. And where the honey-sipping humming-bird rocks himself on the end of the thinnest
branch, I will blossom into a champa. Would you be my sister Parul?

Sudha. You are silly! How can I be sister Parul when I am Sudha and my mother is Sasi, the flower-seller? I have to weave so many garlands a day. It would be jolly if I could lounge here like you!

Amal. What would you do then, all the day long?

Sudha. I could have great times with my doll Benay the bride, and Meni the pussy-cat, and—but I say, it is getting late and I mustn’t stop, or I won’t find a single flower.

Amal. Oh, wait a little longer; I do like it so!

Sudha. Ah, well—now don’t you be naughty. Be good and sit still, and on my way back home with the flowers I’ll come and talk with you.

Amal. And you’ll let me have a flower, then?

Sudha. No, how can I? It has to be paid for.

Amal. I’ll pay when I grow up—before I leave to look for work out on the other side of that stream there.

Sudha. Very well, then.

Amal. And you’ll come back when you have your flowers?

Sudha. I will.

Amal. You will, really?

Sudha. Yes, I will.

Amal. You won’t forget me? I am Amal, remember that.

Sudha. I won’t forget you, you’ll see. [Exit

(A Troop of Boys enter)

Amal. Say, brothers, where are you all off to? Stop here a little.

A Boy. We’re off to play.

Amal. What will you play at, brothers?
A Boy. We'll play at being ploughmen.

Another Boy (showing a stick). This is our ploughshare.

Another Boy. We two are the pair of oxen.

Amal. And you're going to play the whole day?

A Boy. Yes, all day long.

Amal. And you will come home in the evening by
the road along the river bank?

A Boy. Yes.

Amal. Do you pass our house on your way home?

A Boy. Come out and play with us; yes, do.

Amal. Doctor won't let me out.

A Boy. Doctor! Do you mean to say you mind what
the doctor says? Let's be off; it is getting late.

Amal. Don't go. Play on the road near this window.
I could watch you, then.

A Boy. What can we play at here?

Amal. With all these toys of mine that are lying
about. Here you are; have them. I can't play alone.
They are getting dirty and are of no use to me.

Boys. How jolly! What fine toys! Look, here's a ship.
There's old mother Jatai. Isn't this a gorgeous sepoy?
And you'll let us have them all? You don't really mind?

Amal. No, not a bit; have them by all means.

A Boy. You don't want them back?

Amal. Oh, no, I shan't want them.

A Boy. Say, won't you get a scolding for this?

Amal. No one will scold me. But will you play with
them in front of our door for a while every morning?
I'll get you new ones when these are old.

A Boy. Oh, yes, we will. I say, put these sepoys into
a line. We'll play at war; where can we get a musket?
Oh, look here, this bit of reed will do nicely. Say, but
you're off to sleep already.