give it a proper rhythm and it will never cease to shine. That is art. It has the magic wand which gives undying reality to all things it touches, and relates them to the personal being in us. We stand before its productions and say: I know you as I know myself, you are real. . . .

This sensitiveness to the touch of things, such abundant delight in the recognition of them, is obstructed when insistent purposes become innumerable and intricate in our society, when problems crowd in our path clamoring for attention, and life's movement is impeded with things and thoughts too difficult for a harmonious assimilation.

This has been growing evident every day in the modern age, which gives more time to the acquisition of life's equipment than to the enjoyment of it. In fact, life itself is made secondary to life's materials, even like a garden buried under the bricks gathered for the garden wall. Somehow the mania for bricks and mortar grows, the kingdom of rubbish dominates, the days of spring are made futile and the flowers never come.

Our modern mind, a hasty tourist in its rush over the miscellaneous, ransacks cheap markets of curios which mostly are delusions. This happens because its natural sensibility for simple aspects of existence is dulled by constant preoccupations that divert it. The literature that it produces seems always to be poking her nose into out-of-the-way places for things and effects that are out of the common. She racks her resources in order to be striking. She elaborates inconstant changes in style, as in modern millinery, and the product suggests more the polish of steel than the bloom of life.

Fashions in literature that rapidly tire of themselves seldom come from the depth. They belong to the frothy rush of the surface, with its boisterous clamor for recognition of the moment. Such literature, by its very strain, exhausts its inner development and quickly passes through outer changes like autumn leaves, produces with the help of paints and patches an up-to-dateness, shaming its own appearance of the immediately preceding date. Its expressions are often grimaces, like the cactus of the desert which lacks modesty in its distortions and peace in its thorns, in whose attitude an aggressive discourtesy bristles up suggesting a forced pride of poverty. We often come across its analogy in some of the modern writings which are difficult to ignore because of their prickly surprises and paradoxical gesticulations.
Wisdom is not rare in these works, but it is a wisdom that has lost confidence in its serene dignity, afraid of being ignored by crowds which are attracted by the extravagant and the unusual. It is sad to see wisdom struggling to be clever, a prophet arrayed in caps and bells before an admiring multitude.

But in all great arts, literary or otherwise, man has expressed his feelings that are usual in a form that is unique and yet not abnormal. When Wordsworth described in his poem a life deserted by love, he invoked for his art the usual pathos expected by all normal minds in connection with such a subject. But the picture in which he incarnated the sentiment was unexpected and yet every sane reader acknowledges it with joy when the image is held before him of

—a forsaken bird’s nest filled with snow
Mid its own bush of leafless eglandine.¹

On the other hand, I have read some modern writing in which the coming out of the stars in the evening is described as the sudden eruption of disease in the bloated body of darkness. The writer seems afraid to own the feeling of a cool purity in the star-sprinkled night, which is usual, lest he should be found out as commonplace. From the point of view of realism the image may not be wholly inappropriate and may be considered as outrageously virile in its unshrinking incivility. But this is not art; this is a jerky shriek, something like the convulsive advertisement of the modern market that exploits mob psychology against its inattention. To be tempted to create an illusion of forcefulness through an over-emphasis of abnormality is a sign of anesthesia. It is the waning vigor of imagination which employs desperate dexterity in the present-day art for producing shocks in order to poke out into a glare the sensation of the unaccustomed. When we find that the literature of any period is laborious in the pursuit of a spurious novelty in its manner and matter, we must know that it is the symptom of old age, of anemic sensibility which seeks to stimulate its palsied taste with the pungency of indecency and the tingling touch of intemperance. It has been explained to me that these symptoms mostly are the outcome of a reaction against the last-century literature which developed a mannerism too daintily
saccharine, unmanly in the luxury of its toilet and over-delicate in its expressions. It seemed to have reached an extreme limit of refinement which almost codified its conventions, making it easy for the timid talents to reach a comfortable level of literary respectability. This explanation may be true; but unfortunately reactions seldom have the repose of spontaneity, they often represent the obverse of the mintage which they try to repudiate as false. A reaction against a particular mannerism is liable to produce its own mannerism in a militant fashion. Tired of the elaborately planned flower-beds, the gardener proceeds with grim determination to set up everywhere artificial rocks, avoiding the natural inspiration of rhythm in deference to a fashion of tyranny which itself is a tyranny of fashion. The same herd instinct is followed in a cult of rebellion as it was in the cult of conformity and the defiance, which is a mere counteraction of obedience, also shows obedience in a defiant fashion. Fanaticism of virility produces a brawny athleticism meant for a circus and not the natural chivalry which is modest but invincible, claiming its sovereign seat of honor in all arts.

It has often been said by its advocates that this show of the rudely loud and cheaply lurid in art has its justification in the unbiased recognition of facts as such; and according to them realism must not be shunned even if it be ragged and evil-smelling. But when it does not concern science but concerns the arts we must draw a distinction between realism and reality. In its own wide perspective of normal environment, disease is a reality which has to be acknowledged in literature. But disease in a hospital is realism fit for the use of science. It is an abstraction which, if allowed to haunt literature, may assume a startling appearance because of its unreality. Such vagrant specters do not have a proper modulation in a normal surrounding; and they offer false proportions in their features because the proportion of their environment is tampered with. Such a curtailment of the essential is not art, but a trick which exploits mutilation in order to assert a false claim to reality. Unfortunately men are not rare who believe that what forcibly startles them allows them to see more than the facts which are balanced and restrained, which they have to woo and win. Very likely, owing to the lack of leisure, such persons are growing in number, and the dark cellars of sex-psychology and drugstores of
moral virulence are burgled to give them the stimulus which they
wish to believe to be the stimulus of aesthetic reality.

I know a simple line sung by some primitive folk in our neighbor-
hood which I translate thus: "My heart is like a pebble bed hiding a
foolish stream." The psychoanalyst may classify it as an instance of
repressed desire and thus at once degrade it to a mere specimen ad-
vertising a supposed fact, as it does a piece of coal suspected of having
smuggled within its dark the flaming wine of the sun of a forgotten
age. But it is literature, and what might have been the original stimu-
lus that star-led this thought into a song, the significant fact about
it is that it has taken the shape of an image, a creation of a uniquely
personal and yet universal character. The facts of the repression of
a desire are numerous and common, but this particular expression is
singularly uncommon. The listener's mind is touched because it is
an individual poem, representing a personal reality belonging to all
time and place in the human world.

But this is not all. This poem no doubt owed its form to the touch
of the person who produced it, but at the same time with a gesture
of utter detachment, it has transcended its material—the emotional
mood of the author. It has gained its freedom from any biographical
bondage by taking a rhythmic perfection which is precious in its own
exclusive merit. There is a poem which confesses by its title its origin
in a mood of dejection. Nobody can say that to a lucid mind the
feeling of despondency has anything pleasantly memorable. Yet these
verses are not allowed to be forgotten, because directly a poem is
fashioned, it is eternally freed from its genesis, it minimizes its his-
tory and emphasizes its independence. The sorrow which was solely
personal in an emperor was liberated as soon as it took the form of
verse in stone, it became a triumph of lament, an overflow of delight,
hiding the black boulder of its suffering source. The same thing is true
of all creation. A dewdrop is a perfect integrity that has no filial
memory of its parentage.

When I use the word "creation," I mean that through it some im-
ponderable abstractions have assumed a concrete unity in its relation
to us. Its substance can be analyzed, but not this unity which is in
its self-introduction. Literature as an art offers us the mystery which
is in its unity.

We read the poem:
Never seek to tell thy love
Love that never told can be;
For the gentle wind does move
Silently, invisibly.

I told my love, I told my love,
I told her all my heart,
Trembling, cold, in ghastly fears
Ah! she did depart.

Soon as she was gone from me,
A traveller came by,
Silently, invisibly:
He took her with a sigh.

It has its grammar, its vocabulary. When we divide them part by part and try to torture out a confession from them, the poem which is one departs like the gentle wind, silently, invisibly. No one knows how it exceeds all its parts, transcends all its laws, and communicates with the person. The significance which is in unity is an eternal wonder.

As for the definite meaning of the poem, we may have our doubts. If it were told in ordinary prose, we might feel impatient and be roused to contradict it. We would certainly have asked for an explanation as to who the traveler was and why he took away love without any reasonable provocation. But in this poem we need not ask for an explanation unless we are hopelessly addicted to meaning-collection which is like the collection mania for dead butterflies. The poem as a creation, which is something more than as an idea, inevitably conquers our attention, and any meaning which we feel in its words is like the feeling in a beautiful face of a smile that is inscrutable, elusive and profoundly satisfactory.

The unity as a poem introduces itself in a rhythmic language in a gesture of character. Rhythm is not merely in some measured blending of words, but in a significant adjustment of ideas, in a music of thought produced by a subtle principle of distribution, which is not primarily logical but evidential. The meaning which the word "character" contains is difficult to define. It is comprehended in a special
grouping of aspects which gives it an irresistible impetus. The combination it represents may be uncouth in its totality which claims recognition, often against our wishes, for the assent of our reason. An avalanche has a character, which even a heavier pile of snow has not; its character is in its massive movement, its incalculable possibilities.

It is for the artist to remind the world that with the truth of our expression we grow in truth. When the man-made world is less an expression of man’s creative soul than a mechanical device for some purpose of power, then it hardens itself, acquiring proficiency at the cost of the subtle suggestiveness of living growth. In his creative activities man makes nature one with his own life and love. But with his utilitarian energies he fights nature, banishes her from his world, deforms and defiles her with the ugliness of his ambitions.

The world of man’s own manufacture, with its discordant shrieks and swagger, impresses on him the scheme of a universe which has no touch of the person and therefore no ultimate significance. All the great civilizations that have become extinct must have come to their end through such wrong expression of humanity; through parasitism on a gigantic scale bred by wealth, by man’s clinging reliance on material resources; through a scoffing spirit of denial, of negation, robbing us of our means of sustenance in the path of truth.

It is for the artist to proclaim his faith in the everlasting Yes—to say: “I believe that there is an ideal hovering over and permeating the earth, an ideal of that paradise which is not the mere outcome of fancy, but the ultimate reality in which all things dwell and move.”

I believe that the vision of paradise is to be seen in the sunlight and the green of the earth, in the beauty of the human face and the wealth of human life, even in objects that are seemingly insignificant and unprepossessing. Everywhere in this earth the spirit of paradise is awake and sending forth its voice. It reaches our inner ear without our knowing it. It tunes our harp of life which sends our aspiration in music beyond the finite, not only in prayers and hopes, but also in temples which are flames of fire in stone, in pictures which are dreams made everlasting, in the dance which is ecstatic meditation in the still center of movement.
Modern Poetry

Writing about modern English poets is by no means an easy task, for who defines the limit of the modern age in terms of the almanac? It is not so much a question of time as of spirit.

After flowing straight for a while, most rivers take a sudden turn. Likewise, literature does not always follow the straight path; when it takes a turn, that turn must be called modern. We call it *adhunik* in Bengali. This modernity depends not upon time but upon temperament.

The poetry to which I was introduced in my boyhood might have been classed as modern in those days. Poetry had taken a new turn, beginning from Robert Burns, and the same movement brought forth many other great poets, such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats.

The manners and customs of a society are shown in social usage. In countries where these social customs suppress all freedom and individual taste, man becomes a puppet, and his conduct conforms meticulously to social etiquette. Society appreciates this traditional and habitual way of life. Sometimes literature remains in this groove for long periods of time, and whosoever wears the sacred marks of perfect literary style is looked upon as a saintly person. During the age of English poetry that followed Burns, the barriers of style were broken down, and temperament made its debut. “The lake adorned with lotus and the lily” becomes a lake seen through the special view of official blinkers fashioned in the classic workshop. When a daring writer removes those blinkers and catch phrases, and looks upon the lake with open eyes, he also opens up a view through which the lake assumes different aspects and various fancies. But classic judgment cries “fie for shame” on him.

When we began to read English poetry, this unconventionally individualistic mood had already been acknowledged in literature, and the clamor raised by the *Edinburgh Review* had died down. Even so, that period of our life was a new era in modernism.

In those days, the sign of modernism in poetry was an individual’s measure of delight. Wordsworth expressed in his own style the spirit of delight that he realized in nature. Shelley’s was a Platonic con-
temptation accompanied by a spirit of revolt against every kind of obstacle, political, religious or otherwise. Keats's poetry was wrought out of the meditation and creation of beauty. In that age, the stream of poetry took a turn from outwardness to inwardness.

A poet's deepest feelings strive for immortality by assuming a form in language. Love adorns itself; it seeks to prove inward joy by outward beauty. There was a time when humanity in its moments of leisure sought to beautify that portion of the universe with which it came into contact, and this outer adornment was the expression of its inner love, and with this love, there could be no indifference. In those days, in the exuberance of his sense of beauty man began to decorate the common articles of daily use; his inspiration lent creative power to his fingers. In every land and village, household utensils and the adornment of the home and person bound man, in color and form, to these outward insignia of life. Many ceremonies were evolved for adding zest to social life, many new melodies, arts and crafts in wood and metal, clay and stone, silk, wool and cotton. In those days, the husband called his wife: "beloved disciple in the fine arts." The bank balance did not constitute the principal asset of the married couple in the work of setting up house; the arts were a more necessary item. Flower garlands were woven, the art of dancing was taught, accompanied by lessons in the vina, the flute and singing, and young women knew how to paint the ends of their saris of China silk. Then, there was beauty in human relationships.

The English poets with whom we came into contact in my early youth saw the universe with their own eyes; it had become their personal property. Not only did their own imaginations, opinions and tastes humanize and intellectualize the universe, but they molded it according to their individual desires. The universe of Wordsworth was specially "Wordsworthian," of Shelley, "Shelleyan," of Byron, "Byronic." By creative magic it also became the reader's universe. The joy that we felt in the poet's world was the joy of enjoying the delight of a particular world aroma. The flower sent its invitation to the bee through a distinctive smell and color, and the note of invitation was sweet. The poet's invitation possessed a spontaneous charm. In the days when the chief bond between man and the universe was individuality, the personal touch in the invitation had to be fostered with
care, a sort of competition had to be set up in dress and ornament
and manners, in order to show oneself off to the best advantage.

Thus, we find that in the beginning of the nineteenth century the
tradition which held priority in the English poetry of the previous
age had given place to self-expression. This was called modernism.

But now that modernism is dubbed mid-Victorian senility and
made to recline on an easy chair in the next room. Now is the day of
the modernism of lopped skirts and lopped hair. Powder is applied to
the cheeks and rouge to the lips, and it is proclaimed that the days
of illusion are over. But there is always illusion at every step of the
creation, and it is only the variety of that illusion which plays so
many tunes in so many forms. Science has thoroughly examined every
pulse beat, and declares that at the root of things there is no illusion;
there is carbon and nitrogen, there is physiology and psychology. We
old-fashioned poets thought the illusion was the main thing and car-
bon and physiology the by-products. Therefore, we must confess that
we had striven to compete with the Creator in spreading the snare
of illusion through rhyme and rhythm, language and style. In our
metaphors and nuances there was some hide-and-seek; we were unable
to lift aside that veil of modesty which adorns but does not contradict
truth. In the colored light that filtered through the haze, the dawns
and evenings appeared in a beauty as tender as a new bride. The
modern, Duhshshan,\(^3\) engaged in publicly disrobing Draupadi is a
sight we are not accustomed to. Is it merely habit that makes us
uncomfortable; is there no truth in this sense of shame; does not
Beauty become bankrupt when divested of the veil which reveals
rather than conceals?

But the modern age is in a hurry, and livelihood is more important.
Man races through his work and rushes through his pleasures in a
crowd of accelerating machines. The human being who used to create
his own intimate world at leisure now delegates his duties to a factory
and rigs up some sort of provisional affair to suit his needs according
to some official standard. Feasts are out of fashion; only meals remain.
There is no desire to consider whether life is in harmony with the
intellect, for the mind of man is also engaged in pulling the rope of
the huge car of livelihood. Instead of music, we hear hoarse shouts of
"Push, boys, push!" He has to spend most of his time with the crowd,
not in the company of his friends; his mentality is the mentality of the hustler. In the midst of all this bustle he has no will power to bypass unadorned ugliness.

Which path must poetry now follow, then, and what is her destination? It is not possible these days to follow one's own taste, to select, to arrange. Science does not select, it accepts whatever is; it does not appraise by the standard of personal taste nor embellish with the eagerness of personal involvement. The chief delight of the scientific mind consists in curiosity, not in forming ties of relationship. It does not regard what "I" want as the main consideration, but rather what the thing in itself exactly is, leaving "me" out of the question; and without "me," the preparation of illusion is unnecessary.

Therefore, in the process of economizing that is being carried out in the poetry of this scientific age, it is adornment that has suffered the biggest loss. A fastidious selectivity in the matter of rhyme, rhythm and words has become almost obsolete. The change is not taking place smoothly, but in order to break the spell of the past, it has become the fashion to repudiate it aggressively, like trying to arrange bits of broken glass in an ugly manner, lest the selective faculty should enter the house by jumping over the garden wall. A poet writes, "I am the greatest laugh of all, greater than the sun, than the oak tree, than the frog and Apollo." "Than the frog and Apollo" is where the bits of broken glass come in, out of fear that someone will think that the poet is arranging his words sweetly and prettily. If the word "sea" were used instead of "frog," the modernists might object to it as regular poetizing. That may be so, but mentioning the frog is a more regular poetizing of the opposite kind. That is to say, it is not introduced naturally, but is like intentionally walking on your toes; that would be modern.

But the fact of the matter is, the days are gone for the frog to be admitted into poetry with the same respect as other creatures. In the category of reality, the frog now belongs to a higher class than Apollo. I do not wish to regard the frog with contempt; rather, in an appropriate context, the croaking laugh of the frog might be juxtaposed with the laugh of the poet's beloved, even if she objected. But even according to the most ultra-scientific theory of equality, the laugh of the sun, of the oak tree, of Apollo, is not that of the frog. It has been dragged in by force in order to destroy the illusion.
Today, this veil of illusion must be removed and the thing must be seen exactly as it is. The illusive dye which colored the nineteenth century has now faded, and the mere suggestion of sweetness is not enough to satisfy one’s hunger—something tangible is required. When we say that smelling is half the eating, we exaggerate by nearly three quarters. Let me translate a few lines from a poem addressed to a beauty of bygone days.

You are beautiful and faded
Like and old opera tune
Played upon a harpsichord;
Or like the sun-flooded silks
Of an eighteenth-century boudoir.
In your eyes
Smoulder the fallen roses of outlived minutes,
And the perfume of your soul
Is vague and suffusing,
With the pungence of sealed spice-jars.
Your half-tones delight me,
And I grow mad with gazing
At your blent colors.

My vigor is a new-minted penny,
Which I cast at your feet.
Gather it up from the dust,
That its sparkle may amuse you.

This kind of modern coinage is cheaper but stronger, and very definite; it clearly sounds the modern note. Old-fashioned charm had an intoxicating effect, but this poem has insolence; and there is nothing misty about it.

The subject matter of modern poetry does not seek to attract the mind by its charm. Its strength consists in firm self-reliance, that which is called “character” in English. It calls out: Ho there! behold me, here am I. The same poetess, whose name is Amy Lowell, has written a poem on a shop of red slippers. The theme is that in the evening snowflakes are whirling outside in the wind; inside, behind polished glass widows, rows of red slippers hang like garlands, “like
stalactites of blood, flooding the eyes of passers-by with dripping color, jamming their crimson reflections against the windows of cabs and tram-cars, screaming their claret and salmon into the teeth of the sleet, plopping their little round maroon lights upon the tops of umbrellas. The row of white, sparkling shop-fronts is gashed and bleeding, it bleeds red slippers." The whole poem deals with slippers.

This is called impersonal. There is no ground for being particularly attached to these garlands of slippers, either as a buyer or a seller, but one has to stop and look; as soon as the character of the picture as a whole becomes apparent, it no longer remains trifling. Those concerned with meaning will ask, "What does it all mean, sir? Why so much bother about slippers, even if they are red?" To which one replies—"Just look at them yourself." But the questioner asks, "What's the good of looking?" To which there is no reply.

Let us take another example. There is a poem by Ezra Pound called "A Study in Aesthetics," in which a girl walks along the street, and a boy in patched clothes cries out in uncontrollable excitement, "Oh! look, look, how beautiful!" Three years later, the poet meets the boy again during a great haul of sardines. The father and uncles box the fish in order to send them to the market at Brescia. The boy jumps about, handling the fish, and his elders scold him to be quiet. The boy strokes the neatly-arranged fish, and mutters to himself in a tone of satisfaction "How beautiful!" On hearing this the poet says, "I was mildly abashed."

The pretty girl and the sardines elicit the same comment, "How beautiful!" This observation is impersonal, pure and simple; even the slipper-shop is not outside its purview.

In the nineteenth century poetry was subjective in character; in the twentieth it is objective. Hence, emphasis is now laid on the realism of the subject-matter, not on its adornment; for adornment expresses individual taste, whereas the power of reality consists in expressing the subject itself.

Before making its appearance in literature, this modernism exposed itself in painting. By creating disturbances, it sought to contradict the idea that painting was one of the fine arts. The function of art is not to charm but to conquer the mind, it argued; its sign is not beauty but truth. It did not acknowledge the illusion of form but rather the advertisement of the whole. This form has no other intro-
duction to offer; it only wants to proclaim the fact that it is worth observing. This strong case for being observed is not made by appeals of gesture and posture, nor by copying nature, but by its own inherent truth, which is neither religious, moral, nor ideal—it is natural. That is to say, it must be acknowledged simply because it exists, just as we acknowledge the peacock and the vulture, just as we cannot deny the existence of either the pig or the docr.

Some are beautiful, others are ugly; some are useful, others harmful; but there is no possible pretext for discarding any from the sphere of creation. It is the same with literature and art. If any beauty has been created, it needs no apology; but if it possesses no innate strength of being, only sweetness, then it must be rejected.

Hence, present-day literature that has accepted the creed of modernity, scorns to keep caste by carefully adjusting itself to bygone standards of aristocracy: it does not pick and choose. Eliot's poetry is modern in this sense, but not Bridges'. Eliot writes:

The winter evening settles down
With smell of steaks in passageways.
Six o'clock.
The burnt out ends of smoky days.
And now a gusty shower wraps
The grimy scraps
Of withered leaves about your feet
And newspapers from vacant lots;
The showers beat
On broken blinds and chimney-pots.
And at the corner of the street
A lonely cab-horse steams and stumps.
And then the lighting of the lamps.

Then comes a description of a muddy morning filled with the smell of stale beer. On such a morning, the following words are addressed to a girl:

You tossed a blanket from the bed,
You lay upon your back, and waited;
You dozed, and watched the night revealing
The thousand sordid images
Of which your soul was constituted;

And this is the account given of the man:

His soul stretched tight across the skies
That fade behind a city block,
Or trampled by insistent feet
At four and five and six o'clock;
And short square fingers stuffing pipes,
And evening newspapers, and eyes
Assured of certain certainties,
The conscience of a blackened street
Impatient to assume the world.

In the midst of this smoky, this muddy, this altogether dingy
morning and evening, full of many stale odors, and waste papers, the
opposite picture is evoked in the poet's mind. He says:

I am moved by fancies that are curled
Around these images, and cling:
The notion of some infinitely gentle
Infinitely suffering thing.

Here the link between Apollo and the frog is broken. Here the
croaking of the frog in the well hurts the laughter of Apollo. It is
clearly evident that the poet is not absolutely and scientifically im-
personal. His loathing for this tawdry world is expressed through
the very description he gives of it. Hence the bitter words with which
he ends the poem:

Wipe your hand across your mouth, and laugh;
The worlds revolve like ancient women
Gathering fuel in vacant lots.?

The poet's distaste for this gathering world is evident. The differ-
ence from the past consists in there being no desire to delude oneself
with an imaginary world of rosy dreams. The poet makes his poetry
trudge through this mire regardless of his laundered clothes; not
because he is fond of mud, but because in this muddy world one must look at mud with open eyes, and accept it. If Apollo's laugh reaches one's ears in the mud, well and good; if not, then one need not despise the loud, leaping laughter of the frog. One can look at it for a moment in the context of the universe; there is something to be said for this. The frog will seem out of place in the cultured language of the drawing-room; but then most of the world lies outside the drawing-room. . . .

But if modernism has any philosophy, and if that philosophy is to be called impersonal, then one must admit that this attitude of aggressive disbelief and calumny toward the universe, is also a personal mental aberration owing to the sudden revolution. This also is an illusion, in which there is no serious attempt to accept reality naturally in a calm and dispassionate frame of mind. Many people think that this aggressiveness, this wantonly destructive challenging is what is called modernity.

I myself don't think so. Even though thousands of people are attacked by influenza today, I shall not say that influenza is the natural condition of the body in modern times. The natural bodily state exists behind influenza.

Pure modernism, then, consists in looking upon the universe, not in a personal and self-regarding manner, but in an impersonal and matter-of-fact manner. This point of view is bright and pure, and there is real delight in this unclouded vision. In the same dispassionate way that modern science analyzes reality, modern poetry looks upon the universe as a whole; this is what is eternally modern.

But, actually, it is nonsense to call this modern. The joy of a natural and detached way of looking at things belongs to no particular age; it belongs to everyone whose eyes know how to wander over the naked earth. It is over a thousand years since the Chinese poet Li-Po wrote his verses, but he was a modern; he looked upon the universe with freshly-opened eyes. In a verse of four lines he writes simply:

Why do I live among the green mountains?
I laugh and answer not, my soul is serene;
It dwells in another heaven and earth belonging to no man,
The peach trees are in flower, and the water flows on. . . .

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Another picture:

Blue water . . . a clear moon . . .
In the moonlight the white herons are flying.
Listen! Do you hear the girls who gather water-chestnuts?
They are going home in the night, singing.⁹

Another:

Naked I lie in the green forest of summer . . .
Too lazy to wave my white-feathered fan.
I hang my cap on a crag,
And bare my head to the wind that comes
Blowing through the pine trees.¹⁰

A river merchant's wife writes:

I would play, plucking flowers by the gate;
My hair scarcely covered my forehead, then.
You would come, riding on your bamboo horse,
And loiter about the bench with green plums for toys.
So we both dwelt in Chang-kan town,
We were two children, suspecting nothing.

At fourteen I became your wife,
And so bashful I could never bare my face,
But hung my head, and turned to the dark wall;
You would call me a thousand times,
But I could not look back even once.

At fifteen I was able to compose my eyebrows,
And beg you to love me till we were dust and ashes.

I was sixteen when you went on a long journey.
Traveling beyond the Ken-Tang gorge,
Where the giant rocks heap up the swift river,
And the rapids are not passable in May.
Did you hear the monkeys wailing
Up on the skyey height of the crags?

Do you know your footmarks by our gate are old,
And each and every one is filled up with green moss?
The mosses are too deep for me to sweep away;
And already in the autumn wind the leaves are falling.

The yellow butterflies of October
Flutter in pairs over the grass of the west garden
My heart aches at seeing them . . .
I sit sorrowing alone, and alas!
The vermillion of my face is fading.

Some day when you return down the river,
If you will write me a letter beforehand,
I will come to meet you—the way is not long—
I will come as far as the Long Wind Bench instantly.11

In this poem the sentiment is neither maudlin nor ridiculous.
The subject is familiar, and there is feeling. If the tone were sarcastic
and there was ridicule, then the poem would be modern, because the
moderns scorn to acknowledge in poetry that which everybody ac-
knowledges naturally. Most probably a modern poet would have
added at the end of this poem that the husband went his way after
wiping his eyes and looking back repeatedly, and the girl at once
set about frying dried prawn fish-balls. For whom? In reply there
are a line-and-a-half of asterisks. The old-fashioned reader would ask,
“What does this mean?” The modern poet would answer “Things
happen like this.” The reader would say, “but they also happen oth-
erwise.” And the modern would answer, “Yes, they do, but that is too
respectable. Unless it sheds its refinement, it does not become mod-
ern. . . .”

Edwin Arlington Robinson has described an aristocrat thus:

Whenever Richard Cory went down town,
We people on the pavement looked at him:
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,  
Clean favored, and imperially slim.

And he was always quietly arrayed,  
And he was always human when he talked;  
But still he fluttered pulses when he said,  
"Good morning," and he glittered when he walked.

And he was rich—yes, richer than a king—  
And admirably schooled in every grace:  
In fine, we thought that he was everything  
To make us wish that we were in his place.

So on we worked, and waited for the light,  
And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;  
And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,  
Went home and put a bullet through his head.\textsuperscript{13}

There is no modern sarcasm or loud laughter in this poem; on the contrary, there is pathos, which consists in the fact that there may be some fatal disease lurking inside the apparently healthy and beautiful.

He whom we consider rich has a hidden personality. The anchorites spoke in the same way. They remind the living that one day they would go to the burning-ground sling on bamboo-poles. European monks have described how the decomposed body beneath the soil is eaten by worms. In dissertations on morality we have seen attempts to destroy our illusion by reminding us that the body which seems beautiful is a repulsive compound of bones and flesh and blood and fluids. The best way of cultivating detachment is repeatedly to instil into our minds a contempt for the reality which we perceive. But the poet is not a disciple of detachment, he has come to cultivate attachment. Is the modern age so very degenerate that even the poet is infected with the atmosphere of cremation, that he begins to take pleasure in saying that which we consider great is decayed, that which we admire as beautiful is untouchable at the core? . . .

The mid-Victorian age felt a respect for reality and wished to ac-
cord it a place of honor; the modern age thinks it part of its program to insult reality and tear aside all the veils of decency.

If you call a reverence for universal things sentimentalism, then you must also call a rebellion against them by the same name. If the mind becomes bitter, for whatever reason, the vision can never be natural. Hence, if the mid-Victorian age is to be ridiculed as being the leader of ultra-respectability, then the Edwardian age must also be ridiculed with the opposite adjectives. The thing is not natural and therefore not perennial. As for science, so for art, the detached mind is the best vehicle. Europe has gained that mind in science, but not in literature.

Japanese Poetry

. . . This continual curtailment of one’s self-expression is to be found in their verse also. Often a poem consists of no more than three lines, but these are sufficient both for poets and readers. That is why I have never heard anyone singing in the streets since I have been here. The hearts of these people are not resonant like a waterfall, but silent like a lake. All their poems which I have heard are picture-poems, not song-poems. When the heart aches and burns, then life is spent; the Japanese spend very little in this direction. Their inner self finds complete expression in their sense of beauty, which is independent of self-interest. We do not have to break our hearts over flowers and birds or the moon. Our only connection with them is the enjoyment of beauty; they do not hurt us anywhere, or deprive us of anything; our lives are in no wise maimed by them. That is why three lines are enough.

Two old Japanese poems will serve to illustrate my meaning:

Ancient pool,
Frogs leaping,
Splash of water.

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Finished! No more is necessary. The mind of the Japanese reader is all eyes. An ancient pool, dark, silent, deserted by man. As soon as a frog leaps into it, sound is heard, showing how silent the pool is. The picture of this old pool must be sketched in the mind; consequently, only that much has been suggested by the poet; anything more would be unnecessary.

Another poem:

Rotten bough,
   A crow,
   Autumn.

No more! In autumn there are no leaves on the trees, one or two branches are rotting, on one of them sits a crow. In cold countries, autumn is the season of falling leaves, fading flowers, skies leaden-hued with mist; this season brings to mind a sense of death. That a black crow is sitting on a rotten bough is enough to call up before the mind's eye of the reader all the emptiness and desolation of autumn. The poet introduces the subject, then steps aside. The reason why he has to retire so quickly is because the Japanese reader's power of mental vision is great.

Here is another example of a poem, in which it seems to me that India and Japan have met.

Heaven and earth are flowers,
The gods and Buddha are flowers,
The heart of man is the soul of the flower.

Japan looks upon heaven and earth as full-blown flowers; India says these two flowers have blossomed on the same stalk: heaven and earth, gods and Buddha. Had there been no human heart, then this flowering would have been only an external thing, but this beauty lies within the heart of man.

However that may be, there is not only brevity of wording in these poems, there is also brevity of feeling which is not disturbed by the heart's emotion; it may be called the heart's economy. I think there is something deeply symbolical of Japan in this.
Tagore did not claim to have a philosophical system, nor was he a theologian with organized religious beliefs or affiliations. That is why he often chose to describe his intuitive faith as a poet's religion, tracing his poetry and thoughts to encounters with "experiential reality." It is evident that he was a believer in the deepest and even traditional sense, and was a man of prayer, but he used his freedom as an artist in seeking the newness and wonder of creation through every avenue of the mind, the senses, and the processes of his own spiritual growth.

In this section of "Philosophical Meditations," a wide range of his religious, philosophical, and esthetic writings has been included. It will be seen that he did not feel or accept any break between the highest levels of science or of creative art, nor did he think that religion excluded any of the fundamental areas of man's personal and interpersonal experience. He believed in what he called "the processes of self-creation." To the extent that we are using our resources, which he would call "divine" in the sense that all our powers and potentialities are not demonstrable, and that they are "given" to us by an authority greater than ourselves, we are able to grow into an awareness of and establish a conscious relationship with God's purpose in creation.

Increasingly, in his later years, particularly in the Hibbert Lectures at Oxford, 1930, and in his addresses on "Man" at the Andhra University in 1933, he stressed man's need to know the ground of diverse, authentic religious experiences which have come to human society through the great traditions of religion. He did not believe in a merger of religions as such, or in any syncretistic attempt to evolve one religion out of many, but he did urge his fellow beings to discover and connect the basic
and continuous history of man's underlying divinity (or divine humanity), which holds together the entire fabric of civilization.

*The Religion of Man* (Allen & Unwin, London, 1931) comprises the Hibbert Lectures delivered in Oxford at Manchester College during May, 1930, and includes gleanings from Tagore's thoughts on religion which were harvested from earlier lectures, addresses, and conversations. The chapter reproduced here, "The Artist," was one of the Hibbert Lectures.

*Personality* (Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1917) is one of the collections of lectures delivered during Tagore's 1916–1917 lecture tour of the United States.

"Mahatma Gandhi" is a speech given by Tagore on October 2, 1937. Gandhi and Tagore, whom C. F. Andrews brought together, remained lifelong friends in spite of their differences of opinion on certain major issues. Their relationship began in 1915 when Gandhi and his Phoenix party of followers from Durban, South Africa, found shelter for a short time in Tagore's Santiniketan, before Gandhi established his own ashram at Sabarmati. Santiniketan kept Gandhi's birthday (October 2) as a red-letter day in its calendar, and whenever Tagore was present he would preside over the celebration. The speech printed here was translated into English by Surendranath Tagore, and published in the Winter, 1937, issue of the *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*.

*Creative Unity* (Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1922) is a book of essays and lectures delivered during Tagore's 1920–1921 tour of Europe and the United States.

*Our Universe* is the English title of *Visvaparichaya*, a treatise on astronomy that Tagore wrote in 1937 when he was seventy-six. It was translated into English by Indu Dutt for Meridian Books (London, 1958). The excerpt printed here is from the chapter called "The World of Stars."

"Thoughts from Tagore" are excerpts taken from Tagore's English works, published and unpublished, compiled and edited by C. F. Andrews.

"Thought Relics" are Tagore's own translations of passages from his weekly discourses entitled *Santiniketan* delivered during 1906–1909 at the prayer hall at Santiniketan. Tagore started translating them for use in his *Sadhanā* lectures in the United States, published in *Sadhanā* (The Macmillan Company, New York, 1913), and he added fresh translations while on his way to the West in 1920.
CHAPTER IX: THE ARTIST

The fundamental desire of life is the desire to exist. It claims from us a vast amount of training and experience about the necessaries of livelihood. Yet it does not cost me much to confess that the food that I have taken, the dress that I wear, the house where I have my lodging, represent a stupendous knowledge, practice and organization which I helplessly lack; for I find that I am not altogether despised for such ignorance and inefficiency. Those who read me seem fairly satisfied that I am nothing better than a poet or perhaps a philosopher—which latter reputation I do not claim and dare not hold through the precarious help of misinformation.

It is quite evident in spite of my deficiency that in human society I represent a vocation, which though superfluous has yet been held worthy of commendation. In fact, I am encouraged in my rhythmic futility by being offered moral and material incentives for its cultivation. If a foolish blackbird did not know how to seek its food, to build its nest, or to avoid its enemies, but specialized in singing, its fellow creatures, urged by their own science of genetics, would dutifully allow it to starve and perish. That I am not treated in a similar fashion is the evidence of an immense difference between the animal existence and the civilization of man. His great distinction dwells in the indefinite margin of life in him which affords a boundless background for his dreams and creations. And it is in this realm of freedom that he realizes his divine dignity, his great human truth, and is pleased when I as a poet sing victory to him, to man the self-revealer, who goes on exploring ages of creation to find himself in perfection.

Reality, in all its manifestations, reveals itself in the emotional and imaginative background of our mind. We know it, not because we can think of it, but because we directly feel it. And therefore, even if rejected by the logical mind, it is not banished from our consciousness. As an incident it may be beneficial or injurious, but as a revelation its value lies in the fact that it offers us an experience through emotion or imagination; we feel ourselves in a special field of realization. This feeling itself is delightful when it is not accompanied by any great
physical or moral risk; we love to feel even fear or sorrow if it is detached from all practical consequences. This is the reason of our enjoyment of tragic dramas, in which the feeling of pain rouses our consciousness to a white heat of intensity.

The reality of my own self is immediate and indubitable to me. Whatever else affects me in a like manner is real for myself, and it inevitably attracts and occupies my attention for its own sake, blends itself with my personality, making it richer and larger and causing it delight. My friend may not be beautiful, useful, rich or great, but he is real to me; in him I feel my own extension and my joy.

The consciousness of the real within me seeks for its own corroboration the touch of the real outside me. When it fails, the self in me is depressed. When our surroundings are monotonous and insignificant, having no emotional reaction upon our mind, we become vague to ourselves. For we are like pictures, whose reality is helped by the background if it is sympathetic. The punishment we suffer in solitary confinement consists in the obstruction to the relationship between the world of reality and the real in ourselves, causing the latter to become indistinct in a haze of inactive imagination: our personality is blurred, we miss the companionship of our own being through the diminution of our self. The world of our knowledge is enlarged for us through the extension of our information; the world of our personality grows in its area with a large and deeper experience of our personal self in our own universe through sympathy and imagination.

As this world, that can be known through knowledge, is limited to us owing to our ignorance, so the world of personality, that can be realized by our own personal self, is also restricted by the limit of our sympathy and imagination. In the dim twilight of insensitiveness a large part of our world remains to us like a procession of nomadic shadows. According to the stages of our consciousness we have more or less been able to identify ourselves with this world, if not as a whole, at least in fragments; and our enjoyment dwells in that wherein we feel ourselves thus united. In art we express the delight of this unity by which this world is realized as humanly significant to us. I have my physical, chemical and biological self; my knowledge of it extends through the extension of my knowledge of the physical, chemical and biological world. I have my personal self, which has its communication with our feelings, sentiments and imaginations, which
lends itself to be colored by our desires and shaped by our imageries. Science urges us to occupy by our mind the immensity of the knowable world; our spiritual teacher enjoins us to comprehend by our soul the infinite spirit which is in the depth of the moving and changing facts of the world; the urging of our artistic nature is to realize the manifestation of personality in the world of appearance, the reality of existence which is in harmony with the real within us. Where this harmony is not deeply felt, there we are aliens and perpetually homesick. For man by nature is an artist; he never receives passively and accurately in his mind a physical representation of things around him. There goes on a continual adaptation, a transformation of facts into human imagery, through constant touches of his sentiments and imagination. The animal has the geography of its birthplace; man has his country, the geography of his personal self. The vision of it is not merely physical; it has its artistic unity, it is a perpetual creation. In his country, his consciousness being unobstructed, man extends his relationship, which is of his own creative personality. In order to live efficiently man must know facts and their laws. In order to be happy he must establish harmonious relationship with all things with which he has dealings. Our creation is the modification of relationship.

The great men who appear in our history remain in our mind not as a static fact but as a living historical image. The sublime suggestions of their lives become blended into a noble consistency in legends made living in the life of ages. Those men with whom we live we constantly modify in our minds, making them more real to us than they would be in a bare presentation. Men's ideal of womanhood and women's ideal of manliness are created by the imagination through a mental grouping of qualities and conducts according to our hopes and desires, and men and women consciously and unconsciously strive toward its attainment. In fact, they reach a degree of reality for each other according to their success in adapting these respective ideals to their own nature. To say that these ideals are imaginary and therefore not true is wrong in man's case. His true life is in his own creation, which represents the infinity of man. He is naturally indifferent to things that merely exist; they must have some ideal value for him, and then only his consciousness fully recognizes them as real. Men are never true in their isolated self, and their imagination is the
faculty that brings before their mind the vision of their own greater being.

We can make truth ours by actively modulating its inter-relations. This is the work of art; for reality is not based in the substance of things but in the principle of relationship. Truth is the infinite pursued by metaphysics; fact is the infinite pursued by science, while reality is the definition of the infinite which relates truth to the person. Reality is human; it is what we are conscious of, by which we are affected, that which we express. When we are intensely aware of it, we are aware of ourselves and it gives us delight. We live in it, we always widen its limits. Our arts and literature represent this creative activity which is fundamental in man.

But the mysterious fact about it is that though the individuals are separately seeking their expression, their success is never individualistic in character. Men must find and feel and represent in all their creative works man the eternal, the creator. Their civilization is a continual discovery of the transcendent humanity. In whatever it fails it shows the failure of the artist, which is the failure in expression; and that civilization perishes in which the individual thwarts the revelation of the universal. For reality is the truth of man, who belongs to all times, and any individualistic madness of men against man cannot thrive for long.

Man is eager that his feeling for what is real to him must never die; it must find an imperishable form. The consciousness of this self of mine is so intensely evident to me that it assumes the character of immortality. I cannot imagine that it ever has been or can be non-existent. In a similar manner all things that are real to me are for myself eternal, and therefore worthy of a language that has a permanent meaning. We know individuals who have the habit of inscribing their names on the walls of some majestic monument of architecture. It is a pathetic way of associating their own names with some works of art which belong to all times and to all men. Our hunger for reputation comes from our desire to make objectively real that which is inwardly real to us. He who is inarticulate is insignificant, like a dark star that cannot prove itself. He ever waits for the artist to give him his fullest worth, not for anything specially excellent in him but for the wonderful fact that he is what he certainly is, that he carries in him the eternal mystery of being.
A Chinese friend of mine while traveling with me in the streets of Peking suddenly exclaimed with a vehement enthusiasm: "Look, here is a donkey!" Surely it was an utterly ordinary donkey, like an indisputable truism, needing no special introduction from him. I was amused; but it made me think. This animal is generally classified as having certain qualities that are not recommendable and then hurriedly dismissed. It was obscured to me by an encyclopaedia of commonplace associations; I was lazily certain that I knew it and therefore I hardly saw it. But my friend, who possessed the artist mind of China, did not treat it with a cheap knowledge but could see it afresh and recognize it as real. When I say real, I mean that it did not remain at the outskirts of his consciousness tied to a narrow definition, but it easily blended in his imagination, produced a vision, a special harmony of lines, colors and life and movement, and became intimately his own. The admission of a donkey into a drawing-room is violently opposed; yet there is no prohibition against its finding a place in a picture which may be admiringly displayed on the drawing-room wall.

The only evidence of truth in art exists when it compels us to say, "I see." A donkey we may pass by in nature, but a donkey in art we must acknowledge even if it be a creature that disreputably ignores all its natural history responsibility, even if it resembles a mushroom in its head and a palm-leaf in its tail.

In the Upanishad it is said in a parable that there are two birds sitting on the same bough, one of which feeds and the other looks on. This is an image of the mutual relationship of the infinite being and the finite self. The delight of the bird which looks on is great, for it is a pure and free delight. There are both of these birds in man himself, the objective one with its business of life, the subjective one with its disinterested joy of vision.

A child comes to me and commands me to tell her a story. I tell her of a tiger which is disgusted with the black stripes on its body and comes to my frightened servant demanding a piece of soap. The story gives my little audience immense pleasure, the pleasure of a vision, and her mind cries out, "It is here, for I see!" She knows a tiger in the book of natural history, but she can see the tiger in the story of mine.

I am sure that even this child of five knows that it is an impossible
tiger that is out on its untigerly quest of an absurd soap. The delightfulness of the tiger for her is not in its beauty, its usefulness, or its probability; but in the undoubted fact that she can see it in her mind with a greater clearness of vision than she can the walls around her—the walls that brutally shout their evidence of certainty which is merely circumstantial. The tiger in the story is inevitable, it has the character of a complete image, which offers its testimonial of truth in itself. The listener's own mind is the eyewitness whose direct experience could not be contradicted. A tiger must be like every other tiger in order that it may have its place in a book of science; there it must be a commonplace tiger to be at all tolerated. But in the story it is uncommon, it can never be reduplicated. We know a thing because it belongs to a class; we see a thing because it belongs to itself. The tiger of the story completely detached itself from all others of its kind and easily assumed a distinct individuality in the heart of the listener. The child could vividly see it, because by the help of her imagination it became her own tiger, one with herself, and this union of the subject and object gives us joy. Is it because there is no separation between them in truth, the separation being the maya, which is creation?

There come in our history occasions when the consciousness of a large multitude becomes suddenly illumined with the recognition of a reality which rises far above the dull obviousness of daily happenings. The world becomes vivid; we see, we feel it with all our soul. Such an occasion there was when the voice of Buddha reached distant shores across physical and moral impediments. Then our life and our world found their profound meaning of reality in their relation to the central person who offered us emancipation of love. Men, in order to make this great human experience ever memorable, determined to do the impossible; they made rocks to speak, stones to sing, caves to remember; their cry of joy and hope took immortal forms along the hills and deserts, across barren solitudes and populous cities. A gigantic creative endeavor built up its triumph in stupendous carvings, defying obstacles that were overwhelming. Such heroic activity over the greater part of the Eastern continents clearly answers the question: "What is Art?" It is the response of man's creative soul to the call of the real.

Once there came a time, centuries ago in Bengal, when the divine
love drama that has made its eternal playground in human souls was vividly revealed by a personality radiating its intimate realization of God. The mind of a whole people was stirred by a vision of the world as an instrument, through which sounded an invitation to the meeting of bliss. The ineffable mystery of God's love-call, taking shape in an endless panorama of colors and forms, inspired activity in music that overflowed the restrictions of classical conventionalism. Our kirtan music of Bengal came to its being like a star flung up by a burning whirlpool of emotion in the heart of a whole people, and their consciousness was aflame with a sense of reality that must be adequately acknowledged.

The question may be asked as to what place music occupies in my theory that art is for evoking in our mind the deep sense of reality in its richest aspect. Music is the most abstract of all the arts, as mathematics is in the region of science. In fact these two have a deep relationship with each other. Mathematics is the logic of numbers and dimensions. It is therefore employed as the basis of our scientific knowledge. When taken out of its concrete associations and reduced to symbols, it reveals its grand structural majesty, the inevitableness of its own perfect concord. Yet there is not merely a logic but also a magic of mathematics which works at the world of appearance, producing harmony—the cadence of inter-relationship. This rhythm of harmony has been extracted from its usual concrete context, and exhibited through the medium of sound. And thus the pure essence of expressiveness in existence is offered in music. Expressiveness finds the least resistance in sound, having freedom unencumbered by the burden of facts and thoughts. This gives it a power to arouse in us an intimate feeling of reality. In the pictorial, plastic and literary arts, the object and our feelings with regard to it are closely associated, like the rose and its perfumes. In music, the feeling distilled in sound becomes itself an independent object. It assumes a tune-form which is definite, but a meaning which is undefinable, and yet which grips our mind with a sense of absolute truth.

It is the magic of mathematics, the rhythm which is in the heart of all creation, which moves in the atom and, in its different measures, fashions gold and lead, the rose and the thorn, the sun and the planets. These are the dance steps of numbers in the arena of time and space, which weave the maya, the patterns of appearance, the
incessant flow of change, that ever is and is not. It is the rhythm that churns up images from the vague and makes tangible what is elusive. This is *maya,* this is the art in creation, and art in literature, which is the magic of rhythm.

And must we stop here? What we know as intellectual truth, is that also not a rhythm of the relationship of facts, that weaves the pattern of theory, and produces a sense of convincingness to a person who somehow feels sure that he knows the truth? We believe any fact to be true because of a harmony, a rhythm in reason, the process of which is analyzable by the logic of mathematics, but not its result in me, just as we can count the notes but cannot account for the music. The mystery is that I am convinced, and this also belongs to the *maya* of creation, whose one important, indispensable factor is this self-conscious personality that I represent.

And the Other? I believe it is also a self-conscious personality, which has its eternal harmony with mine.

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FROM *Personality*

THE WORLD OF PERSONALITY

... There is a point where in the mystery of existence contradictions meet; where movement is not all movement and stillness is not all stillness; where the idea and the form, the within and the without, are united; where infinite becomes finite, yet not losing its infinity. If this meeting is dissolved, then things become unreal.

When I see a rose leaf through a microscope, I see it in a more extended space than it usually occupies for me. The more I extend the space the more it becomes vague. So that in the pure infinite it is neither rose-leaf nor anything at all. It only becomes a rose-leaf where the infinite reaches finitude at a particular point. When we disturb that point toward the small or the great, the rose-leaf begins to assume unreality.

It is the same with regard to time. If by some magic I could re-

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main in my normal plane of time while enhancing its quickness with regard to the rose leaf, condensing, let us say, a month into a minute, then it would rush through its point of first appearance to that of its final disappearance with such a speed that I would hardly be able to see it. One can be sure that there are things in this world which are known by other creatures, but which, since their time is not synchronous with ours, are nothing to us. The phenomenon which a dog perceives as a smell does not keep its time with that of our nerves, therefore it falls outside our world.

Let me give an instance. We have heard of prodigies in mathematics who can do difficult sums in an incredibly short time. With regard to mathematical calculations their minds are acting in a different plane of time, not only from ours, but also from their own in other spheres of life. As if the mathematical part of their minds is living in a comet, while the other parts are the inhabitants of this earth. Therefore the process through which their minds rush into their results is not only invisible to us, it is not even seen by themselves.

It is a well-known fact that often our dreams flow in a measure of time different from that of our waking consciousness. The fifty minutes of our sundial of dreamland may be represented by five minutes of our clock. If from the vantage of our wakeful time we could watch these dreams, they would rush past us like an express train. Or if from the window of our swift-flying dreams we could watch the slower world of our waking consciousness, it would seem receding away from us at a great speed. In fact if the thoughts that move in other minds than our own were open to us, our perception of them would be different from theirs, owing to our difference of mental time. If we could adjust our focus of time according to our whims, we would see the waterfall standing still and the pine forest running fast like the waterfall of a green Niagara.

So that it is almost a truism to say that the world is what we perceive it to be. We imagine that our mind is a mirror, that it is more or less accurately reflecting what is happening outside us. On the contrary our mind itself is the principal element of creation. The world, while I am perceiving it, is being incessantly created for myself in time and space.

The variety of creation is owing to the mind seeing different phe-
nomina in different foci of time and space. When it sees stars in a space which may be metaphorically termed as dense, then they are close to each other and motionless. When it sees planets, it sees them in much less density of sky and then they appear far apart and moving. If we could have the sight to see the molecules of a piece of iron in a greatly different space, they could be seen in movement. But because we see things in various adjustments of time and space therefore iron is iron, water is water, and clouds are clouds for us. . . .

Walt Whitman shows in his poems a great dexterity in changing his position of mind and thus changing his world with him from that of other people, rearranging the meaning of things in different proportions and forms. Such mobility of mind plays havoc with things whose foundations lie fixed in convention. Therefore he says in one of his poems:

I hear it was charged against me that I sought
to destroy institutions,
But really I am neither for nor against institutions,
(What indeed have I in common with them? or what
with the destruction of them?)
Only I will establish in the Mannahatta and in every
city of these States inland and seaboard,
And in the fields and woods, and above every keel little
or large that dents the water,
Without edifices or rules or trustees or any argument,
The institution of the dear love of comrades.

Institutions which are so squarely built, so solid and thick, become like vapor in this poet's world. It is like a world of Röntgen rays, for which some of the solid things of the world have no existence whatever. On the other hand, love of comrades, which is a fluid thing in the ordinary world, which seems like clouds that pass and repass the sky without leaving a trace of a track, is to the poet's world more stable than all institutions. Here he sees things in a time in which the mountains pass away like shadows, but the rain clouds with their seeming transitoriness are eternal. He perceives in his world that this love of comrades, like clouds that require no solid foundation, is stable

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and true, is established without edifices, rules, trustees or arguments.

When the mind of a person like Walt Whitman moves in a time different from that of others, his world does not necessarily come to ruin through dislocation, because there in the center of his world dwells his own personality. All the facts and shapes of this world are related to this central creative power; therefore, they become interrelated spontaneously. His world may be like a comet among stars, different in its movements from others, but it has its own consistency because of the central personal force. It may be a bold world or even a mad world, with an immense orbit swept by its eccentric tail, yet it is a world.

But with science it is different. For she tries to do away altogether with that central personality, in relation to which the world is a world. Science sets up an impersonal and unalterable standard of space and time which is not the standard of creation. Therefore at its fatal touch the reality of the world is so hopelessly disturbed that it vanishes in an abstraction where things become nothing at all. For the world is not atoms and molecules or radio-activity or other forces, the diamond is not carbon, and light is not vibrations of ether. You can never come to the reality of creation by contemplating it from the point of view of destruction. Not only the world but God himself is divested of reality by science, which subjects him to analysis in the laboratory of reason outside our personal relationship and then describes the result as unknown and unknowable. It is a mere tautology to say that God is unknowable, when we leave altogether out of account the person who can and who does know him. It is the same thing as saying that food is uneatable when the eater is absent. Our dry moralists also play the same tricks with us in order to weary away our hearts from their desired objects. Instead of creating for us a world in which moral ideals find their natural places in beauty they begin to wreck the world that we have built ourselves, however imperfectly. They put moral maxims in the place of human personality and give us the view of things in their dissolution to prove that behind their appearances they are hideous deceptions. But when you deprive truth of its appearance, it loses the best part of its reality. For appearance is a personal relationship; it is for me. Of this appearance, which seems to be of the surface, but which carries the message of the inner spirit, Whitman has said:
Beginning my studies the first step pleas'd me so much,
The mere fact consciousness, these forms, the power of motion,
The least insect or animal, the senses, eye-sight, love,
The first step I say awed me and pleas'd me so much,
I have hardly gone and hardly wish'd to go any farther,
But stop and loiter all the time to sing it in ecstatic songs.

Our scientific world is our world of reasoning. It has its greatness and uses and attractions. We are ready to pay the homage due to it. But when it claims to have discovered the real world for us and laughs at the worlds of all simple-minded men, then we must say it is like a general grown intoxicated with his power, usurping the throne of his king. For the reality of the world belongs to the personality of man and not to reasoning, which is useful and great but which is not the man himself.

If we could fully know what a piece of music was in Beethoven's mind, we could ourselves become so many Beethovens. But because we cannot grasp its mystery, we may altogether distrust the element of Beethoven's personality in his sonata—though we are fully aware that its true value lies in its power of touching the depth of our own personality. But it is simpler to observe the facts when that sonata is played upon the piano. We can count the black and white keys of the keyboard, measure the relative lengths of the strings, the strength, velocity and order of sequence in the movements of fingers and triumphantly assert that this is Beethoven's sonata. Not only that, we can predict the accurate production of the same sonata wherever and whenever our experiment is repeated according to those observations. By constantly dealing with the sonata from this point of view we may forget that both in its origin and object dwell the personality of man, and however accurate and orderly may be the facts of the interactions of the fingers and strings they do not comprehend the ultimate reality of the music.

A game is a game where there is a player to play it. Of course, there is a law of the game which it is of use to us to analyze and to master. But if it be asserted that in this law is its reality, then we cannot
accept it. For the game is what it is to the players. The game changes its aspects according to the personality of its players: for some its end is the lust of gain, in others that of applause; some find in it the means for satisfying their social instinct, and there are others who approach it in the spirit of disinterested curiosity for studying its secrets. Yet all through its manifold aspects its law remains the same. For the nature of reality is the variedness of its unity. And the world is like this game to us—it is the same and yet it is not the same to us all.

Science deals with this element of sameness, the law of perspective and color combination, and not with the pictures—the pictures which are the creations of a personality and which appeal to the personality of those who see them. Science does it by eliminating from its field of research the personality of creation and fixing its attention only upon the medium of creation.

What is this medium? It is the medium of finitude which the Infinite Being sets before him for the purpose of his self-expression. It is the medium which represents his self-imposed limitations—the law of space and time, of form and movement. This law is reason, which is universal—reason which guides the endless rhythm of the creative idea, perpetually manifesting itself in its ever changing forms.

Our individual minds are the strings which catch the rhythmic vibrations of this universal mind and respond in music of space and time. The quality and number and pitch of our mind strings differ and their tuning has not yet come to its perfection, but their law is the law of the universal mind which is the instrument of finitude upon which the Eternal Player plays his dance music of creation.

Because of the mind instruments which we possess we also have found our place as creators. We create not only art and social organizations, but our inner nature and outer surroundings, the truth of which depends upon their harmony with the law of the universal mind. Of course, our creations are mere variations upon God's great theme of the universe. When we produce discords, they either have to end in a harmony or in silence. Our freedom as a creator finds its highest joy in contributing its own voice in the concert of the world-music.

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ON Mahatma Gandhi

... While India lay ... cramped and divided, betrayed by its own idealism, it was called upon to meet the greatest trial in her history, the challenge of Western imperialism. For the Aryans and the Muslims may have deprived a few Dravidian and Hindu dynasties of their rule in India, but they settled down among the people and their achievements became India's heritage. But here was a new impersonal empire, where the rulers were over us but not among us, who owned our land but could never belong to it. So disintegrated and demoralized were our people that many wondered if India could ever rise again by the genius of her own people, until there came on the scene a truly great soul, a great leader of men, in line with the tradition of the greatest sages of old, whom we are today assembled to honor—Mahatma Gandhi.¹ Today no one need despair of the future of the country, for the unconquerable spirit that creates has already been released. Mahatma Gandhi has shown us a way which, if we follow, shall not only save ourselves but may also help other peoples to save themselves.

He who has come to us today is above all distinguished by his freedom from any bias of personal or national selfishness. For the selfishness of the Nation can be a grandly magnified form of that same vice; the viciousness is there all the same. The standard of conduct followed by the class called politicians is not one of high ideals. They think nothing of uttering falsehoods, they have no compunction in vitally hurting others for their own aggrandizement. ... Such people plume themselves on being practical and do not hesitate to ally themselves with the forces of evil if they think that evil will accomplish their end. But tactics of this kind will not pass the audit of the Dispenser of our fortunes; so while we may admire their cleverness, we cannot revere them. Our reverence goes out to the Mahatma whose striving has ever been for truth; who, to the great good fortune of our country at this time of its entry into the new age, has never, for the sake of immediate results, advised or condoned any departure from the standard of universal morality.

He has shown the way how, without wholesale massacre, freedom may be won. There are doubtless but few amongst us who can rid
our minds of a reliance on violence, who can really believe that victory may be ours without recourse to it. For even in the Mahabharata, not to speak of the “civilized” warfare of the modern age, we find Dharmayuddha to be full of violence and cruelty. Now it has been declared that it is for us to yield up life, not to kill, and yet we shall win! A glorious message, indeed, not a counsel of strategy, not a means to a merely political end. In the course of unrighteous battle death means extinction; in the non-violent battle of righteousness something remains; after defeat victory, after death immortality. The Mahatma has realized this in his own life, and compels our belief in this truth.

As before, the genius of India has taken from her aggressors the most spiritually significant principle of their culture and fashioned of it a new message of hope for mankind. There is in Christianity the great doctrine that God became man in order to save humanity by taking the burden of its sin and suffering on Himself, here in this very world, not waiting for the next. That the starving must be fed, the ragged clad, has been emphasized by Christianity as no other religion has done. Charity, benevolence, and the like, no doubt have an important place in the religions of our country as well, but there they are in practice circumscribed within much narrower limits, and are only partially inspired by love of man. And to our great good fortune, Gandhiji was able to receive this teaching of Christ in a living way. It was fortunate that he had not to learn of Christianity through professional experts, but should have found in Tolstoi a teacher who realized the value of non-violence through the multifarious experience of his own life struggles. For it was this great gift from Europe that our country had all along been awaiting.

In the Middle Ages we also had received gifts from Muslim sources. Dadu, Kabir and other saints had proclaimed that purity and liberation are not for being hoarded up in any temple, but are wealth to which all humanity is entitled. We should have no hesitation in admitting freely that this message was inspired by contact with Islam. The best of men always accept the best of teaching, whenever and wherever it may be found, in religion, moral culture, or in the lives of individuals. But the Middle Ages are past, and we have stepped into a New Age. And now the best of men, Mahatma Gandhi, has come to us with this best of gifts from the West.
FROM Creative Unity

THE MODERN AGE

The terribly efficient method of repressing personality in the individuals and the races who have failed to resist it has, in the present scientific age, spread all over the world; and in consequence there have appeared signs of a universal disruption which seems not far off. Faced with the possibility of such a disaster, which is sure to affect the successful peoples of the world in their intemperate prosperity, the great powers of the West are seeking peace, not by curbing their greed, or by giving up the exclusive advantages which they have unjustly acquired, but by concentrating their forces for mutual security.

But can powers find their equilibrium in themselves? Power has to be made secure not only against power, but also against weakness; for there lies the peril of its losing balance. The weak are as great a danger for the strong as quicksand for an elephant. They do not assist progress because they do not resist, they only drag down. The people who grow accustomed to wield absolute power over others are apt to forget that by so doing they generate an unseen force which some day rends that power into pieces. The dumb fury of the downtrodden finds its awful support from the universal law of moral balance. The air which is so thin and unsubstantial gives birth to storms that nothing can resist. This has been proved in history over and over again, and stormy forces arising from the revolt of insulted humanity are openly gathering in the air at the present time.

Yet in the psychology of the strong the lesson is despised and no count taken of the terribleness of the weak. Have we never read of the castle of power, securely buttressed on all sides, in a moment dissolving in air at the explosion caused by the weak and outraged besiegers? Politicians calculate upon the number of mailed hands that are kept on the sword-like hilts; they do not possess the third eye to see the great invisible hand that clasps in silence the hand of the helpless and waits its time. The strong form their league by a combination of powers, driving the weak to form their own league alone
with their God. I know I am crying in the wilderness when I raise the voice of warning; and while the West is busy with its organization of a machine-made peace, it will still continue to nourish by its iniquities the underground forces of earthquake in the Eastern Continent. The West seems unconscious that science, by providing it with more and more power, is tempting it to suicide and encouraging it to accept the challenge of the disarmed; it does not know that the challenge comes from a higher source.

Two prophecies about the world's salvation are cherished in the hearts of the two great religions of the world. They represent the highest expectation of man, thereby indicating his faith in a truth which he instinctively considers as ultimate—the truth of love. These prophecies do not have a vision of fettering the world and reducing it to tameness by means of a close-linked power forged in the factory of a political steel trust. One of the religions has for its meditation the image of the Buddha who is to come, Maitreya, the Buddha of love; and he is to bring peace. The other religion waits for the coming of Christ. For Christ preached peace when he preached love, when he preached the oneness of the Father with the brothers who are many. And this was the truth of peace. Christ never held that peace was the best policy. For policy is not truth. The calculation of self-interest can never successfully fight the irrational force of passion—the passion which is perversion of love, and which can only be set right by the truth of love. So long as the powers build a league on the foundation of their desire for safety, secure enjoyment of gains, consolidation of past injustice, and putting off the reparation of wrongs, while their fingers still wriggle for greed and reek of blood, rifts will appear in their union; and in future their conflicts will take greater force and magnitude. It is political and commercial egoism which is the evil harbinger of war. By different combinations it changes its shape and dimensions, but not its nature. This egoism is still held sacred, and made a religion; and such a religion, by a mere change of temple, and by new committees of priests, will never save mankind. We must know that, as through science and commerce, the realization of the unity of the material world gives us power, so the realization of the great spiritual unity of man alone can give us peace. . . .
THE RELIGION OF THE FOREST

... When we know this world as alien to us, then its mechanical aspect takes prominence in our mind, and then we set up our machines and our methods to deal with it and make as much profit as our knowledge of its mechanism allows us to do. This view of things does not play us false, for the machine has its place in this world. And not only this material universe, but human beings also may be used as machines and made to yield powerful results. This aspect of truth cannot be ignored; it has to be known and mastered. Europe has done so and has reaped a rich harvest. . . .

According to the true Indian view, our consciousness of the world, merely as the sum total of things that exist, and as governed by laws, is imperfect. But it is perfect when our consciousness realizes all things as spiritually one with it, and therefore capable of giving us joy. For us the highest purpose of this world is not merely living in it, knowing it and making use of it, but realizing our own selves in it through expansion of sympathy; not alienating ourselves from it and dominating it, but comprehending and uniting it with ourselves in perfect union. . . .

Strangely enough, in Shakspere's dramas, like those of Kalidasa, we find a secret vein of complaint against the artificial life of the king's court—the life of ungrateful treachery and falsehood. And almost everywhere in his dramas, forest scenes have been introduced in connection with some working of the life of unscrupulous ambition. It is perfectly obvious in Timon of Athens, but there nature offers no message or balm to the injured soul of man. In Cymbeline the mountainous forest and the cave appear in their aspect of obstruction to life's opportunities. These only seem tolerable in comparison with the vicissitudes of fortune in the artificial court life. In As You Like It, the forest of Arden is didactic in its lessons. It does not bring peace, but preaches, when it says:

Hath not old custom made this life more sweet
Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods
More free from peril than the envious court?
In *The Tempest*, through Prospero's treatment of Ariel and Caliban we realize man's struggle with nature and his longing to sever connection with her. In *Macbeth*, as a prelude to a bloody crime of treachery and treason, we are introduced to a scene of a barren heath where the three witches appear as personifications of nature's malignant forces; and in *King Lear* it is the fury of a father's love turned into curses by the ingratitude born of the unnatural life of the court that finds its symbol in the storm on the heath. The tragic intensity of *Hamlet* and *Othello* is unrelieved by any touch of nature's eternity. Except in a passing glimpse of a moonlight night in the love scene in *The Merchant of Venice*, nature has not been allowed in other dramas of this series, including *Romeo and Juliet* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, to contribute her own music to the music of man's love. In *A Winter's Tale*, the cruelty of a king's suspicion stands bare in its relentlessness, and nature cowers before it, offering no consolation.

I hope it is needless for me to say that these observations are not intended to minimize Shakespeare's great power as a dramatic poet, but to show in his works the gulf between nature and human nature owing to the tradition of his race and time. It cannot be said that the beauty of nature is ignored in his writings; only that he fails to recognize in them the truth of the interpenetration of human life with the cosmic life of the world. We observe a completely different attitude of mind in the later English poets like Wordsworth and Shelley, which can be attributed in the main to the great mental change in Europe at that particular period, through the influence of the newly discovered philosophy of India which stirred the soul of Germany and aroused the attention of other Western countries.

In Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the very subject—man dwelling in the garden of Paradise—seems to afford a special opportunity for bringing out the true greatness of man's relationship with nature. But though the poet has described to us the beauties of the garden, though he has shown to us the animals living there in amity and peace among themselves, there is no reality of kinship between them and man. They were created for man's enjoyment; man was their lord and master. We find no trace of the love between the first man and woman gradually surpassing themselves and overflowing the rest of creation, such as we find in the love scenes in *Kumara-Sambhava* and
*Shakuntala.* In the seclusion of the bower, where the first man and woman rested in the garden of Paradise,

Bird, beast, insect or worm  
Durst enter none, such was their awe of man.

Not that India denied the superiority of man, but the test of that superiority lay, according to her, in the comprehensiveness of sympathy, not in the aloofness of absolute distinction. . . .

FROM *Thoughts from Rabindranath Tagore*

Just as it does not do to have a writer entirely removed from the feeling to which he is giving expression, so also it does not conduce to the truest poetry to have him too close to it. Memory is the brush which can best lay on the true poetic color. Nearness has too much of the compelling about it, and the imagination is not sufficiently free unless it can get away from its influence. Not only in poetry, but in all art, the mind of the artist must attain a certain degree of aloofness—the creator within man must be allowed the sole control. If the subject matter gets the better of the creation, the result is a mere replica of the event, not a reflection of it through the artist’s mind.

To be able to love material things, to clothe them with tender grace, and yet not be attached to them, this is a great service. Providence expects that we should make this world our own, and not live in it as though it were a rented tenement. We can only make it our own by some service, and that service is to lend it love and beauty from our soul. From your own experience you can see the difference between the beautiful, the tender, the hospitable; and the mechanically neat and monotonously useful.

There are truths which are of the nature of information, that can be added to our stock of knowledge from the outside. But there are
other truths of the nature of inspiration, which cannot be used to swell the number of our accomplishments. These latter are not like food, but are rather the appetite itself, that can only be strengthened by inducing harmony in our bodily functions. Religion is such a truth. It establishes the right center for life's activities, giving them an eternal meaning. It maintains the true standard of value for the objects of our striving and inspires in us the spirit of renunciation which is the spirit of humanity.

Just as health is a condition of man's body, so is religion of his whole nature. Health cannot be given in the same way as money is put into one's palm. But it may be induced by bringing about suitable conditions. Religious teaching, likewise, cannot be left to a school committee to be put on their syllabus along with arithmetic and Euclid. No school inspector will be able to measure its progress. No examiner's blue pencil can assign it proper marks. An appropriate environment must be created in which religion may have its natural growth.

The question why there is evil in existence is the same as why there is imperfection, or, in other words, why there is creation at all. We must take it for granted that it could not be otherwise; that creation must be imperfect, must be gradual, and that it is futile to ask the question, "why are we?"

But this is the real question we ought to ask: is this imperfection the final truth, is evil absolute and ultimate? The river has its boundaries, its banks, but is a river all banks? Or are the banks the final facts about the river? Do not these obstructions themselves give its water an onward motion? The towing rope binds a boat, but is the bondage its meaning? Does it not at the same time draw the boat forward?

The current of the world has its boundaries, otherwise it could have no existence, but its purpose is not shown in the boundaries which restrain it, but in its movement, which is toward perfection. The wonder is not that there should be obstacles and sufferings in this world, but that there should be law and order, beauty and joy, goodness and love.

The idea of God that man has in his being is the wonder of all
wonders. He has felt in the depths of his life that what appears as imperfect is the manifestation of the perfect, just as a man who has an ear for music realizes the perfection of a song, while in fact he is only listening to a succession of notes. Man has found out the great paradox, that what is limited is not imprisoned within its limits; it is ever moving, and therewith shedding its finitude every moment. In fact, imperfection is not a negation of perfectness, finitude is not contradictory to infinity; they are but completeness manifested in parts, infinity revealed within bounds.

The true universal finds its manifestation in the individuality which is true. Beauty is universal, and a rose reveals it because, as a rose, it is individually beautiful. By making a decoction of a rose, jasmine, and lotus, you do not get a realization of some larger beauty which is interfloral. The true universality is not breaking down the walls of one's own house, but the offering of hospitality to one's guests and neighbors.

As art creations are emotional representations of facts and ideas, they can never be like the product of a photographic camera which is passively receptive of lights and shadows in all their indiscriminate details. Our scientific mind is unbiased, it accepts facts with a cold-blooded curiosity that has no preference. The artistic mind is strongly biased, and that bias not only guides it in its fastidious selection of the subject, but also in that of its details. It throws the colored lights of emphasis on its theme in such a manner that it attains a character which clearly distinguishes it from its fellows. The Skylarks of science offer corroboration of their truth through their similarity; the Skylarks of artists and poets through their dissimilarity. If Shelley's poem on this bird had been just like that of Wordsworth, it would have been rejected for its lack of truth.

Children are living beings—more living than grown-up people who have built shells of habit around themselves. Therefore it is absolutely necessary for their mental health and development that they should not have mere schools for their lessons, but a world whose guiding spirit is personal love. It must be an ashram where men have gathered for the highest end of life, in the peace of nature; where life is not merely meditative, but fully awake in its activities; where boys' minds...
are not being perpetually drilled into believing that the ideal of the
idolatry of the nation is the truest ideal for them to accept; where
they are bidden to realize man's world as God's Kingdom to whose
citizenship they have to aspire; where the sunrise and sunset and the
silent glory of stars are not daily ignored; where nature's festivities
of flowers and fruit have their joyous recognition from man; and
where the young and the old, the teacher and the student, sit at the
same table to take their daily food and the food of their eternal life.

Religion is not a fractional thing that can be doled out in fixed
weekly or daily measures as one among various subjects in the school
syllabus. It is the truth of our complete being, the consciousness of
our personal relationship with the infinite; it is the true center of
gravity of our life. This we can attain during our childhood by daily
living in a place where the truth of the spiritual world is not obscured
by a crowd of necessities assuming artificial importance; where life
is simple, surrounded by fullness of leisure, by ample space and pure
air and profound peace of nature; and where men live with a perfect
faith in the eternal life before them.

That which I value most in my religion or my aspiration, I seek
to find corroborated, in its fundamental unity, in other great religions,
or in the hopes expressed in the history of other peoples. Each great
movement of thought and endeavor in any part of the world may
have something unique in its expression, but the truth underlying any
of them never has the meretricious cheapness of utter novelty about
it. The great Ganges must not hesitate to declare its essential similarity to the Nile of Egypt, or to the Yangtse-Kiang of China.

FROM Our Universe

However awe-inspiring we may find this immense magnitude in
speed, distance and the measure of time regarding the world of stars,
the inconceivable force, and the circumferences of their fiery revolv-
ing movements, we have yet to admit that what is still more miracu-
lous is that man is aware of them, and surmounting all needs in life he is ever eager for knowledge of them. Smaller than small, perishable at any moment is his body. His presence occupies only a momentary corner in the history of the universe; a tiny spot in the vast universe that is ever turning where he dwells, and yet he keeps an account of the immense, the immeasurable and the formidable subtleties of a universe closing on infinity. There is no other splendor than this in the world, or perhaps, who knows, there may be, in the profusion of creation, some other world, which conquering the heart of another matter is expressing itself in some other form. But what man has proved is that the supreme is not in outward form, nor in weight, but in inward fulfillment.

FROM Thought Relics

We are like a stray line of a poem, which ever feels that it rhymes with another line and must find it, or miss its own fulfillment. This quest of the unattained is the great impulse in man which brings forth all his best creations. Man seems deeply to be aware of a separation at the root of his being; he cries to be led across it to a union, and somehow he knows that it is love which can lead him to a love which is final.

The horse harnessed to a carriage is only a part of it; the master is he who drives it unattached. We are enjoined to work with vigor and yet retain our detachment of mind. For our deeds must express our freedom above all, otherwise we become like wheels revolving because compelled. There is a harmony between doing and not doing, between gaining and renouncing which we must attain.

Our daily flow of prayer carries our self into the supreme Self, it makes us feel the reality of that fullness which we gain by utterly giving ourselves up, makes our consciousness expand in a large world of peace, where movements are beauty and all relations are truths because of their inner freedom, which is disinterestedness.
Love is not a mere impulse, it must contain truth, which is law. It accepts limitations from truth because of its own inner wealth. The child willingly exercises restraint to correct its bodily balance, because it has true pleasure in the freedom of its movements; and love also counts no cost as too great to realize its truth. Poetry is much more strict in its form of expression than prose, because poetry has the freedom of joy in its origin and end. Our love of God is accurately careful of its responsibilities. It is austere in its probity and it must have intellect for its ally. Since what it deals with is immense in value, it has to be cautious about the purity of its coins. Therefore, when our soul cries for the gift of immortality, its first prayer is, "Lead me from the unreal to truth."

We criticize nature from outside when we separate it in our mind from human nature, and blame it for being devoid of pity and justice. Let the wick burn with indignation at the want of light in the rest of the candle, but the truth is that the wick represents the whole candle in its illumination. Obstacles are necessary companions to expression, and we know that the positive element in language is not in its obstructiveness. Exclusively viewed from the side of the obstacle, nature appears inimical to the idea of morality. But if that were absolutely true, moral life could never come to exist. Life, moral or physical, is not a completed fact, but a continual process, depending for its movement upon two contrary forces, the force of resistance and that of expression. Dividing these forces into two mutually opposing principles does not help us, for the truth dwells not in the opposition but in its continual reconciliation.

Fear assumes unlimited dimensions in the dark, because it is the shadow of the self which has lost its foothold in the all, the self which is a doubter, an unbeliever, which puts its emphasis upon negation, exaggerating detached facts into fearful distortions. In the light we find the harmony of things and know that our world is great and therefore we are great; we know that with more and more extensive realization of truth, conflicts will vanish, for existence itself is harmony.

An acquaintance of mine has suddenly died and once again I come to know death, the tritest of all truisms in this world.
The moralist teaches us to know the world as unreal through the contemplation of death. But to make renunciation easy by calling the world names is neither true, nor brave. For that renunciation is no renunciation at all in which things have lost their value.

On the contrary, the world is so true, that death’s wheel leaves no mark upon it. The untruth is in the belief that this self of ours for its own permanent use can rob this world of even a particle of its things. Death has its concern only with our self and not with this world. The world never loses an atom; it is our self which suffers.

There are men whose idea of life is static, who long for its continuation after death only because of their wish for permanence and not perfection; they love to imagine that the things to which they are accustomed will persist for ever. They completely identify themselves in their minds with their fixed surroundings and with whatever they have gathered, and to have to leave these is death for them. They forget that the true meaning of living is outliving, it is ever growing out of itself. The fruit clings to its stem, its skin clings to the pulp, and the pulp to the seed so long as the fruit is immature, so long as it is not ready for its course of further life. Its outer covering and its inner core are not yet differentiated and it only proves its life by its strength of tenacity. But when the seed is ripe its hold upon its surrounding is loosened, its pulp attains fragrance, sweetness and detachment, and is dedicated to all who need it. Birds peck at it and it is not hurt, the storm plucks it and flings it to the dust and it is not destroyed. It proves its immortality by its renunciation.

The life of the seed within the fruit is absolutely different from its life of growth as a tree. The life which is bound on all sides within the environment of our self, within the limited range of our senses must be so fundamentally different from the life of an emancipated soul that it is impossible to imagine the latter while we are immured in the sheath of self. And therefore, in our desire for eternal life we pray for an eternity of our habit and comfort, forgetting that immortality is in repeatedly transcending the definite forms of life in order to pursue the infinite truth of life. Those who think that life’s true meaning is in the persistence of its particular forms which are famili-
iar to us are like misers who have not the power to know that the meaning of money can only be found by spending it, by changing the symbol into truth.

The world of sleep is fundamental; it is the world of the mother's womb. It is the world where the grass and the trees live and find their beauty of reposefulness. Our consciousness has freed itself from its embrace, asserting its independence. It is the freedom of the fountain which must come over and over again to its origin to renew its play. The whole depth and spread of the still water finds its own play in the play of this little fountain. In like manner, it is in our own consciousness that the universe knows itself. Therefore this consciousness has to be great in order to be true. Our consciousness is the music of the world, its dance, its poem. It has its pauses in the bosom of the original sleep, to be fed with immortality at her breast.

But we cannot afford to fritter away our solitude where lies the throne of the infinite. We cannot truly live for one another if we never claim the freedom to live alone, if our social duties consist in helping one another to forget that we have souls. To exhaust ourselves completely in mere efforts to give company to each other is to cheat the world of our best, the best which is the product of the amplitude of our inner atmosphere of leisure. Society poisons the air it breathes, where it hems in the individual with a revolving crowd of distractions.

Some part of the earth's water becomes rarefied and ascends to the skies. With the movement and the music it acquires in those pure heights it then showers down, back to the water of the earth, making it wholesome and fresh. Similarly, part of the mind of humanity rises up out of the world and flies skyward; but this sky-soaring mind attains completeness only when it has returned to mingle with the earth-bound mind. This is the ventilation of religion, the circulation of man's ideals between heaven and earth.

Our greatest men have shown immense respect for mankind in their expectations. We come to believe in ourselves because of what is asked of us. Practical men base their arrangements upon their esti-
mates of man's limitations. Therefore the great creations of history, the creations that have their foundations upon the faith in the infinite in man, have not their origin in the common sense of practical men. When Buddha said to men: "Spread thy thoughts of love beyond limits," when Christ said: "Love thine enemies," their words transcended the average standard of ideals belonging to the ordinary world. But they ever remind us that our true life is not the life of the ordinary world, and we have a fund of resources in us which is inexhaustible. It is not for us to despair, because the highest hope for mankind has been uttered by the great words of great men.

To fledgling birds, flight in the sky may appear incredible. They may with apparent reason measure the highest limit of their possibilities by the limited standard of their nests. But in the meanwhile they find that their food is not grown inside those nests; it is brought to them across the measureless blue. There is a silent voice that speaks to them, that they are more than what they are, and that they must not laugh at the message of soaring wings and glad songs of freedom.

The old is prudent but is not wise. Wisdom is that freshness of mind which enables one to realize that truth is not hoarded in caskets of maxims, it is free and living. Great sufferings lead us to wisdom because these are the birth-throes through which our mind is freed from its habit-environment, and comes naked into the arms of reality. Wisdom has the character of the child perfected through knowledge and feeling.

To alleviate pain, to try to remove its causes, is worthy of man. All the same, we must know that a great part of our sufferings should be ascribed to the beginning of our entrance into a new plane of existence to which our vital nature has not been completely adapted nor our mind thoroughly accustomed. From a narrow perfection of animality man has arrived in the imperfectness of spiritual life, where the civil war between the forces of our primitive past and those belonging to our future has robbed us of peace. Not having reached its normal stage, humanity is enveloped in the incandescent vapor of suffering.
We must know that to be provided with an exact apportionment of what we deserve and need is like traveling in a world whose flatness is ideally perfect, and therefore where the fluid forces of nature are held in suspense. We require ups and downs, however unpleasant they may be, in our life's geography, in order to make our thoughts and energies fluently active. Our life's journey is a journey in an unknown country, where hills and hollows come in our way unawares, keeping our minds ever active in dealing with them. They do not come according to our deserts, but our deserts are judged according to our treatment of them.

When we come to believe that we are in possession of our God because we belong to some particular sect it gives us such a complete sense of comfort, that God is needed no longer except for quarreling with others whose idea of God differs from ours in theoretical details.

Having been able to make provision for our God in some shadow-land of creed we feel free to reserve all the space for ourselves in the world of reality, ridding it of the wonder of the infinite, making it as trivial as our own household furniture. Such unlimited vulgarity only becomes possible when we have no doubt in our minds that we believe in God while our life ignores Him.

The pious sectarian is proud because he is confident of his right of possession in God. The man of devotion is meek because he is conscious of God's right of love over his life and soul. The object of our possession becomes smaller than ourselves, and without acknowledging it in so many words the bigoted sectarian has an implicit belief that God can be kept secured for certain individuals in a cage which is of their own make. In a similar manner the primitive races of men believe that their ceremonials have a magic influence upon their deities. Sectarianism is a perverse form of worldliness in the disguise of religion; it breeds a narrowness of heart in a greater measure than the cult of the world based upon material interest can ever do. For undisguised pursuit of self has its safety in its openness, like filth exposed to the sun and air. But the self-magnification with its consequent lessening of God that goes on unchecked under the cover of sectarianism loses its chance of salvation because it defiles the very source of purity.
Religion, like poetry, is not a mere idea, it is expression. The self-expression of God is in the endless variety of creation; and our attitude toward the Infinite Being must also in its expression have a variety of individuality ceaseless and unending. Those sects which jealously build their boundaries with too rigid creeds excluding all spontaneous movement of the living spirit may hoard their theology but they kill religion.

When religion is in the complete possession of the monotonous average, it becomes correct and comfortable, but loses the living spirit of art. For art is the expression of the universal through the individual, and religion in its outer aspect is the art of the human soul. It almost becomes a matter of pride and a sign of superior culture to be able to outrage all codes of decency imposed by an authorized religion bearing the stamp of approval of an organization which can persecute but has not the power to persuade.

As an analogous phenomenon, we have known literary men deliberately cultivating a dread of whatever has the reputation of goodness, and also men of art afraid of being suspected as lovers of the beautiful. They rebel against the fact that what is proper and what is true in beauty and in goodness have become mixed up in men's minds. The appraisement of what is proper does not require any degree of culture or natural sensitiveness of mind, and therefore it fetches a ready price in the market, outbids truth, becomes petty in its tyranny and leaves smudges of vulgarity upon things that are precious. To rescue truth from the dungeon of propriety has always been the mission of poets and artists, but in the time of revolution they are apt to go further by rejecting truth itself.

In our epic Ramayana, we find that when Prince Ramachandra won back his wife from the clutches of the giant who had abducted her, his people clamored for her rejection, suspecting defilement. Similarly, in art, fastidious men of culture are clamoring for the banishment of the beautiful because she has been allowed to remain so long in the possession of propriety.

In a lyrical poem, the meter and the idea are blended in one. Treated separately, they reveal themselves as two contrary forces;
and instances are common in which their natural antagonism has not been overcome, thus resulting in the production of bad poems.

We are the artists, before whom lie materials which are mutually obstructive. They continually clash, until they develop into a creation perfect in unity. Very often, in order to shirk trouble and secure peace, we sacrifice one of the contending parties. This makes the fight impossible, but also the creation. The restless spirit of nature divorced from the soul’s repose drives us to the madness of work which piles up towers of things. On the other hand the spiritual being deprived of its world of reality lives only in the exile of abstraction, creating phantoms in which exaggerations, unchecked by the strict necessities of forms, run riot.

Our nature being complex, it is unsafe to generalize about things that are human, and it is an incomplete statement of truth to say that habits have the sole effect of deadening our mind. The habits that are helpful are like a channel, which helps the current to flow. It is open where the water runs onward, guarding it only where it has the danger of deviation. The bee’s life in its channel of habit has no opening, it revolves within a narrow circle of perfection. Man’s life has its institutions which are its organized habits. When these act as enclosures, then the result may be perfect, like a beehive of wonderful precision of form, but unsuitable for the mind which has unlimited possibilities of growth.

For the current of our spiritual life creeds, rituals are channels that may thwart or help, according to their fixity or openness. When a symbol or spiritual idea becomes rigidly elaborate in its construction, it supplants the idea which it should support. In art and literature metaphors which are the symbol of our emotional perceptions excite our imagination but do not arrest it. For they never claim a monopoly of our attention; they leave open the way for the endless possibility of other metaphors. They lose their artistic value if they degenerate into fixed habits of expression. Shelley, in his poem on the skylark, pours out images which we value because they are only a few suggestions of the immeasurableness of our enjoyment. But if, because of their fitness and beauty, a law were passed that while thinking about
a skylark these images should be treated as final and no others admitted, then Shelley’s poem would at once become false; for its truth is in its fluidity, in its modesty, which tacitly admits that it has not the last word.

The question is asked, if life’s journey be endless where is its goal? The answer is, it is everywhere. We are in a palace which has no end, but which we have reached. By exploring it and extending our relationship with it we are ever making it more and more our own. The infant is born in the same universe where lives the adult of ripe mind. But its position is not like a schoolboy who has yet to learn his alphabet, finding himself in a college class. The infant has its own joy of life because the world is not a mere road, but a home, of which it will have more and more as it grows up in wisdom. With our road the gain is at every step, for it is the road and the home in one; it leads us on yet gives us shelter.

A block of stone is unplastic, insensitive, inert; it offers resistance to the creative idea of the artist. But for a sculptor its very obstacles are an advantage and he carves his image out of it. Our physical existence is an obstacle to our spirit, it has every aspect of a bondage, and to all appearance it is a perpetual humiliation to our soul. And therefore it is the best material for our soul to manifest herself through it, to proclaim her freedom by fashioning ornaments out of her fetters. The limitations of our outer circumstances are only to give opportunities to our soul, and by being able to defy them she realizes her truth.

When I was a child, God also became a child with me to be my playmate. Otherwise my imperfections would have weighed me down, and every moment it would have been a misery to be and yet not fully to be. The things that kept me occupied were trifling and the things I played with were made of dust and sticks. But nevertheless my occupations were made precious to me and the importance that was given to my toys made them of equal value with the playthings of the adult. The majesty of childhood won for me the world’s homage, because there was revealed the infinite in its aspect of the small.

And the reason is the same, which gives the youth the right to
claim his full due and not to be despised. The divinity which is ever young, has crowned him with his own wreath, whispering to his ears that he is the rightful inheritor of all the world’s wealth.

The infinite is with us in the beauty of our childhood, in the strength of our youth, in the wisdom of our age, in play, in earning, and in spending.

The world of senses in which animals live is limited. Our reason has opened the gate for our mind into the heart of the infinite. Yet this freedom of reason is but a freedom in the outer courtyard of existence. Objects of knowledge maintain an infinite distance from us who are the knowers. For knowledge is not union. Therefore the further world of freedom awaits us there where we reach truth, not through feeling it by senses or knowing it by reason, but through union of perfect sympathy. This is an emancipation difficult fully to imagine; we have but glimpses of its character. We perceive the fact of a picture by seeing it, we know about it by measuring its lines, analyzing its colors and studying the laws of harmony in its composition. But even then it is no realization of the picture, for which we want an intimate union with it immediate to ourselves.

The picture of a flower in a botanical book is information; its mission ends with our knowledge. But in pure art it is a personal communication. And therefore until it finds its harmony in the depth of our personality it misses its mark. We can treat existence solely as a textbook furnishing us lessons, and we shall not be disappointed, but we know that there its mission does not end. For in our joy in it, which is an end in itself, we feel that it is a communication, the final response to which is not the response of our knowing but the response of our being.
POETRY

Several unusual factors are involved when a poet becomes his own translator, and a lyricist, more than others, knows that the inspired word, phrase, or rhyme in the language of his subconscious cannot be repeated or replaced. A creative writer is intimately responsible to his own original, symbolic expression, and it was exceptional historical and personal inducements, one feels, that made Tagore conquer the natural resistance of an artist. One factor was perhaps the peculiar nature of the Indian culture itself during the Indo-Anglian phase when artists as well as ordinary Indians lived and absorbed, in a manner almost unprecedented in the annals of cultural duality, not only the new learning and incentives of the modern West, channeled in the new India through the English language, but also the feeling tone, accent of thought, and adventurous thrust of Western thought. This, in Tagore's case, was an auxiliary stream which met and mingled with the great currents of Sanskrit and Bengali traditions which were the main source of his continuing poetic expression. We find in Tagore's life a process of absorption, an atmospheric quickening of his imagination through the deep reading of English poetry, especially in the area of English lyricism. His eager delight in Shakespeare, in early nineteenth century English poetry, later in Browning and then in Whitman enriched the creative force of his own Bengali writing where he went from one level of excellence to another in outgrowing a technique which had already revolutionized Bengali poetry.

Secondly, Tagore's conscious faith in the need for East-West reciprocity, as part of the essential progress of civilization, seems to have played an important role in making him his own translator into English. He felt that modern civilization demanded to some extent an outbreak beyond the immediate horizon of local and indigenous art forms fashioned in the normal vernacular context. The English language which he knew

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and loved, even though he learned it later than the average educated
Indian of his day, was for him the language of an expanding era, and
the speech currency for the greater part of global mankind. From this
came his partly deliberate sponsorship, when he was nearly fifty, of the
language of Wordsworth, Keats, and Shelley, and his experiments with
translations from modern English poetry in the later period of his life.

Added to this is the part played by personal demands made upon him by
his English visitors and friends, mainly Ramsay Macdonald and William
Rothenstein, and his colleagues at Santiniketan like C. F. Andrews, who
knew no Bengali and did not claim citizenship in the realm of creative
English writing, but were persons dedicated to the cause of international
and Indo-European cooperation at spiritually relevant levels. The genesis
of the Citanjali translation by Tagore is given in another section of this
volume. (See letter to Indira Devi, May 6, 1913, page 20.)

Tagore was not only an artist, but a craftsman who used and perfected
the tools of Bengali poetry in a systematic and chiseled manner for nearly
seventy years. Therefore, he knew even at an earlier stage of his artistry
how completely untranslatable poetry is. The Bengali language, rich in
syllabic sound and natural melody, offered the same problems as Indian
music itself which uses subtle quarter notes that defy the notational system
of Europe. Tagore knew this, and even when fame descended upon his
translation of Citanjali in 1912, when he was fifty-two years old, he
could not at heart, or more precisely, in his literary mind, reconcile him-
self to this strange and unexpected acceptance by the West in terms of
the creative element in his own translations. It is true that he felt the
novelty and excitement of trying out his ideas in English, but he felt
baffled and even a sense of self-betrayal in confronting what he knew to
be the untranslatable core of Bengali lyricism, over which he had no
more right as a translator than any other translator of poetry.

While Tagore, with a singular intention, and with a competence born
not only of genius but of repeated intellectual exercise, reached unique
success in putting his Bengali poetry into English, he perhaps paid the
price of getting used to the process, in spite of inward rebellion. The
translations sensitively enhanced a relationship of understanding between
the East and West, and also between different parts of the East, and
even between different parts of India which did not yet have a measurably
successful national language. But Tagore heavily lost his position in the
artistic society of the West, even though he was one of the great world
poets. The meter and rhyme, the associational words, the irreplaceable
symbols in his Bengali poetry, were discarded in favor of rhythmic “prose-
poems” in English, and soon strained the responsive capacity of his
readers. It must be pointed out, however, contrary to repeated assertions
by many Western and Indian literary critics of today, that some of his own later translations from his Bengali poems were as fine, and sometimes superior to anything done by him in *Gitanjali* or *Gardener* ("Our Lane Is Torturous," in *The Fugitive*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1921, and much later, "Once More the Night Has Waned," *Poems*, Visva-Bharati, 1942). But this whole literary problem will continue to intrigue, inspire, and frustrate genuine lovers of poetry.

Time will cast aside the temporal, while the enduring contributions of Tagore's own English translations will remain. We have here attempted to select the best. Care has been taken to eliminate any duplication of form and style, and where possible, to present poems in English which carry even a faint and transferred suggestion of the light and bloom of Bengali verse. All the published volumes in English, including Tagore's own English translations, have been represented; some of his own translations, posthumously published in book form, or published in Indian journals and almost unknown to the greater part of the Western world have also been used.

"The Child," published by Allen & Unwin, was the only poem directly written by Tagore in English free verse; he did this while in Berlin and Munich at the request of a German film company, UFA, who wanted a script from him for a pageant of Indian life. The scheme did not materialize, but the poem remains and is included in this section.

Translations made by this editor, mostly of Tagore's Bengali poems composed or dictated shortly before his death, as well as translations made by other Bengali contemporaries, are included. This latest phase of Tagore's poetry is represented for reasons of chronological and literary inclusiveness. The editor is delighted to acknowledge the help and advice, sensitively and artistically rendered, of Donald Junkins in regard to the revisions of first translations made by the editor from some of Tagore's Bengali poems. Fidelity to the Bengali original and a recognition of the needs of modern literary English had to be combined, though the same, almost insurmountable, barriers remain in regard to translation from one language to another.

*Poems*, published by Visva-Bharati, has been used, as well as the resources of volumes of the *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, in order to illustrate the later phase of Tagore’s Bengali poetry. Other sources, magazines and books, are mentioned in the footnotes. It is important to add that Tagore's later Bengali poems became increasingly terse, luminous and precise in the use of imagery. A modern and experimental artistry marks another phase in the plenitude of his poetic genius.

I am thankful to Henry Braun for his research assistance in tracing Tagore’s influence on the poetry of Hart Crane.
FROM *Gitanjali*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I shall ever try to drive all evils away from my heart and keep my love in flower, knowing that thou hast thy seat in the inmost shrine of my heart.
And it shall be my endeavor to reveal thee in my actions, knowing it is thy power gives me strength to act.

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I ask for a moment’s indulgence to sit by thy side. The works that I have in hand I will finish afterwards.

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

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

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

Here is thy footstool and there rest thy feet where live the poorest, and lowliest, and lost.

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

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

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

Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads! Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut? Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee!

He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the pathmaker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and in
shower, and his garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil!

Deliverance? Where is this deliverance to be found? Our master himself has joyfully taken upon him the bonds of creation; he is bound with us all for ever.

Come out of thy meditations and leave aside thy flowers and incense! What harm is there if thy clothes become tattered and stained? Meet him and stand by him in toil and in sweat of thy brow.

The song that I came to sing remains unsung to this day.

I have spent my days in stringing and in unstringing my instrument. The time has not come true, the words have not been rightly set; only there is the agony of wishing in my heart.

The blossom has not opened; only the wind is sighing by.

I have not seen his face, nor have I listened to his voice; only I have heard his gentle footsteps from the road before my house.

The livelong day has passed in spreading his seat on the floor; but the lamp has not been lit and I cannot ask him into my house.

I live in the hope of meeting with him; but this meeting is not yet.

My desires are many and my cry is pitiful, but ever didst thou save me by hard refusals; and this strong mercy has been wrought into my life through and through.

Day by day thou art making me worthy of the simple, great gifts that thou gavest to me unasked—this sky and the light, this body and the life and the mind—saving me from perils of overmuch desire.

There are times when I languidly linger and times when I awaken and hurry in search of my goal; but cruelly thou hidest thyself from before me.

Day by day thou art making me worthy of thy full acceptance by refusing me ever and anon, saving me from perils of weak, uncertain desire.
Clouds heap upon clouds and it darkens. Ah, love, why dost thou let me wait outside at the door all alone?

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

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

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

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

Only now and again a sadness fell upon me, and I started up from my dream and felt a sweet trace of a strange fragrance in the south wind.

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

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

In the deep shadows of the rainy July, with secret steps, thou walkest, silent as night, eluding all watchers.

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

The woodlands have hushed their songs, and doors are all shut at every house. Thou art the solitary wayfarer in this deserted street. Oh, my only friend, my best beloved, the gates are open in my house—do not pass by like a dream.
Art thou abroad on this stormy night on thy journey of love, my friend? The sky groans like one in despair.

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

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

By what dim shore of the ink-black river, by what far edge of the frowning forest, through what mazy depth of gloom art thou threading thy course to come to me, my friend?

In the night of weariness let me give myself up to sleep without struggle, resting my trust upon thee.

Let me not force my flagging spirit into a poor preparation for thy worship.

It is thou who drawest the veil of night upon the tired eyes of the day to renew its sight in a fresher gladness of awakening.

Obstinate are the trammels, but my heart aches when I try to break them.

Freedom is all I want, but to hope for it I feel ashamed.

I am certain that priceless wealth is in thee, and that thou art my best friend, but I have not the heart to sweep away the tinsel that fills my room.

The shroud that covers me is a shroud of dust and death; I hate it, yet hug it in love.

My debts are large, my failures great, my shame secret and heavy; yet when I come to ask for my good, I quake in fear lest my prayer be granted.
"PRISONER, tell me, who was it that bound you?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

When it was day they came into my house and said, "We shall only take the smallest room here."

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

But in the darkness of night I find they break into my sacred shrine, strong and turbulent, and snatch with unholy greed the offerings from God's altar.
Let only that little be left of me whereby I may name thee my all.
Let only that little be left of my will whereby I may feel thee on
every side, and come to thee in everything, and offer to thee my love
every moment.
Let only that little be left of me whereby I may never hide thee.
Let only that little of my fetters be left whereby I am bound with
thy will, and thy purpose is carried out in my life—and that is the
fetter of thy love.

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow
domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms toward perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the
dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought
and action—
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

This is my prayer to thee, my lord—strike, strike at the root of penury
in my heart.
Give me the strength lightly to bear my joys and sorrows.
Give me the strength to make my love fruitful in service.
Give me the strength never to disown the poor or bend my knees
before insolent might.
Give me the strength to raise my mind high above daily trifles.
And give me the strength to surrender my strength to thy will
with love.
That I want thee, only thee—let my heart repeat without end. All desires that distract me, day and night, are false and empty to the core.

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

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

When the heart is hard and parched up, come upon me with a shower of mercy.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The day was when I did not keep myself in readiness for thee; and entering my heart unbidden even as one of the common crowd, un-
known to me, my king, thou didst press the signet of eternity upon
many a fleeting moment of my life.

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

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

Have you not heard his silent steps? He comes, comes, ever comes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

My hopes rose high and me thought my evil days were at an end,
and I stood waiting for alms to be given unmasked and for wealth
scattered on all sides in the dust.

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

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

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

Thus it is that thy joy in me is so full. Thus it is that thou hast come down to me. O thou lord of all heavens, where would be thy love if I were not?

Thou hast taken me as thy partner of all this wealth. In my heart is the endless play of thy delight. In my life thy will is ever taking shape.

And for this, thou who art the King of kings hast decked thyself in beauty to captivate my heart. And for this thy love loses itself in the love of thy lover, and there art thou seen in the perfect union of two.

Light, my light, the world-filling light, the eye-kissing light, heart-sweetening light!

Ah, the light dances, my darling, at the center of my life; the light strikes, my darling, the chords of my love; the sky opens, the wind runs wild, laughter passes over the earth.

The butterflies spread their sails on the sea of light. Lilies and jasmines surge up on the crest of the waves of light.

The light is shattered into gold on every cloud, my darling, and it scatters gems in profusion.

Mirth spreads from leaf to leaf, my darling, and gladness without measure. The heaven's river has drowned its banks and the flood of joy is abroad.
Let all the strains of joy mingle in my last song—the joy that makes the earth flow over in the riotous excess of the grass, the joy that sets the twin brothers, life and death, dancing over the wide world, the joy that sweeps in with the tempest, shaking and wakening all life with laughter, the joy that sits still with its tears on the open red lotus of pain, and the joy that throws everything it has upon the dust, and knows not a word.

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

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

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

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

Thou art the sky and thou art the nest as well.

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

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

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

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

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

It is the same life that shoots in joy through the dust of the earth in numberless blades of grass and breaks into tumultuous waves of leaves and flowers.

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

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

Deliverance is not for me in renunciation. I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight.

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

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

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

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

The day is no more, the shadow is upon the earth. It is time that I go to the stream to fill my pitcher.

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

I know not if I shall come back home. I know not whom I shall chance to meet. There at the fording in the little boat the unknown man plays upon his lute.
Time is endless in thy hands, my lord. There is none to count thy minutes.

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

Thy centuries follow each other perfecting a small wild flower.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Yet stars will watch at night, and morning rise as before, and hours heave like sea waves casting up pleasures and pains.
When I think of this end of my moments, the barrier of the moments breaks and I see by the light of death thy world with its careless treasures. Rare is its lowliest seat, rare is its meanest of lives. Things that I longed for in vain and things that I got—let them pass. Let me but truly possess the things that I ever spurned and overlooked.

I was not aware of the moment when I first crossed the threshold of this life.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In one salutation to thee, my God, let all my senses spread out and touch this world at thy feet.
Like a rain-cloud of July hung low with its burden of unshed showers let all my mind bend down at thy door in one salutation to thee.

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

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

FROM The Crescent Moon

ON THE SEASHORE

On the seashore of endless worlds children meet.

The infinite sky is motionless overhead and the restless water is boisterous. On the seashore of endless worlds the children meet with shouts and dances.

They build their houses with sand, and they play with empty shells. With withered leaves they weave their boats and smilingly float them on the vast deep. Children have their play on the seashore of worlds.

They know not how to swim, they know not how to cast nets. Pearl-fishers dive for pearls, merchants sail in their ships, while children gather pebbles and scatter them again. They seek not for hidden treasures, they know not how to cast nets.

The sea surges up with laughter, and pale gleams the smile of the sea-beach. Death-dealing waves sing meaningless ballads to the children, even like a mother while rocking her baby's cradle. The sea plays with children, and pale gleams the smile of the sea-beach.

On the seashore of endless worlds children meet. Tempest roams in the pathless sky, ships are wrecked in the trackless water, death is abroad and children play. On the seashore of endless worlds is the great meeting of children.
THE SOURCE

The sleep that flits on baby's eyes—does anybody know from where it comes? Yes, there is a rumor that it has its dwelling where, in the fairy village among shadows of the forest dimly lit with glowworms, there hang two shy buds of enchantment. From there it comes to kiss baby's eyes.

The smile that flickers on baby's lips when he sleeps—does anybody know where it was born? Yes, there is a rumor that a young pale beam of a crescent moon touched the edge of a vanishing autumn cloud, and there the smile was first born in the dream of a dewwashed morning—the smile that flickers on baby's lips when he sleeps.

The sweet, soft freshness that blooms on baby's limbs—does anybody know where it was hidden so long? Yes, when the mother was a young girl it lay pervading her heart in tender and silent mystery of love—the sweet, soft freshness that has bloomed on baby's limbs.

SLEEP-STEALER

Who stole sleep from baby's eyes? I must know.

Clasping her pitcher to her waist mother went to fetch water from the village near by.

It was noon. The children's playtime was over; the ducks in the pond were silent.

The shepherd boy lay asleep under the shadow of the banyan tree. The crane stood grave and still in the swamp near the mango grove. In the meanwhile the Sleep-stealer came and, snatching sleep from baby's cycs, flew away.

When mother came back she found baby traveling the room over on all fours.

Who stole sleep from our baby's eyes? I must know. I must find her and chain her up.

I must look into that dark cave, where, through boulders and scowling stones, trickles a tiny stream.
I must search in the drowsy shade of the bakula grove, where pigeons coo in their corner, and fairies' anklets tinkle in the stillness of starry nights.

In the evening I will peep into the whispering silence of the bamboo forest, where fireflies squander their light, and will ask every creature I meet, "Can anybody tell me where the Sleep-stealer lives?"

Who stole sleep from baby's eyes? I must know.
Shouldn't I give her a good lesson if I could only catch her!
I would raid her nest and see where she hoards all her stolen sleep.
I would plunder it all, and carry it home.
I would bind her two wings securely, set her on the bank of the river, and then let her play at fishing with a reed among the rushes and the water lilies.

When the marketing is over in the evening, and the village children sit in their mothers' laps, then the night birds will mockingly din her ears with:

"Whose sleep will you steal now?"

WHEN AND WHY

When I bring you colored toys, my child, I understand why there is such a play of colors on clouds, on water, and why flowers are painted in tints—when I give colored toys to you, my child.

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

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

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

When the gong sounds ten in the morning and I walk to school by our lane,
   Every day I meet the hawker crying, "Bangles, crystal bangles!"
   There is nothing to hurry him on, there is no road he must take, no place he must go to, no time when he must come home.
   I wish I were a hawker, spending my day in the road, crying, "Bangles, crystal bangles!"

When at four in the afternoon I come back from the school,
   I can see through the gate of that house the gardener digging the ground.
   He does what he likes with his spade, he soils his clothes with dust, nobody takes him to task if he gets baked in the sun or gets wet.
   I wish I were a gardener digging away at the garden with nobody to stop me from digging.

   Just as it gets dark in the evening and my mother sends me to bed,
   I can see through my open window the watchman walking up and down.
   The lane is dark and lonely, and the street-lamps stand like a giant with one red eye in its head.
   The watchman swings his lantern and walks with his shadow at his side, and never once goes to bed in his life.
   I wish I were a watchman walking the streets all night, chasing the shadows with my lantern.

Benediction

Bless this little heart, this white soul that has won the kiss of heaven for our earth.
   He loves the light of the sun, he loves the sight of his mother's face.
   He has not learned to despise the dust, and to hanker after gold.
   Clasp him to your heart and bless him.
He has come into this land of an hundred crossroads.
I know not how he chose you from the crowd, came to your door, and grasped your hand to ask his way.
He will follow you, laughing and talking, and not a doubt in his heart.
Keep his trust, lead him straight and bless him.
Lay your hand on his head, and pray that though the waves underneath grow threatening, yet the breath from above may come and fill his sails and waft him to the heaven of peace.
Forget him not in your hurry, let him come to your heart and bless him.

THE CHILD-ANGEL

They clamor and fight, they doubt and despair, they know no end to their wranglings.
Let your life come amongst them like a flame of light, my child, unflickering and pure, and delight them into silence.
They are cruel in their greed and their envy, their words are like hidden knives thirsting for blood.
Go and stand amidst their scowling hearts, my child, and let your gentle eyes fall upon them like the forgiving peace of the evening over the strife of the day.
Let them see your face, my child, and thus know the meaning of all things; let them love you and thus love each other.
Come and take your seat in the bosom of the limitless, my child. At sunrise open and raise your heart like a blossoming flower, and at sunset bend your head and in silence complete the worship of the day.
FROM *The Gardener*

I AM restless. I am athirst for far-away things.
My soul goes out in a longing to touch the skirt of the dim distance.
O Great Beyond, O the keen call of thy flute!
I forget, I ever forget, that I have no wings to fly, that I am bound
in this spot evermore.

I am eager and wakeful, I am a stranger in a strange land.
Thy breath comes to me whispering an impossible hope.
Thy tongue is known to my heart as its very own.
O Far-to-seek, O the keen call of thy flute!
I forget, I ever forget, that I know not the way, that I have not
the winged horse.

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

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

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

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

"Trust love even if it brings sorrow. Do not close up your heart."
"Ah, no, my friend, your words are dark, I cannot understand them."

"The heart is only for giving away with a tear and a song, my love."
"Ah, no, my friend, your words are dark, I cannot understand them."

"Pleasure is frail like a dewdrop, while it laughs it dies. But sorrow is strong and abiding. Let sorrowful love wake in your eyes."
"Ah, no, my friend, your words are dark, I cannot understand them."

"The lotus blooms in the sight of the sun, and loses all that it has. It would not remain in bud in the eternal winter mist."
"Ah, no, my friend, your words are dark, I cannot understand them."

Peace, my heart, let the time for the parting be sweet,
Let it not be a death but completeness.