Let love melt into a memory and pain into songs.
Let the flight through the sky end in the folding of the wings over
the nest.
Let the last touch of your hands be gentle like the flower of the
night.
Stand still, O Beautiful End, for a moment, and say your last
words in silence.
I bow to you and hold up my lamp to light you on your way.

At midnight the would-be ascetic announced:
“This is the time to give up my home and seek for God. Ah, who
has held me so long in delusion here?”
God whispered, “I,” but the ears of the man were stopped.
With a baby asleep at her breast lay his wife, peacefully sleeping
on one side of the bed.
The man said, “Who are ye that have fooled me so long?”
The voice said again, “They are God,” but he heard it not.
The baby cried out in its dream, nestling close to its mother.
God commanded, “Stop, fool, leave not thy home,” but still he
heard not.
God sighed and complained, “Why does my servant wander to
seek me, forsaking me?”

She dwelt on the hillside by the edge of a maize-field, near the spring
that flows in laughing rills through the solemn shadows of ancient
trees. The women came there to fill their jars, and travelers would
sit there to rest and talk. She worked and dreamed daily to the tune
of the bubbling stream.

One evening the stranger came down from the cloud-hidden peak;
his locks were tangled like drowsy snakes. We asked in wonder, “Who
are you?” He answered not but sat by the garrulous stream and
silently gazed at the hut where she dwelt. Our hearts quaked in fear
and we came back home when it was night.
Next morning when the women came to fetch water at the spring by the deodar trees, they found the doors open in her hut, but her voice was gone and where was her smiling face? The empty jar lay on the floor and her lamp had burnt itself out in the corner. No one knew where she had fled to before it was morning—and the stranger had gone.

In the month of May the sun grew strong and the snow melted, and we sat by the spring and wept. We wondered in our mind, "Is there a spring in the land where she has gone and where she can fill her vessel in these hot thirsty days?" And we asked each other in dismay, "Is there a land beyond these hills where we live?"

It was a summer night; the breeze blew from the south; and I sat in her deserted room where the lamp stood still unlit. When suddenly from before my eyes the hills vanished like curtains drawn aside. "Ah, it is she who comes. How are you, my child? Are you happy? But where can you shelter under this open sky? And, alas! our spring is not here to allay your thirst."

"Here is the same sky," she said, "only free from the fencing hills,—this is the same stream grown into a river,—the same earth widened into a plain." "Everything is here," I sighed, "only we are not." She smiled sadly and said, "You are in my heart." I woke up and heard the babbling of the stream and the rustling of the deodars at night.

FROM Fruit-Gathering

Where roads are made I lose my way,
In the wide water, in the blue sky there is no line of a track.
The pathway is hidden by the birds’ wings, by the star-fires, by the flowers of the wayfaring seasons.
And I ask my heart if its blood carries the wisdom of the unseen way.
No: it is not yours to open buds into blossoms.
Shake the bud, strike it; it is beyond your power to make it blossom.
Your touch soils it, you tear its petals to pieces and strew them in the dust.
But no colors appear, and no perfume.
Ah! it is not for you to open the bud into a blossom.

He who can open the bud does it so simply.
He gives it a glance, and the life-sap stirs through its veins.
At his breath the flower spreads its wings and flutters in the wind.
Colors flush out like heart-longings, the perfume betrays a sweet secret.
He who can open the bud does it so simply.

Sudās, the gardener, plucked from his tank the last lotus left by the ravage of winter and went to sell it to the King at the palace gate.
There he met a traveler who said to him, “Ask your price for the last lotus,—I shall offer it to Lord Buddha.”
Sudās said, “If you pay one golden māshā it will be yours.”
The traveler paid it.

At that moment the King came out and he wished to buy the flower, for he was on his way to see Lord Buddha, and he thought, “It would be a fine thing to lay at his feet the lotus that bloomed in winter.”
When the gardener said he had been offered a golden māshā the King offered him ten, but the traveler doubled the price.
The gardener, being greedy, imagined a greater gain from him for whose sake they were bidding. He bowed and said, “I cannot sell this lotus.”

In the hushed shade of the mango grove beyond the city wall Sudās stood before Lord Buddha, on whose lips sat the silence of love and whose eyes beamed peace like the morning star of the dew-washed autumn.
Sudās looked in his face and put the lotus at his feet and bowed his head to the dust.
Buddha smiled and asked, "What is your wish, my son?"
Sudās cried, "The least touch of your feet."

Sanātan was telling his beads by the Ganges when a Brahmin in rags came to him and said, "Help me, I am poor!"
"My alms-bowl is all that is my own," said Sanātan. "I have given away everything I had."
"But my lord Shiva came to me in my dreams," said the Brahmin, "and counseled me to come to you."
Sanātan suddenly remembered he had picked up a stone without price among the pebbles on the riverbank, and thinking that some one might need it hid it in the sands.

He pointed out the spot to the Brahmin, who wondering dug up the stone.
The Brahmin sat on the earth and mused alone till the sun went down behind the trees, and cowherds went home with their cattle.
Then he rose and came slowly to Sanātan and said,
"Master, give me the least fraction of the wealth that disdains all the wealth of the world."
And he threw the precious stone into the water.

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

Ratnākar, the banker, hung his head and said, "Much more is needed than all my wealth to feed the hungry."

Jaysen, the chief of the King's army, said, "I would gladly give my life's blood, but there is not enough food in my house."
Dharmapāl, who owned broad acres of land, said with a sigh, "The drought demon has sucked my fields dry. I know not how to pay King's dues."

Then rose Supriyā, the mendicant's daughter. She bowed to all and meekly said, "I will feed the hungry."
"How!" they cried in surprise. "How can you hope to fulfill that vow."

"I am the poorest of you all," said Supriyā, "that is my strength. I have my coffer and my store at each of your houses."

"Sire," announced the servant to the King, "the saint Narottam has never deigned to enter your royal temple. He is singing God's praise under the trees by the open road. The temple is empty of worshipers. They flock round him like bees round the white lotus, leaving the golden jar of honey unheeded."

The King, vexed at heart, went to the spot where Narottam sat on the grass. He asked him, "Father, why leave my temple of the golden dome and sit on the dust outside to preach God's love?"
"Because God is not there in your temple," said Narottam. The King frowned and said, "Do you know, twenty millions of gold went to the making of that marvel of art, and it was consecrated to God with costly rites?"

"Yes, I know it," answered Narottam. "It was in that year when thousands of your people whose houses had been burned stood vainly asking for help at your door. "And God said, "The poor creature who can give no shelter to his brothers would build my house!"
"And he took his place with the shelterless under the trees by the road."
"And that golden bubble is empty of all but hot vapor of pride."
The King cried in anger, "Leave my land."
Calmly said the saint, "Yes, banish me where you have banished my God."

When, mad in their mirth, they raised dust to soil thy robe, O Beautiful, it made my heart sick.
I cried to thee and said, "Take thy rod of punishment and judge them."
The morning light struck upon those eyes, red with the revel of night; the peace of the white lily greeted their burning breath; the stars through the depth of the sacred dark stared at their carousing—at those that raised dust to soil thy robe, O Beautiful!
Thy judgment seat was in the flower-garden, in the birds' notes in springtime: in the shady river-banks, where the trees muttered in answer to the muttering of the waves.

O my Lover, they were pitiless in their passion.
They prowled in the dark to snatch thy ornaments to deck their own desires.
When they had struck thee and thou wert pained, it pierced me to the quick, and I cried to thee and said, "Take thy sword, O my Lover, and judge them!"
Ah, but thy justice was vigilant.
A mother's tears were shed on their insolence; the imperishable faith of a lover hid their spears of rebellion in its own wounds.
Thy judgment was in the mute pain of sleepless love; in the blush of the chaste; in the tears of the night of the desolate; in the pale morning light of forgiveness.

O Terrible, they in their reckless greed climbed thy gate at night, breaking into thy storehouse to rob thee.
But the weight of their plunder grew immense, too heavy to carry or to remove.
Thereupon I cried to thee and said, "Forgive them, O Terrible!"

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Thy forgiveness burst in storms, throwing them down, scattering their thefts in the dust.
Thy forgiveness was in the thunderstone; in the shower of blood; in the angry red of the sunset.

Bring beauty and order into my forlorn life, woman, as you brought them into my house when you lived.
Sweep away the dusty fragments of the hours, fill the empty jars, and mend all that has been neglected.
Then open the inner door of the shrine, light the candle, and let us meet there in silence before our God.

THANKSGIVING

Those who walk on the path of pride crushing the lowly life under their tread, covering the tender green of the earth with their footprints in blood;
Let them rejoice, and thank thee, Lord, for the day is theirs.
But I am thankful that my lot lies with the humble who suffer and bear the burden of power, and hide their faces and stifle their sobs in the dark.
For every throb of their pain has pulsed in the secret depth of thy night, and every insult has been gathered into thy great silence.
And the morrow is theirs.
O Sun, rise upon the bleeding hearts blossoming in flowers of the morning, and the torchlight revelry of pride shrunken to ashes.
FROM Lover's Gift

Come to my garden walk, my love. Pass by the fervid flowers that press themselves on your sight. Pass them by, stopping at some chance joy, which like a sudden wonder of sunset illumines, yet eludes.

For love's gift is shy, it never tells its name, it flits across the shade, spreading a shiver of joy along the dust. Overtake it or miss it for ever. But a gift that can be grasped is merely a frail flower, or a lamp with a flame that will flicker.

She dwelt here by the pool with its landing-stairs in ruins. Many an evening she had watched the moon made dizzy by the shaking of bamboo leaves, and on many a rainy day the smell of the wet earth had come to her over the young shoots of rice.

Her pet name is known here among those date-palm groves and in the courtyards where girls sit and talk while stitching their winter quilts. The water in this pool keeps in its depth the memory of her swimming limbs, and her wet feet had left their marks, day after day, on the footpath leading to the village.

The women who come today with their vessels to the water have all seen her smile over simple jests, and the old peasant, taking his bullocks to their bath, used to stop at her door every day to greet her.

Many a sailing-boat passes by this village; many a traveler takes rest beneath that banyan tree; the ferryboat crosses to yonder ford carrying cows to the market; but they never notice this spot by the village road, near the pool with its ruined landing-stairs,—where dwelt she whom I love.

There is a looker-on who sits behind my eyes. It seems he has seen things in ages and worlds beyond memory's shore, and those forgotten sights glisten on the grass and shiver on the leaves. He has seen under new veils the face of the one beloved, in twilight hours of many a
nameless star. Therefore his sky seems to ache with the pain of countless meetings and partings, and a longing pervades this spring breeze,—the longing that is full of the whisper of ages without beginning.

I traveled the old road every day, I took my fruits to the market, my cattle to the meadows, I ferried my boat across the stream and all the ways were well known to me.

One morning my basket was heavy with wares. Men were busy in the fields, the pastures crowded with cattle; the breast of earth heaved with the mirth of ripening rice.

Suddenly there was a tremor in the air, and the sky seemed to kiss me on my forehead. My mind started up like the morning out of mist.

I forgot to follow the track. I stepped a few paces from the path, and my familiar world appeared strange to me, like a flower I had only known in bud.

My everyday wisdom was ashamed. I went astray in the fairyland of things. It was the best luck of my life that I lost my path that morning, and found my eternal childhood.

The evening was lonely for me, and I was reading a book till my heart became dry, and it seemed to me that beauty was a thing fashioned by the traders in words. Tired I shut the book and snuffed the candle. In a moment the room was flooded with moonlight.

Spirit of Beauty, how could you, whose radiance overbrims the sky, stand hidden behind a candle's tiny flame? How could a few vain words from a book rise like a mist, and veil her whose voice has hushed the heart of earth into ineffable calm?
FROM Crossing

Accept me, my lord, accept me for this while.
Let those orphaned days that passed without thee be forgotten.
Only spread this little moment wide across thy lap, holding it under thy light.
I have wandered in pursuit of voices that drew me yet led me nowhere.
Now let me sit in peace and listen to thy words in the soul of my silence.
Do not turn away thy face from my heart’s dark secrets, but burn them till they are alight with thy fire.

When thou savest me the steps are lighter in the march of thy worlds.
When stains are washed away from my heart it brightens the light of thy sun.
That the bud has not blossomed in beauty in my life spreads sadness in the heart of creation.
When the shroud of darkness will be lifted from my soul it will bring music to thy smile.

I know that this life, missing its ripeness in love, is not altogether lost. I know that the flowers that fade in the dawn, the streams that strayed in the desert, are not altogether lost.
I know that whatever lags behind in this life laden with slowness is not altogether lost.
I know that my dreams that are still unfulfilled, and my melodies still unstruck, are clinging to some lute-strings of thine, and they are not altogether lost.
When I awake in thy love my night of ease will be ended. 
Thy sunrise will touch my heart with its touchstone of fire, and my 
voyage will begin in its orbit of triumphant suffering. 
I shall dare to take up death's challenge and carry thy voice in the 
heart of mockery and menace. 
I shall bare my breast against the wrongs hurled at thy children, and 
take the risk of standing by thy side where none but thee remains.

No guest had come to my house for long, my doors were locked, my 
windows barred; I thought my night would be lonely. 
When I opened my eyes I found the darkness had vanished. 
I rose up and ran and saw the bolts of my gates all broken, and 
through the open door your wind and light waved their banner. 
When I was a prisoner in my own house, and the doors were shut, 
my heart ever planned to escape and to wander. 
Now at my broken gate I sit still and wait for your coming. 
You keep me bound by my freedom.

I lived on the shady side of the road and watched my neighbors' 
gardens across the way reveling in the sunshine. 
I felt I was poor, and from door to door went with my hunger. 
The more they gave me from their careless abundance the more I 
became aware of my beggar's bowl. 
Till one morning I awoke from my sleep at the sudden opening of 
my door, and you came and asked for alms. 
In despair I broke the lid of my chest open and was startled into 
finding my own wealth.

You hide yourself in your own glory, my King. 
The sand-grain and the dew-drop are more proudly apparent than 
yourself.
The world unabashed calls all things its own that are yours—yet it is never brought to shame.
You make room for us while standing aside in silence; therefore love lights her own lamp to seek you and comes to your worship unbidden.

I remember my childhood when the sunrise, like my playfellow, would burst in to my bedside with its daily surprise of morning; when the faith in the marvelous bloomed like fresh flowers in my heart every day, looking into the face of the world in simple gladness; when insects, birds and beasts, the common weeds, grass and the clouds had their fullest value of wonder; when the patter of rain at night brought dreams from the fairyland, and mother’s voice in the evening gave meaning to the stars.
And then I think of death, and the rise of the curtain and the new morning and my life awakened in its fresh surprise of love.

Comrade of the road,
Here are my traveler’s greetings to thee.
O Lord of my broken heart, of leave-taking and loss, of the gray silence of the dayfall,
My greetings of the ruined house to thee!
O Light of the new-born morning,
Sun of the everlasting day,
My greetings of the undying hope to thee!
My guide,
I am a wayfarer of an endless road,
My greetings of a wanderer to thee!

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FROM *Stray Birds*

The mighty desert is burning for the love of a blade of grass who shakes her head and laughs and flies away.

Sorrow is hushed into peace in my heart like the evening among the silent trees.

I sit at my window this morning where the world like a passer-by stops for a moment, nods to me and goes.

That I exist is a perpetual surprise which is life.

O beauty, find thyself in love, not in the flattery of thy mirror.

The trees come up to my window like the yearning voice of the dumb earth.

His own mornings are new surprises to God.

Woman, when you move about in your household service your limbs sing like a hill stream among its pebbles.

The fish in the water is silent, the animal on the earth is noisy, the bird in the air is singing.

But Man has in him the silence of the sea, the noise of the earth and the music of the air.

Your idol is shattered in the dust to prove that God's dust is greater than your idol.

We come nearest to the great when we are great in humility.

Never be afraid of the moments—thus sings the voice of the everlasting.
CHASTITY is a wealth that comes from abundance of love.

Every child comes with the message that God is not yet discouraged of man.

Be still, my heart, these great trees are prayers.

If you shut your door to all errors truth will be shut out.

This rainy evening the wind is restless.

I look at the swaying branches and ponder over the greatness of all things.

When I traveled to here and to there, I was tired of thee, O Road, but now when thou leadest me to everywhere I am wedded to thee in love.

By plucking her petals you do not gather the beauty of the flower.

They hated and killed and men praised them.

But God in shame hastens to hide its memory under the green grass.

Men are cruel, but Man is kind.

The false can never grow into truth by growing in power.

When I stand before thee at the day's end thou shalt see my scars and know that I had my wounds and also my healing.

Some day I shall sing to thee in the sunrise of some other world, "I have seen thee before in the light of the earth, in the love of man."

Thou wilt find, Eternal Traveler, marks of thy footsteps across my songs.

When all the strings of my life will be tuned, my Master, then at every touch of thine will come out the music of love.
Man's history is waiting in patience for the triumph of the insulted man.

Let this be my last word, that I trust in thy love.

From The Fugitive, and Other Poems

"Why these preparations without end?"—I said to Mind—"Is some one to come?"

Mind replied, "I am enormously busy gathering things and building towers. I have no time to answer such questions."

Meekly I went back to my work.

When things were grown to a pile, when seven wings of his palace were complete, I said to Mind, "Is it not enough?"

Mind began to say, "Not enough to contain—" and then stopped.

"Contain what?" I asked.

Mind affected not to hear.

I suspected that Mind did not know, and with ceaseless work smothered the question.

His one refrain was, "I must have more."

"Why must you?"

"Because it is great."

"What is great?"

Mind remained silent. I pressed for an answer.

In contempt and anger, Mind said, "Why ask about things that are not? Take notice of those that are hugely before you—the struggle and the fight, the army and armaments, the bricks and mortar, and laborers without number."

I thought, "Possibly Mind is wise."
I REMEMBER the day.

The heavy shower of rain is slackening into fitful pauses, renewed gusts of wind startle it from a first lull.

I take up my instrument. Idly I touch the strings, till, without my knowing, the music borrows the mad cadence of that storm.

I see her figure as she steals from her work, stops at my door, and retreats with hesitating steps. She comes again, stands outside leaning against the wall, then slowly enters the room and sits down. With head bent, she plies her needle in silence; but soon stops her work, and looks out of the window through the rain at the blurred line of trees.

Only this—one hour of a rainy noon filled with shadows and song and silence.

**While** stepping into the carriage she turned her head and threw me a swift glance of farewell.

This was her last gift to me. But where can I keep it safe from the trampling hours?

Must evening sweep this gleam of anguish away, as it will the last flicker of fire from the sunset?

Ought it to be washed off by the rain, as treasured pollen is from heartbroken flowers?

Leave kingly glory and the wealth of the rich to death. But may not tears keep ever fresh the memory of a glance flung through a passionate moment?

"Give it to me to keep," said my song: "I never touch kings' glory or the wealth of the rich, but these small things are mine for ever."

WHEN we two first met my heart rang out in music, "She who is eternally afar is beside you for ever."

That music is silent, because I have grown to believe that my love is only near, and have forgotten that she is also far, far away.

Music fills the infinite between two souls. This has been muffled by the mist of our daily habits.
On shy summer nights, when the breeze brings a vast murmur out of the silence, I sit up in my bed and mourn the great loss of her who is beside me. I ask myself, "When shall I have another chance to whisper to her words with the rhythm of eternity in them?"

Wake up, my song, from thy languor, rend this screen of the familiar, and fly to my beloved there, in the endless surprise of our first meeting!

She went away when the night was about to wane.

My mind tried to console me by saying, "All is vanity."

I felt angry and said, "That unopened letter with her name on it, and this palm-leaf fan bordered with red silk by her own hands, are they not real?"

The day passed, and my friend came and said to me, "Whatever is good is true, and can never perish."

"How do you know?" I asked impatiently; "was not this body good which is now lost to the world?"

As a fretful child hurting its own mother, I tried to wreck all the shelters that ever I had, in and about me, and cried, "This world is treacherous."

Suddenly I felt a voice saying—"Ungrateful!"

I looked out of the window, and a reproach seemed to come from the star-sprinkled night,—"You pour out into the void of my absence your faith in the truth that I came!"

The name she called me by, like a flourishing jasmine, covered the whole seventeen years of our love. With its sound mingled the quiver of the light through the leaves, the scent of the grass in the rainy night, and the sad silence of the last hour of many an idle day.

Not the work of God alone was he who answered to that name; she created him again for herself during those seventeen swift years.
Other years were to follow, but their vagrant days, no longer gathered within the fold of that name uttered in her voice, stray and are scattered.

They ask me, "Who should fold us?"
I find no answer and sit silent, and they cry to me while dispersing, "We seek a shepherdess!"
Whom should they seek?
That they do not know. And like derelict evening clouds they drift in the trackless dark, and are lost and forgotten.

I was walking along a path overgrown with grass, when suddenly I heard from some one behind, "See if you know me?"
I turned round and looked at her and said, "I cannot remember your name."
She said, "I am that first great Sorrow whom you met when you were young."
Her eyes looked like a morning whose dew is still in the air.
I stood silent for some time till I said, "Have you lost all the great burden of your tears?"
She smiled and said nothing. I felt that her tears had had time to learn the language of smiles.
"Once you said," she whispered, "that you would cherish your grief for ever."
I blushed and said, "Yes, but years have passed and I forget."
Then I took her hand in mine and said, "But you have changed."
"What was sorrow once has now become peace," she said.

The General came before the silent and angry King and saluting him said: "The village is punished, the men are stricken to dust, and the women cower in their unlit homes afraid to weep aloud."

The High Priest stood up and blessed the King and cried: "God's mercy is ever upon you."
The Clown, when he heard this, burst out laughing and startled the Court. The King's frown darkened.

"The honor of the throne," said the Minister, "is upheld by the King's prowess and the blessing of Almighty God."

Louder laughed the Clown, and the King growled—"Unseemly mirth!"

"God has showered many blessings upon your head," said the Clown; "the one he bestowed upon me was the gift of laughter."

"This gift will cost you your life," said the King, gripping his sword with his right hand.

Yet the Clown stood up and laughed till he laughed no more.

A shadow of dread fell upon the Court, for they heard that laughter echoing in the depth of God's silence.

I have looked on this picture in many a month of March when the mustard is in bloom—this lazy line of water and the gray of the sand beyond, the rough path along the river-bank carrying the comradeship of the field into the heart of the village.

I have tried to capture in rhyme the idle whistle of the wind, the beat of the oar-strokes from a passing boat.

I have wondered in my mind how simply it stands before me, this great world: with what fond and familiar ease it fills my heart, this encounter with the Eternal Stranger.

How often, great Earth, have I felt my being yearn to flow over you, sharing in the happiness of each green blade that raises its signal banner in answer to the beckoning blue of the sky!

I feel as if I had belonged to you ages before I was born. That is why, in the days when the autumn light shimmers on the mellowing ears of rice, I seem to remember a past when my mind was everywhere, and even to hear voices as of playfellows echoing from the remote and deeply veiled past.
When, in the evening, the cattle return to their folds, raising dust from the meadow paths, as the moon rises higher than the smoke ascending from the village huts, I feel sad as for some great separation that happened in the first morning of existence.

The kingfisher sits still on the prow of an empty boat, while in the shallow margin of the stream a buffalo lies tranquilly blissful, its eyes half closed to savor the luxury of cool mud.

Undismayed by the barking of the village cur, the cow browses on the bank, followed by a hopping group of saliks hunting moths.

I sit in the tamarind grove, where the cries of dumb life congregate—the cattle’s lowing, the sparrows’ chatter, the shrill scream of a kite overhead, the crickets’ chirp, and the splash of a fish in the water.

I peep into the primeval nursery of life, where the mother Earth thrills at the first living clutch near her breast.

In the evening my little daughter heard a call from her companions below the window.

She timidly went down the dark stairs holding a lamp in her hand, shielding it behind her veil.

I was sitting on my terrace in the starlit night of March, when at a sudden cry I ran to see.

Her lamp had gone out in the dark spiral staircase. I asked, “Child, why did you cry?”

From below she answered in distress, “Father, I have lost myself!”

When I came back to the terrace under the starlit night of March, I looked at the sky, and it seemed that a child was walking there treasuring many lamps behind her veils.

If their light went out, she would suddenly stop and a cry would sound from sky to sky, “Father, I have lost myself!”
The day came for the image from the temple to be drawn round the holy town in its chariot.

The Queen said to the King, “Let us go and attend the festival.” Only one man out of the whole household did not join in the pilgrimage. His work was to collect stalks of spear-grass to make brooms for the King’s house.

The chief of the servants said in pity to him, “You may come with us.”

He bowed his head, saying, “It cannot be.”

The man dwelt by the road along which the King’s followers had to pass. And when the Minister’s elephant reached this spot, he called to him and said, “Come with us and see the God ride in his chariot!”

“I dare not seek God after the King’s fashion,” said the man.

“How should you ever have such luck again as to see the God in his chariot?” asked the Minister.

“When God himself comes to my door,” answered the man.

The Minister laughed loud and said, “Fool! ‘When God comes to your door!’ yet a King must travel to see him!”

“Who except God visits the poor?” said the man.

Our Lane is tortuous, as if, ages ago, she started in quest of her goal, vacillated right and left, and remained bewildered for ever.

Above in the air, between her buildings, hangs like a ribbon a strip torn out of space: she calls it her sister of the blue town.

She sees the sun only for a few moments at midday, and asks herself in wise doubt, “Is it real?”

In June rain sometimes shades her band of daylight as with pencil hatchings. The path grows slippery with mud, and umbrellas collide. Sudden jets of water from spouts overhead splash on her startled pavement. In her dismay, she takes it for the jest of an unmannerly scheme of creation.

The spring breeze, gone astray in her coil of contortions, stumbles
like a drunken vagabond against angle and corner, filling the dusty air with scraps of paper and rag. "What fury of foolishness! Are the Gods gone mad?" she exclaims in indignation.

But the daily refuse from the houses on both sides—scales of fish mixed with ashes, vegetable peelings, rotten fruit, and dead rats—never rouses her to question, "Why should these things be?"

She accepts every stone of her paving. But from between their chinks sometimes a blade of grass peeps up. That baffles her. How can solid facts permit such intrusion?

On a morning when at the touch of autumn light her houses wake up into beauty from their foul dreams, she whispers to herself, "There is a limitless wonder somewhere beyond these buildings."

But the hours pass on; the households are astir; the maid strolls back from the market, swinging her right arm and with the left clasping the basket of provisions to her side; the air grows thick with the smell and smoke of kitchens. It again becomes clear to our Lane that the real and normal consist solely of herself, her houses, and their muck-heaps.

The man had no useful work, only vagaries of various kinds.
Therefore it surprised him to find himself in Paradise after a life spent perfecting trifles.
Now the guide had taken him by mistake to the wrong Paradise—one meant only for good, busy souls.

In this Paradise, our man saunters along the road only to obstruct the rush of business.
He stands aside from the path and is warned that he tramples on sown seed. Pushed, he starts up: hustled, he moves on.
A very busy girl comes to fetch water from the well. Her feet run on the pavement like rapid fingers over harp-strings. Hastily she ties a negligent knot with her hair, and loose locks on her forehead pry into the dark of her eyes.
The man says to her, "Would you lend me your pitcher?"
"My pitcher?" she asks, "to draw water?"
“No, to paint patterns on.”
“I have no time to waste,” the girl retorts in contempt.

Now a busy soul has no chance against one who is supremely idle. Every day she meets him at the well, and every day he repeats the same request, till at last she yields.
Our man paints the pitcher with curious colors in a mysterious maze of lines.
The girl takes it up, turns it round and asks, “What does it mean?”
“It has no meaning,” he answers.

The girl carries the pitcher home. She holds it up in different lights and tries to con its mystery.
At night she leaves her bed, lights a lamp, and gazes at it from all points of view.
This is the first time she has met with something without meaning.

On the next day the man is again near the well.
The girl asks, “What do you want?”
“Do more work for you!”
“What work?” she enquires.
“Allow me to weave colored strands into a ribbon to bind your hair.”
“Is there any need?” she asks.
“None whatever,” he allows.
The ribbon is made, and thenceforward she spends a great deal of time over her hair.

The even stretch of well-employed time in that Paradise begins to show irregular rents.
The elders are troubled; they meet in council.
The guide confesses his blunder, saying that he has brought the wrong man to the wrong place.
The wrong man is called. His turban, flaming with color, shows plainly how great that blunder has been.
The chief of the elders says, “You must go back to the earth.”
The man heaves a sigh of relief: “I am ready.”
The girl with the ribbon round her hair chimes in: "I also!"
For the first time the chief of the elders is faced with a situation which has no sense in it.

Give me the supreme courage of love, this is my prayer—the courage to speak, to do, to suffer at thy will, to leave all things or be left alone. Strengthen me on errands of danger, honor me with pain, and help me climb to that difficult mood which sacrifices daily to thee.

Give me the supreme confidence of love, this is my prayer—the confidence that belongs to life in death, to victory in defeat, to the power hidden in frailest beauty, to that dignity in pain which accepts hurt but disdains to return it.


FROM His eternal seat Christ comes down to this earth, where, ages ago, in the bitter cup of death He poured his deathless life for those who came to the call and those who remained away.

He looks about Him, and sees the weapons of evil that wounded His own age.

The arrogant spikes and spears, the slim, sly knives, the scimitar in diplomatic sheath, crooked and cruel, are hissing and raining sparks as they are sharpened on monster wheels.

But the most fearful of them all, at the hands of the slaughterers, are those on which has been engraved His own name, that are fashioned from the texts of His own words fused in the fire of hatred and hammered by hypocritical greed.

He presses His hand upon His heart; He feels that the age-long moment of His death has not yet ended, that new nails, turned out in countless numbers by those who are learned in cunning craftsmanship, pierce Him in every joint.

They had hurt Him once, standing at the shadow of their temple; they are born anew in crowds.

From before their sacred altar they shout to the soldiers, "Strikel"
And the Son of Man in agony cries, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

Raidas, the sweeper, sat still, lost in the solitude of his soul, and some songs born of his silent vision found their way to the Rani’s heart,—the Rani Jhali of Chitore.

Tears flowed from her eyes, her thoughts wandered away from her daily duties, till she met Raidas who guided her to God’s presence.

The old Brahmin priest of the King’s house rebuked her for her desecration of sacred law by offering homage as a disciple to an outcaste.

"Brahmin," the Rani answered, "while you were busy tying your purse-strings of custom ever tighter, love’s gold slipped unnoticed to the earth, and my Master in his divine humility has picked it up from the dust.

"Revel in your pride of the unmeaning knots without number, harden your miserly heart, but I, a beggar woman, am glad to receive love’s wealth, the gift of the lowly dust, from my Master, the swccper."

**Fireflies**

I touch God in my song
as the hill touches the far-away sea
with its waterfall.

The butterfly counts not months but moments,
and has time enough.

Let my love, like sunlight, surround you
and yet give you illumined freedom.

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Love remains a secret even when spoken,
   for only a lover truly knows that he is loved.

Emancipation from the bondage of the soil
   is no freedom for the tree.

In love I pay my endless debt to thee
   for what thou art.


garden  The Child

"What of the night?" they ask.
No answer comes.
For the blind Time gropes in a maze and knows not its path or
   purpose.
The darkness in the valley stars like the dead cyc-sockets of a giant,
   the clouds like a nightmare oppress the sky,
   and the massive shadows lie scattered like the torn limbs of the
   night.
A lurid glow waxes and wanes on the horizon—
   is it an ultimate threat from an alien star,
   or an elemental hunger licking the sky?
Things are deliriously wild,
they are a noise whose grammar is a groan,
   and words smothered out of shape and sense.
They are the refuse, the rejections, the fruitless failures of life,
   abrupt ruins of prodigal pride—
fragments of a bridge over the oblivion of a vanished stream,
godless shrines that shelter reptiles,
   marble steps that lead to blankness.
Sudden tumults rise in the sky and wrestle
   and a startled shudder runs along the sleepless hours.
Are they from desperate floods
  hammering against their cave walls,
or from some fanatic storms
  whirling and howling incantations?
Are they the cry of an ancient forest
  flinging up its hoarded fire in a last extravagant suicide,
or screams of a paralytic crowd scourged by lunatics
  blind and deaf?
Underneath the noisy terror a stealthy hum creeps up
  like bubbling volcanic mud,
a mixture of sinister whispers, rumors and slanders, and hisses of
derision.
The men gathered there are vague like torn pages of an epic.
Groping in groups or single, the torchlight tattoos
  their faces in chequered lines, in patterns of frightfulness.
The maniacs suddenly strike their neighbors on suspicion
and a hubbub of an indiscriminate fight bursts forth,
  echoing from hill to hill.
The women weep and wail,
  they cry that their children are lost in a wilderness
  of contrary paths with confusion at the end.
Others defiantly ribald shake with raucous laughter
  their lascivious limbs unshrinking loudly,
  for they think that nothing matters.

There on the crest of the hill
stands the Man of faith amid the snow-white silence,
  He scans the sky for some signal of light,
and when the clouds thicken and the nightbirds scream as they fly,
  he cries, "Brothers, despair not, for Man is great."
But they never heed him,
  for they believe that the elemental brute is eternal
and goodness in its depth is darkly cunning in deception.
When beaten and wounded they cry, "Brother, where art thou?"
  The answer comes, "I am by your side."
But they cannot see in the dark
  and they argue that the voice is of their own desperate desire,
that men are ever condemned to fight for phantoms
in an interminable desert of mutual menace.

The clouds part, the morning star appears in the East,
a breath of relief springs up from the heart of the earth,
the murmur of leaves ripples along the forest path, and the early
bird sings.
"The time has come," proclaims the Man of faith.
"The time for what?"
"For the pilgrimage."
They sit and think, they know not the meaning,
and yet they seem to understand according to their desires.
The touch of the dawn goes deep into the soil
and life shivers along through the roots of all things.
"To the pilgrimage of fulfillment," a small voice whispers, nobody
knows whence.
Taken up by the crowd
it swells into a mighty meaning.
Men raise their heads and look up,
women lift their arms in reverence,
children clap their hands and laugh.
The early glow of the sun shines like a golden garland on the forehead
of the Man of faith,
and they all cry: "Brother, we salute thee!"

Men begin to gather from all quarters,
from across the seas, the mountains and pathless wastes,
They come from the valley of the Nile and the banks
of the Ganges,
from the snow-sunk uplands of Tibet,
from high-walled cities of glittering towers,
from the dense dark tangle of savage wilderness.
Some walk, some ride on camels, horses and elephants,
on chariots with banners vying with the clouds of dawn,
The priests of all creeds burn incense, chanting verses as they go.
The monarchs march at the head of their armies,
lances flashing in the sun and drums beating loud.
Ragged beggars and courtiers pompously decorated,
   agile young scholars and teachers burdened with learned age jostle
   each other in the crowd.
Women come chatting and laughing,
mothers, maidens and brides,
   with offerings of flowers and fruit,
   sandal paste and scented water.
Mingled with them is the harlot,
   shrill of voice and loud in tint and tinsel.
The gossip is there who secretly poisons the well
   of human sympathy and clucks.
The maimed and the cripple join the throng with the blind and the sick,
   the dissolute, the thief and the man who makes a trade of his God
   for profit and mimics the saint.
"The fulfillment!"
   They dare not talk aloud,
but in their minds they magnify their own greed,
   and dream of boundless power,
   of unlimited impunity for pilfering and plunder,
   and eternity of feast for their gluttonous flesh.

The Man of faith moves on along pitiless paths strewn with flints over
   scorching sands and steep mountainous tracks.
They follow him, the strong and the weak, the aged and young,
   the rulers of realms, the tillers of the soil.
Some grow weary and footsore, some angry and suspicious.
They ask at every dragging step,
   "How much further is the end?"
The Man of faith sings in answer;
they scowl and shake their fists and yet they cannot resist him;
   the pressure of the moving mass and indefinite hope push them
   forward.
They shorten their sleep and curtail their rest,
   they out-vie each other in their speed,
they are ever afraid lest they may be too late for their chance
   while others be more fortunate.
The days pass,  
the ever-receding horizon tempts them with renewed lure of the un-
seen till they are sick.  
Their faces harden, their curses grow louder and louder.

It is night.  
The travelers spread their mats on the ground under the banyan  
tree.  
A gust of wind blows out the lamp  
and the darkness deepens like a sleep into a swoon.  
Someone from the crowd suddenly stands up  
and pointing to the leader with merciless finger breaks out:  
"False prophet, thou has deceived us!"  
Others take up the cry one by one,  
women hiss their hatred and men growl.  
At last one bolder than others suddenly deals him a blow.  
They cannot see his face, but fall upon him in a fury of destruction  
and hit him till he lies prone upon the ground, his life extinct.  
The night is still, the sound of the distant waterfall comes muffled,  
and a faint breath of jasmine floats in the air.

The pilgrims are afraid.  
The women begin to cry, the men in an agony of wretchedness  
shout at them to stop.  
Dogs break out barking and are cruelly whipped into silence broken  
by moans.  
The night seems endless and men and women begin to wrangle as to  
who among them was to blame.  
They shriek and shout and as they are ready to unsheathe their knives  
the darkness pales, the morning light overflows the mountain tops.  
Suddenly they become still and gasp for breath as they gaze at the  
figure lying dead.  
The women sob out loud and men hide their faces in their hands.  
A few try to slink away unnoticed,  
but their crime keeps them chained to their victim.  
They ask each other in bewilderment,  
"Who will show us the path?"  
The old man from the East bends his head and says:  
"The Victim."
They sit still and silent.
Again speaks the old man,
"We refused him in doubt, we killed him in anger,
now we shall accept him in love,
for in his death he lives in the life of us all,
the great Victim."
And they all stand up and mingle their voices and sing,
"Victory to the Victim."

"To the pilgrimage" calls the young,
"to love, to power, to knowledge, to wealth overflowing,"
"We shall conquer the world and the world beyond this,"
they all cry exultant in a thundering cataract of voices,
The meaning is not the same to them all, but only the impulse,
the moving confluence of wills that reck not death and disaster.
No longer they ask for their way,
no more doubts are there to burden their minds
or weariness to clog their feet.
The spirit of the leader is within them and ever
beyond them—
the Leader who has crossed death and all limits.
They travel over the fields where the seeds are sown,
by the granary where the harvest is gathered,
and across the barren soil where famine dwells
and skeletons cry for the return of their flesh.
They pass through populous cities humming with life,
through dumb desolation hugging its ruined past,
and hovels for the unclad and unclean,
a mockery of home for the homeless.
They travel through long hours of the summer day,
and as the light wanes in the evening they ask the man who reads
the sky:
"Brother, is yonder the tower of our final hope and peace?"
The wise man shakes his head and says:
"It is the last vanishing cloud of the sunset."
"Friends," exhort the young, "do not stop.
Through the night's blindness we must struggle into the Kingdom
of living light."
They go on in the dark.
The road seems to know its own meaning
and dust underfoot dumbly speaks of direction.
The stars—celestial wayfarers—sing in silent chorus:
"Move on, comrades!"
In the air floats the voice of the Leader:
"The goal is nigh."

The first flush of dawn glistens on the dew-dripping leaves of the
forest.
The man who reads the sky cries:
"Friends, we have come!"
They stop and look around.
On both sides of the road the corn is ripe to the horizon,
—the glad golden answer of the earth to the morning light.
The current of daily life moves slowly
between the village near the hill and the one by the river bank.
The potter's wheel goes round, the woodcutter brings fuel to the
market,
the cowherd takes his cattle to the pasture,
and the woman with the pitcher on her head walks to the well.
But where is the King's castle, the mine of gold, the secret book of
magic,
the sage who knows love's utter wisdom?
"The stars cannot be wrong," assures the reader of the sky.
"Their signal points to that spot."
And reverently he walks to a wayside spring
from which wells up a stream of water, a liquid light,
like the morning melting into a chorus of tears and laughter.
Near it in a palm grove surrounded by a strange hush stands a leaf-
thatched hut,
at whose portal sits the poet of the unknown shore, and sings:
"Mother, open the gate!"

A ray of morning sun strikes aslant at the door.
The assembled crowd feel in their blood the primeval chant of
creation:
"Mother, open the gate!"
The gate opens.
The mother is seated on a straw bed with the babe on her lap,
Like the dawn with the morning star.
The sun's ray that was waiting at the door outside falls on the head
of the child.
The poet strikes his lute and sings out:
"Victory to Man, the new-born, the ever-living."
They kneel down—the king and the beggar, the saint and the sinner,
the wise and the fool—and cry:
"Victory to Man, the new-born, the ever-living."
The old man from the East murmurs to himself:
"I have seen!"

Poems Old and New

Be not ashamed, my brothers, to stand
before the proud and the powerful
with your white robes of simpleness.
Let your crown be of humility, your
freedom the freedom of the soul.
Build God's throne daily upon the ample
bareness of your poverty, and know
that what is huge is not great and
pride is not everlasting.¹

Far as I gaze at the depth of Thy immensity
I find no trace there of sorrow or death or separation.
Death assumes its aspect of terror
and sorrow its pain
only when, away from Thee,
I turn my face toward my own dark self.
Thou All Perfect,
everything abides at Thy feet
for all time.
The fear of loss only clings to me
with its ceaseless grief,
but the shame of my penury
and my life's burden
vanish in a moment
when I feel Thy presence
in the center of my being.²

Let the earth and the water, the air and
the fruits of my country be sweet,
my God.
Let the homes and marts, the forests
and fields of my country be full,
my God.
Let the promises and hopes, the deeds
and words of my country be true,
my God.
Let the lives and hearts of the sons and
daughters of my country be one,
my God.³

Thou art the ruler of the minds of all people,
Thou Dispenser of India's destiny.
Thy name rouses the hearts
of the Punjab, Sind, Gujrat and Maratha,
of Dravid, Orissa and Bengal.
It echoes in the hills of the Vindhyas and
Himalayas,
mingles in the music of Jumna and Ganges,
and is chanted by the waves of the Indian Sea.
They pray for thy blessing and sing thy praise,
Thou Dispenser of India’s destiny,
Victory, Victory, Victory to thee.

Day and night, thy voice goes out from land to land,
calling Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and Jains
round thy throne
and Parsecs, Mussalmans and Christians.
Offerings are brought to thy shrine by
the East and the West
to be woven in a garland of love.
Thou bringest the hearts of all peoples
into the harmony of one life,
Thou Dispenser of India’s destiny,
Victory, Victory, Victory to thee.

Eternal Charioteer, thou drivest man’s history
along the road rugged with rises and falls
of Nations.
Amidst all tribulations and terror
thy trumpet sounds to hearten those that
despair and droop,
and guide all people in their paths of
peril and pilgrimage.
Thou Dispenser of India’s destiny,
Victory, Victory, Victory to thee.

When the long dreary night was dense with gloom
and the country lay still in a stupor,
thy Mother’s arms held her,
thy wakeful eyes bent upon her face,
till she was rescued from the dark evil
dreams
that oppressed her spirit,
Thou Dispenser of India’s destiny,
Victory, Victory, Victory to thee.
Thou hast given us to live.
Let us uphold this honor with all our
strength and will;
For thy glory rests upon the glory that we are.
Therefore in thy name we oppose the power that
would plant its banner upon our soul.
Let us know that thy light grows dim in the
heart that bears its insult of bondage,
That the life, when it becomes feeble,
timidly yields thy throne to untruth,
For weakness is the traitor who betrays our soul.
Let this be our prayer to thee—

Give us power to resist pleasure where it
enslaves us,
To lift our sorrow up to thee as the summer
holds its midday sun.
Make us strong that our worship may
flower in love, and bear fruit in work.
Make us strong that we may not insult the weak
and the fallen,
That we may hold our love high where all things
around us are wooing the dust.

They fight and kill for self-love, giving
it thy name,
They fight for hunger that thrives on
brother's flesh,
They fight against thine anger and die.
But let us stand firm and suffer with strength
for the true, for the good, for the
eternal in man,
for thy kingdom which is in the union
of hearts,
for the freedom which is of the soul.⁵
A beast’s bony frame lies bleaching on the grass.
Its dry white bones—time’s hard laughter—cry to me:
Thy end, proud man, is one with the end of the cattle that graze no more,
for when thy life’s wine is spilt to its last drop
the cup is flung away in final unconcern.
I cry in answer:
Mine is not merely the life that pays its bed and board
with its bankrupt bones, and is made destitute.
Never can my mortal days contain to the full
all that I have thought and felt, gained and given,
listened to and uttered.
Often has my mind crossed time’s border,—
Is it to stop at last for ever at the
boundary of crumbling bones?
Flesh and blood can never be the measure of the truth that is myself;
the days and moments cannot wear it out with their passing kicks;
the wayside bandit, dust, dares not rob it of all its possessions.

Death, I refuse to accept from thee
that I am nothing but a gigantic jest of God,
a blank annihilation built with all the wealth of the Infinite.  

You were born to the joy of all:
the blue sky,
birds,
your mother’s eyes;
S\(\text{ravan}\)'s rains, \(\text{sarat}\)'s moist air,
these were the first welcome of life.
Your birth was given in an instant
an endless gift,
the call of home to the home-dweller.

Death be yours in distant loneliness at night,
greet you where sea-waves rhythm the dance of the homeless,
where a chant rises from the unknown forest,
where the foreign waterfall claps its hands in a farewell song,
where unfamiliar stars offer light to the infinite,
where nothing calls back to return.
The door is open: oceans and hills all point to the road.
The night near your head will stand silent
For death is a call to the wayfarer.7

The worshiper offers leaves and flowers to the river
and ends his worship.
So I fill my basket and offer songs to Ganges, water of life;
and I too worship.

This is love’s current from high Vaikuntha,
from the tangled locks of Siva,
the water purified by his fiery sacrifice.
Ages of sin have dissolved in these waters,
and its waves resound the future.
Each bank and bend beckons at the endless current.

By touch
it has rescued me from dust,
swung its waves into my limbs, murmured in my voice,
rippled light and color in my eyes.
Removing the mantle of the infinite,
what form and joy, dear stream, you have revealed.

My song is my flower-offering to the waters.
What if no flower floats for long,
with whom, then, do I quarrel?
Under the firmament, in this grass-thrilled earth,
in the cycle of spring and rain,
in the procession of summer and winter,
I have worshiped each day with song.
And at the end, may my song be complete, be blessed
and carried away.8
When I was a boy,
At two in the afternoon
        My head against the door
        Of my room on the roof
My mat spread out,
I spent the sunny hours.
Far in the sky the eagle called,
The shishu leaves glittered in the breeze,
Its beak parted in thirst, the crow
Lighted on the stone wall.
Sparrows fluttered
To the rafters of my room.
Across the lane came the hawker’s cry:
On a distant roof somebody was flying a kite.
The unknown,
The far-away beyond the eyes
Played a tune that won my heart
From home.
Love and pain mingled without reason,
Wove dreams with no beginning
And no end.
It seemed I saw—
        The friend of one without a friend.

I have stepped to seventy,
Toward the shore’s end.
        I open the window of my heart
        As in the childhood
Gazing. My hours pass.
In this burning heat
The shirish branches quiver
Near the well by the tamarind tree.
The neighborhood dog is asleep;
Freed from the cart, the bullock
Lies on the ground.
The gandharajas wilt on the gravel.
My eyes touch all,
My thoughts are in each thing.
Free as a naked child, my mind
Is with the forest shade
And with the sky.
The conch-shell of the unknown
Sounds in all that I know.⁹

The world today is wild with the delirium
of hatred,
the conflicts are cruel and unceasing in
anguish,
crooked are its paths, tangled its bonds
of greed.
All creatures are crying for a new birth
of thine,
Oh Thou of boundless life,
save them, rouse thine eternal voice of hope,
let Love’s lotus with its inexhaustible
treasure of honey
open its petals in thy light.
O Serene, O Free,
in thine immeasurable mercy and goodness
wipe away all dark stains from the heart
of this earth.

Thou giver of immortal gifts
give us the power of renunciation
and claim from us our pride.
In the splendor of a new sunrise of wisdom
let the blind gain their sight
and let life come to the souls that are dead.
O Serene, O Free,
in thine immeasurable mercy and goodness
wipe away all dark stains from the heart
of this earth.

Man’s heart is anguished with the fever
of unrest,
with the poison of self-seeking,
with a thirst that knows no end.
Countries far and wide flaunt on their
foreheads
the blood-red mark of hatred.
Touch them with thy right hand,
make them one in spirit,
bring harmony into their life,
bring rhythm of beauty.
O Serene, O Free,
in thine immeasurable mercy and goodness
wipe away all dark stains from the heart
of this earth.10

Those who struck Him once
in the name of their rulers,
are born again in this present age.

They gather in their prayer-halls
in a pious garb,
they call their soldiers,
“Kill, Kill,” they shout;
in their roaring mingles the music of
their hymns,
while the Son of Man in His agony
prays, “O God,
fling, fling far away this cup filled with
the bitterest of poisons.” 11
From afar I thought you
Invincible, merciless;
The world trembled in fear.
Awesome,
Your greedy flames
Consumed broken hearts.
The trident in your hand
Rose to the storm-clouds
To draw down the thunder.

My heart trembled;
I stood before you.
At the sight of your scowling brow
Danger rose like a wave.
Down came the blow.
Pressing my hand against my heart
I asked,
"Is there more,
The last of your thunderbolts?"
Down came the blow.
Just this?
My fear disappeared.
When you held your thunderbolt aloft
You seemed mightier than I.
Your blow brought you down
To my world.
You became small
And my fear was gone.
However great,
You were not mightier than death.

That I am mightier,
Will be my last word
When I leave.12
Door, always open
Only the blind eye is shut.
He fears to enter
Who does not know the inner way.

Door, your call resounds in light and dark,
Your welcome music solemn.
You unbar in the risen sun
And in the darkness of stars.

Door, from seed to sprout
You lead from flower to fruit.
Through ages you unravel,
From death to life.

Oh door, world’s life
Journeys from death to death.
You beckon to freedom’s pilgrim;
“Never fear” comes from the despairing night.13

Scattered in this room
Dumb, deaf things intermingle;
Some strike my eyes, others I barely see:
The corner flower jar,
There the teapot darkly hides its face;
The cabinet articles, miscellaneous,
Crowd into nothingness;
Two window-panes lie broken there behind the screen,
Suddenly, I even see that red screen itself;
I see but do not see.
And the morning light traces intricate rug designs.
There—the green desk cloth; I had fancied it before,
Its color flaming in my eyes.
Today the green lies buried, as if ashes smoked,
And it is there, but it is gone.
The drawers are here, layers crammed with papers
I forgot to throw away.
The calendar slanting on the table
Reminds me it is the eighth day of the month.
A lavender bottle catches light;
The clock ticks; I hardly look.
Near the wall
An almirah, full of books—
Most of them remain unknown.
Those pictures which I hung
Appear like ghosts, forgotten.
The carpet lines once spoke clear language,
Now are almost silent.
Those days gone before and this day now
Lie unconnected.
In this small room
Some things are intimate, so many are alien,
And in passing the table
From shut-eyed habit
I miss most of what there is to see.
Inattentively, I cross and re-cross
Between the known and unknown.
Some one has placed a childhood photograph
Under the mirror-frame; the faded print
Is little more than shadows.
In my mind I am Rabindranath,
Like this room.
In dim, torn language,
Some things throng clear, some
Hide away in corners.
Most of it I merely forgot to remove.
Like these lost meanings,
The past days diminish,
Rubbing off their right to be:
Shadows lost amidst the new.
And the alphabet which holds their meanings,
Nobody can read.
The journey nears the road-end
    where the shadows deepen with death.
The setting sun unties the last strings of its gifts,
    Squanders gold with both hands.
Death is lighted with festive colors;
    Life is before me.

With this word my breath will stop:
    I loved.
Love's overbrimming mystery
    joins death and life. It
Has filled my cup of pain
    with joy.

The Vaisakh storm lashed sorrow's road
    Where I walked, a lonely pilgrim,
Many nights bereft of light.
    Yet beckonings reached my heart.
Slander's thorn pricked me
    As a garland of triumph.

Gazing at the face of earth
    I never exhausted wonder.
Lakshmi, grace in the lotus of beauty,
    Touched me.
I caught in my flute
    The breath that rocks with laughs and cries.

I claimed for my soul
    Those human voices of the divine.
Many defeats, much fear and shame,
    Yet I saw greatness.
In the midst of agony and striving
    The door suddenly opened.
I gained the right of birth;
    That glory was mine.
I shared the stream that flows from ages,
    in wisdom, work and thought.
If a vision were mine
    It belonged to all.

Sitting in the dust, I saw the supreme
    in light beyond the light,
Smaller than the smallest, great beyond the greatest,
    Transcending the senses.
I often beheld the unquenchable flame
    Rending the body.

Wherever a saint atoned,
    I gained.
Whoever triumphed over delusion,
    I knew myself in him;
Wherever a hero died with ease,
    My place is in his history.

Perfect beyond perfection, even if I forgot His name
    I offered Him worship.
The quiet sky reached me,
    At dawn I received the radiance.
My death will be fulfilled
    In this earth with the splendor of life.

Today in the farewell of the year,
    Death, remove your veil.
Much has fallen aside, love's tenderness often left me,
    Lightless memory faded on the road
But at this deathless moment of life, O Death
    Your hands are filled with treasure.15
In the center of the universe
Age to age, there gathers
Unforgiveness.
Unaware, a single error
Multiplies in time and
Suddenly destroys itself.
The seeming solid base
Heaves an earthquake dance.
Creatures come in hordes,
Power-packed, illusory:
The burden grows, and grows
To self-destruction.
Piercing through errors beyond our ken
It rends relationships;
Mistakes of a gesture or of a gleaming spark
Impede the backward path, forever:
Destruction at the bidding of the Perfect.
What new creation will it yield at last?
Disobedient clay is crushed, resistance all removed,
Now green sprouts will bear new life.
Unforgiveness,
Strength in creation,
Your feet trample the thorns
On the path of peace.\textsuperscript{18}

The war-drums are sounded.
Men force their features into frightfulness
and gnash their teeth;
and before they rush out to gather raw
human flesh for death’s larder,
they march to the temple of Buddha,
the compassionate,
to claim his blessings,
while loud beats the drum rat-a-tat
and earth trembles.
They pray for success;
for they must raise weeping and wailing
in their wake, sever ties of love,
plant flags on the ashes of desolated homes,
devastate the centers of culture
and shrines of beauty,
mark red with blood their trail
across green meadows and populous markets,
and so they march to the temple of Buddha,
the compassionate,
to claim his blessings,
while loud beats the drum rat-a-tat
and earth trembles.

They will punctuate each thousand of the maimed and killed
with the trumpeting of their triumph,
arouse demon’s mirth at the sight of the limbs torn bleeding from women and children;
and they pray that they may befog minds with untruths
and poison God’s sweet air of breath,
and therefore they march to the temple of Buddha, the compassionate,
to claim his blessings,
while loud beats the drum rat-a-tat
and earth trembles.\textsuperscript{17}

I have won blessings in this life of the beautiful.
In the vessel of man’s affection I taste His own divine nectar.
Sorrow, difficult to bear,
has shown me the unconquered, unhurt soul.
On the day when I saw death’s impending shadow,
I was not defeated by fear.
Great human beings
have not deprived me of their touch;
I have stored undying words in my heart.
I received grace from the god of life:
let me leave this memory
in grateful words.\textsuperscript{18}

On the bank of Rup-Narain
I awake:
This world
Is not a dream.
In words of blood I saw
My being.
I knew myself
Through hurts
And pain.
Truth is hard
And never deceives.
I loved that hardness.
Death-long \textit{tapasya} of suffering
To win truth’s terrible value
And to pay all debts
In death.\textsuperscript{19}

Here in the universe
Revolves a gigantic wheel of pain;
Stars and planets burst;
Sparks of far-flung, fiery dust
Scatter at a gaping speed
Enveloping first creation’s anguish.
In the armory of pain
Glowing on the stretches of consciousness
Torture instruments clang;
Bleeding wounds gape.
Man's body is so small,
His strength of suffering so immense.
Where chaos and creation meet
Why does man hold up his fiery cup
In the weird festival of the gods,
Titan-drunk—O why
Fill his clay body, deliriously
With the red tide of tears?
Each moment offers value.
Man's sacrifice,
His burning body—
Can anything compare
In all the suns and stars?
Such prowess, endurance
Indifference to death—
This triumphal march where hundreds
Trample embers
To reach the limit of sorrow—
Where else is such a guest,
Where such a pilgrimage,
Such service, breaking like water through
Igneous rocks,
Where else such endless stores of love? 20

Once again I wake up when the night has waned,
when the world opens all its petals once more,
and this is an endless wonder.
Vast islands have sunk in the abyss unnamed,
stars have been beggared of the last flicker
of their light,
countless epochs have lost all their lading.
World-conquerors have vanished into the
shadow of a name
behind dim legends,
great nations raised their towers of triumph
as a mere offering to the unappeasable
hunger of the dust.
Among this dissolving crowd of the discarded
my forehead receives the consecration of light,
and this is an endless wonder.
I stand for another day with the Himalayas,
with constellations of stars.
I am here where in the surging sea-waves
the infuriate dance of the Terrible
is rhythm with his boisterous laughter.
The centuries on which have flashed up
and foundered
kingly crowns like bubbles
have left their signature on the bark of
this aged tree,
where I am allowed to sit under its ancient
shade for one more day,
and this is an endless wonder.21

How little I know of this world:
deeds of men, cities, rivers,
mountains, arid wastes, unknown
creatures, unacquainted trees.
The great Earth teems
and I know merely a niche.
Deprived, I travel with my eyes
gathering word-glimpses, pictures
that fill my areas of inexperience
with wealth.
I am a poet of the earth:
my flute re-plays its tunes.
I fill its callings with my dreams
and hear the harmony in the
silent hours of my heart.
Inaccessible snowy ranges
call me ever again
with music unheard.
The Polar star, far, alone,
has touched my sleepless eyes.
The waterfall
dances in my heart as I have heard
the primal song of nature.
I have heard the symphony of being.

Man stands farthest in this mystery,
hidden in time and space.
To know him is to commune and love.
Seldom have I won access,
my ways of life have intervened.
The tiller,
the weaver,
the fisherman
all sustain the world with labor.
I have known them from my corner of renown,
unable to enter the intimate precincts.
I know the song basket is empty
if filled with trinkets when links are gone
between life and life.
And I know my failure
whenever my song has been incomplete,
wherever it has missed the all.

So I am here waiting for the message
from the poet of the world,
of the peasant, the comrade
whose words and deeds have concurred.
May his words reveal, not hoodwink,
nor tempt the eye alone.
May he give what I have not.
May he save himself from a
mimic sympathy for laborers.

Come, poet of the multitudes,
sing songs of obscure man,
reveal his unspoken soul,
soothe his humiliated heart,
restore life and song
to this dry land.
Resuscitate the failing hearts
of hidden men.
May your voice reflect
those standing bowed.
Let the one-stringed minstrel, also,
add his tune
to the great court anthem of the muse.
Come, poet of the new age,
lead me to those hearts
so far away, those hearts so near.
May they know themselves through you
whom I salute.\textsuperscript{22}

Sheltered by the distant throne
The kingdom flaunts
The difference between rulers and the ruled,
Keeps disaster hidden under awnings.
Hapless the reign which
Reduces the symbol of power to shame.
Even if the suffering of multitudes
Does not touch the rulers—
Finally it draws the providential curse.

Under the shadow of great wealth
Starvation moves across the land,
Where drinking water is impure and drying up—
Where the body has no winter clothes.
And the door of death is open—
Where, worse than death, the lives worn to the skin,
Day and night, are subjected to unchecked disease.
There,
The dying cannot help the kingdom,
They are only burdens.
The bird whose wing is shriveled up,
Cannot remain steady in the storm,
It falls to the dust, broken.
The reckoning comes.
When possessions topple down,
From the ruins
The penury which was destitute
Re-builds its state.23

On that birthday morning,
With deference
I lifted my eyes to the sunrise.
I saw the dawn
Consecrate
The white forehead of the mountain ranges.
I beheld
The great distance
In creation’s heart
On the throne of the lord of mountains.
From ages, majestic,
He has preserved the unknown
In the trackless forest;
The sky-cleaving, far-away,
Encircled
In sunrise and sunset.

On this birthday,
The great distance grows in my heart.
The starry path is nebular,
Mysterious;
And my own remoteness
Impenetrable.
The pilgrim moves, his path unseen,
The consequence unknown.
Today
I hear that traveler's footsteps
From my lonely seashore.²⁴

Shunned at the temple-gates
by the pious;
the outcasts,
uninitiates,
seek their God
beyond the artificial,
inwardly,
in midnight skies,
in forest flowers,
in love
and separation.
Their image of God
is not manhandled,
or imprisoned by temple walls.
Along the edge of the Padma,
whose waves sweep away
old temples,
I have seen one of them
alone with his ektara
seeking his soul's companion
through songs.
I am an
—outcaste,
whose offerings cannot reach
the imprisoned God.
The priest asks,
"Did you see your God?"
"No"—I say.
Surprised, he asks,
"Do you know the path?"
"No"—I say.
He questions sadly,
"Are you not of caste then?"
"No"—I say.

As a boy
I felt in my blood the radiance
of the primal light.
I spread my spirit
upon the bosom of the Eternal
and marveled,
that for millions of years
a spark lay hidden
until it burst into the flame
that was I.
This wonder
has been
ritual for me every day,
my worship
outside the temple gates;
I am the outcaste, the uninitiate.
Born in the household
of exile,
I was rejected by the respectable.
Out of grace with playmates,
a nameless stranger
to the neighborhood,
I could but peep across
the bristling hedge
to their house
sanctimonious in pride.
And from a distance I watched
the crowds pouring
along the traveled paths.
Away from the crowd,
I pursued my fancies
at the crossing of the roads.
For their worship they plucked
flowers prescribed by scripture
and left for me and my God
the garden of blossoms
blessed by the sun.
By the contempt of the pious
I was thrust
into the arms of man.
And I found solitary friends
whose light and voice
made history.
The heroes and sages
who made death divine
are my associates:
They are seekers after truth
and inheritors of life.
I have prayed:
Deliver us,
O man of men,
from the creed
which flaunts
exclusion;
rescue me from the boredom
of observances
that insult humanity.
I am blessed
who have known you
in the fellowship
of sons of the immortal,
—even I, the outcaste, the uninitiate.
Whose offerings are
to Him in the heavens,
and to the inner man in me,
whose love is joy forever.²⁵
Floating on time's stream
My mind gazes at the
Beyond.
Along that track of emptiness
Shadow pictures form,
Conquerors processing through the past
With power's arrogant speed.
Empire-hungry Pathans have come,
And the Mughals:
Victory's chariot-wheels
Churning dust;
Triumphant banners have fluttered.
Today in the empty path
I see no traces.
The blue space, age to age,
Is colored by sunrise and sunset.

Again, in that emptiness,
Iron-bound,
Fire-breathing,
The powerful English
Scattering energy.
Time's current will
Sweep away Empire's nets.
Their merchandise troops
Will leave no sign
On the path of the stars.
On this earth
I see the moving
Multitudes,
Age to age,
Urged by mankind's needs in life,
and death.

They pull the oars,
Hold the helm;
In the fields they
Sow and cut the corn.
They work.
The kingly scepter breaks, the war-drums cease,
Victory columns gape, stupidly
Oblivious:
Blood-stained weapons and blood-shot eyes
Hide in children's storybooks.
They work,
In Anga, in Banga, in Kalinga's seas and river-ghats,
In Punjab, Bombay, and Gujurat.
Voices hum
Night and day
The world's livelihood.
Sorrows and joys
Chant life.
On hundreds of empire ruins
They work.²⁸

You have covered the path of your creation
in a mesh of varied wiles,
guileful one.
Deftly you have set a snare of false beliefs
in artless lives.
With your deception
you have set the great man on trial
taking from him the secrecy of night.
Your star lights for him
the translucent path of his heart,
illumined by a simple faith,
Though tortuous outside
it is straight within,
and there is his pride.
Though men call him futile,
in the depth of his heart he finds truth
washed clean by the inner light.
Nothing can deprive him;  
he carries to his treasure-house  
his last reward.  
He who could easily bear your wile,  
receives from you the right  
to everlasting peace.  

There lies the ocean of peace,  
Helmsman, launch the boat.  
You will always be his comrade.  
Take, O take him to your heart.  
In the path of the Infinite  
will shr ine the Dhruva-tara.  
Giver of freedom, your forgiveness, your mercy  
will be wealth inexhaustible  
in the eternal journey.  
May the mortal bonds perish,  
May the vast universe take him in its arms,  
And may he know in his fearless heart  
The great unknown.  

The first day’s sun  
asked  
at the new manifestation of being—  
Who are you?  
No answer came.  
Year after year went by,  
the last sun of the day  
the last question utters  
on the western sea-shore,  
in the silent evening—  
Who are you?  
He gets no answer.
Soon, I feel
the time comes near to leave.
With sunset shadings
screen the parting day.
Let the hour be silent; let it be peaceful.
Let not any pompous memories or meetings
create a sorrow’s trance.
May the trees at the gate
raise the earth’s chant of peace
in a cluster of green leaves.
May the night’s blessings be
in the light of the seven stars.
NOTES

TRAVEL

Occasional changes in the verb tenses of the English translations are intentional. The original Bengali verbs possess qualities which give the sense of both the past and the present, and in order to convey this dual sense of what one could call the reminiscent past and the discursive present, it has seemed best to use both the past and present tenses of the English verbs.

3. “Rural England.” The reading at Rothenstein’s referred to in the preface is discussed in Rathindranath Tagore’s On the Edges of Time (Orient Longmans, Bombay, 1958), p. 116, where he says, “The historic evening at Rothenstein’s, when Yeats read out the Gitanjali poems in his musical, ecstatic voice to a choice group of people like Ernest Rhys, Alice Meynell, Henry Nevinson, Ezra Pound, May Sinclair, Charles Trevelyan, C. F. Andrews and others gathered in the drawing-room...”

LETTERS

Salutations have been omitted from letters translated from the Bengali, due to the impossibility of rendering precise connotations into English.

1. Tagore’s wife, Mrinalini Devi, was born in 1872 and died in 1902.

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5. Fultala. His wife's birthplace.
6. The Sturge Moore letters are from the private collection of Elinor Wolf, used with her permission. Thomas Sturge Moore (1870–1944) was an English poet, man of letters, and wood engraver.
7. Tagore does not mean to suggest that Valentine Chirol is one of the leading Mohammedan gentlemen; rather, he was a British administrator.
8. Crescent Moon. A collection of poems translated into English by Tagore himself (1913); all but half a dozen were taken from Sisu, poems written for his children during 1903–1904 after the death of his twenty-nine-year-old wife.
10. Chitra. Anglicized title of Chitrangada, published in 1892. The original Bengali was a poetic drama which was later set to music and dance, similar to the Elizabethan masque.
11. C. F. Andrews. Most of Letters to a Friend was written to Tagore's close friend, C. F. Andrews, during the years 1913–1922. Andrews (1871–1940) was born and educated in England, but after a period of service as a missionary on the staff of St. Stephen's College, Delhi, joined Tagore at Santiniketan in 1912. Andrews devoted the rest of his life to the cause of India, both in England and abroad; he championed Indian laborers in South Africa, Fiji, British Guiana, and Kenya, and played a large role in the abolition of the indenture system, in the Gandhi-Smuts agreement, and in the 1927 agreement between India and the South African Union. His friendship with Gandhi and Tagore made him the best interpreter of Indian aspirations to both the East and the West. He died April 5, 1940, and was buried in Calcutta.
12. W. W. Pearson. William Winstanley Pearson was a friend and close associate of Tagore during 1912–1923. He began his work in India in the London Missionary Society at Bhowanipur in Calcutta. After joining Tagore at Santiniketan, he later traveled in different parts of the world with Tagore and C. F. Andrews. The Manchester Guardian called him "the best loved Englishman in India." During World War I, the British Home Government ordered his departure from Peking as "undesirable," from where he was sent to England under guard and placed on parole in Manchester. He died as a result of a railway accident in Italy, in 1923.

15. Aban. Tagore's cousin, the well known artist Abanindranath Tagore.

16. Haricharan Babu. The late Haricharan Bandopadhyaya, a scholar and staff member of Santiniketan.

17. Texas, 1921. During this and other visits to the United States, Tagore met and talked with such American writers as Sinclair Lewis, Theodore Dreiser, Hart Crane, Carl Sandburg, and Robert Frost. It might be interesting to include here a poem by Theodore Dreiser which he sent to Tagore shortly after they met in 1930 and which appeared in The Golden Book of Tagore, ed. Ramananda Chatterji (Golden Book Committee, Calcutta, 1931).

The Process

That which was crooked straightened
That which was defeated
Joined with that which was beautiful
Blended
With that which was ill planned
To be separated
And made crooked
Or straight again.

18. Leonard Elmhirst. Met Tagore in New York in 1920, and after receiving a B.Sc. degree in agriculture from Cornell, joined Tagore at Santiniketan in 1921. On February 6, 1922, he began the work of Sriniketan Center of Rural Reconstruction under Tagore's guidance. In 1924–1925, Elmhirst traveled with Tagore to China and Japan, Argentina and Italy.

19. "Genesis of Gitanjali." The following is a quote from Harriet Monroe's article "Poetry: A Magazine of Verse": "... Poetry: A Magazine of Verse had the honor of being the first occidental publication to print Tagore's poems in English. His six Gitanjali poems, appearing in Poetry for December, 1912, preceded by a few weeks the London India Society's private edition, which, though dated 1912, was not distributed until 1913.

"Poetry, published in Chicago, was far away from India and even from London where the Bengali poet was sojourning, and its founder and editor had never heard of Tagore. But Ezra Pound, our foreign correspondent, had met him in London and had induced him to permit the sending of some of the Gitanjali poems to the new little poets' magazine."
This article was also published in *The Golden Book of Tagore.*

SHORT STORIES

1. “Cabuliwallah.” It is said that Tagore’s eldest daughter, Bela, was a little chatterbox, somewhat like Mini. As to the story, Tagore once said, “Of course there used to be a Cabuliwallah who came to our house and became very familiar with us. I imagined that he too must have a daughter left behind in his motherland. . . .”

2. “The Hungry Stones.” Before leaving for England when he was seventeen, Tagore spent some time with his elder brother Satyendranath in an old Muslim palace in Shahibag, and in his imagination relived the court life of the Mughal kings. He said that here “My mind received the first suggestion for the story of ‘Hungry Stones.’” Edward Thompson, writing on Tagore’s famous poem, “Taj Mahal,” refers to “The Hungry Stones”: “The Mughal Empire always touches his imagination, and we find an atmosphere as eerie and glamorous as that of ‘Hungry Stones.’” Edward Thompson, *Rabindranath Tagore* (Oxford University Press, London, 1926), p. 237.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL


The following extract throws some outside light on the material included in this section: “Tagore’s life history is mainly the biography of ideas and artistic creations. . . . In other words, Tagore’s crises are all subjective, begotten by this spirit, even if nursed by the objective situation. That jealous guard over his soul completely defeats Western biographers and baffles any Indian writer of this century who has accepted their model. In another language, the life of Tagore cannot be composed on the symphonic pattern of Goethe’s, whose variety of creative work most resembled his. Tagore’s life-pattern was essentially melodic, with numerous improvisations, indeed, but it was built around the regnant notes. This does not
at all mean that he did not share in the tragedies of his country and the world. That he did, but his actions remained essentially personal, spiritual.” Dhurjati Prasad Mukerji, Tagore—A Study (Padma Publications, Ltd., Bombay, 1943), p. 15.

1. Raja Rammohan Roy. Considered by Tagore to be the maker of the Modern Age in India. He was an Indian religious reformer (1774–1833); founder of the Brahma Samaj or Theistic Church for the worship of God. He was the enemy of idol worship, supported the abolition of suttee, and worked hard to promote education among his countrymen. He visited England and France in 1832; died on September 27, 1833, at Bristol.

2. Bankim Chandra Chatterji. Bengali novelist (1838–1894), the first in Bengal to take the B.A. degree (1858), entered the Indian Civil Service, from which he retired in 1894. He was the greatest Indian novelist of the nineteenth century, and some of his work was modeled on Scott’s historical novels. His influence even at present is considerable; among the literary young men he gathered round him was Rabindranath Tagore. He is the author of the first Indian national anthem, “Vande Mataram.”

3. Vaishnava poems. Vaishnavism is the name given to the Hindu sect the members of which in a special way worship Vishnu of the Hindu trinity. The erotic tendency of some Vaishnava poetry, especially in connection with degenerate forms of the cult of Radha and Krishna, had aroused opposition among the more sober-minded Hindus.


CONVERSATIONS

Unfortunately, meetings with other great thinkers and artists were not recorded, but evidences of such meetings are available in letters, telegrams, and messages, of which the following are examples:

Telegram from G. B. Shaw

“10 January, 1933
R.M.S. The Empress of Britain

“My dear Rabindranath Tagore,

“Unfortunately I am not really visiting India; but the ship in which I am going round the world to get a little rest and do a little work has to put in at Bombay and Colombo to replenish her tanks; and on such occasions I step ashore for a few hours and wander about the streets and such temples as are open to European untouchables.

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“The organizers of the tour urge me to see India by spending five days and nights in a crowded railway carriage and being let out for a few minutes occasionally to lunch at a hotel and see the Tajmahal; but I am too old a traveler to be taken by such baits, and too old a man (76½) to endure such hardships without expiring.

“My only regret is that I shall be unable to visit you. My consolation is that the present situation in India will not bear being talked about. I understand it only too well.

“Faithfully,
“G. Bernard Shaw”

Letter from Albert Einstein, 1931
This was a personal address to Tagore at the end of an article contributed by Einstein to The Golden Book of Tagore.

“You saw the fierce strife of creatures, a strife that wells forth from need and dark desire. You saw the withdrawal in calm meditation and in creation of beauty. Cherishing these, you serve mankind all through a long and fruitful life, spreading everywhere a gentle and free thought in a manner such as the seers of your people have proclaimed as the ideal.”

Letter from Albert Schweitzer, 1936
Following is an excerpt from a letter which Schweitzer wrote to Tagore when he sent him a copy of his book, Indian Thought and Its Development. Dated Gunsbach, près Munster, Alsace, France, August 15, 1936, the letter is quoted in A. Aronson, Rabindranath Through Western Eyes (Kitabistan, Allahabad, 1943), p. 131.

“I do not think that you agree with everything as regards my analysis; neither will you agree with everything I say about you. But I still believe that you will feel in this book my deep understanding of the greatness of Indian thought and the sympathy I have for it. Let me tell you on this occasion the great love I have for you and your thought. When I call you in this book the Goethe of India that is because, in my opinion, you are as important for India as Goethe was for Europe.”

Message from Robert Frost
In a letter of September 19, 1959, to this editor, Robert Frost reminisced about his meeting with Tagore in Williamstown, Massachusetts, during the fall of 1930. The friendship that developed as a result of this meeting was communicated by Frost in a message to the Embassy of India in Washington, D.C., on May 7, 1959.
“Fortunately Tagore’s poetry overflowed national bounds to reach us in his own English. He belongs little less to us than to his own country. He was my friend and I am proud to take part in celebrating his greatness.”

**DRAMA**


“Tagore’s dramas fall into three main groups: (1) the earliest, nonsymbolic, of which *Sacrifice* is the best as drama, and *Chitrāngadā* and *Mālini* the loveliest as poetry. All of these, except *Mālini*, are in blank verse; they are of the Shakespearian type, with five acts. (2) The group of short dramas based on Sanskrit (or, in the case of *Sati*, later) heroic story. These are in rhymed couplets and are symbolical. Whatever fire of human interest was present in the earlier plays is fading out; ideas gain the mastery, almost the monopoly, of the poet’s stage.”

Thompson reports Tagore’s conversation with him about the genesis of *Sacrifice* on p. 54:

“I wanted a serial for *Bālak*, and was thinking about one. I was going to visit Ramnarayan Basu. The train was crowded, and an Englishman wouldn’t allow the lamp to be hidden, so it burnt brightly all night and I couldn’t sleep. But I dozed, and dreamed of a father and a girl before a temple. Blood was running out over the steps, and the girl was deeply pained. ‘Why is this blood? Why is this blood?’ she kept asking, and tried to wipe it away. Her father was very troubled, and couldn’t answer her, so tried to silence her, really to silence his own mind. I woke up, and determined to put this in my story. And I used also the story of the Raja of Tripura, who introduced Vaishnavism into his state, and was banished by his brother.”

Commenting on the religious and social criticism in *Sacrifice*, Thompson wrote (pp. 91–92):

“The theme of *Sacrifice* had been implicit in many an obscure page of Indian religious thought. But Rabindranath’s play first gave its protest a reasoned and deliberate place in art. He attacks bigotry with the weapon most dangerous to it, the sarcasm of parody.”

Concerning the writing of the *Post Office* (and also *Gitanjali*, which was written during the same period), Edward Thompson (pp. 215, 216) reports the following excerpt from a conversation with Tagore:

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"I was very restless, just as I am now. That gave me the idea of a child pining for freedom, and the world anxious to keep it in its bounds, for it has its duties there. . . . I was anxious to know the world. At that time, I thought that it was in the West that the spirit of humanity was experimenting and working. My restlessness became intolerable. I wrote *Dakghar* in three or four days. About the same time I wrote *Gitanjali*. Most of the pieces were written at Santiniketan. I used to write almost every day and sometimes at night. I did not intend to publish them. I knew people would be disappointed, and would say that after *Sonar Tari [The Golden Boat]* they were very poor. But I knew that they were very intimately my own."

In connection with the staging of the *Post Office* in England, Ernest Rhys, in *Rabindranath Tagore, A Biographical Study* (Macmillan, New York, 1916), pp. 79, 80, says:

"Of the two plays acted over here, the *Post Office* (*Dakghar* in the original) and *The King of the Dark Chamber*, I saw the first when it was produced at the Court Theatre, with Synge's mordant comedy, *The Well of the Saints*. . . . As it was acted, even with the drawback of having a partly Irish, instead of an Indian, characterization of its village humors, it proved moving and particularly effective in the stroke of tragedy redeemed at the close. . . ."


"The stage was set up at one end of the Vichitra Hall, leaving enough room for only about one hundred and fifty persons to make the audience. The arrangement could not have been better. Many of the delicate nuances of the play would have been lost in a less intimate atmosphere. The conception of the stage was entirely Gaganendranath's. It was novel and daring. A cottage with a real thatched roof and bamboo walls was erected by him on the stage platform. The decorations were simple but artistic as only the eye of a connoisseur could select and apply with sure effect.

"The performance was meant to be a private show for the benefit of the members of the Vichitra Club, but it was such a unique treat and people were so eager to see it that it had to be repeated several times. After every show when I wanted to pull down the stage, a demand was made for another repeat performance and thus Amal's three-walled cottage remained a fixture in the Vichitra Hall for many weeks. I believe the seventh and last performance was given for the entertainment of the delegates of the Indian National Congress then being held in Calcutta."

2. Chandalika. Dance sequences which obviously cannot be translated, but which constitute an integral part of the charm and color in the staging of the play, have not been indicated.

3. Uma. In the Puranic legend Uma imposed on herself a terrible penance in order to win the love of Siva.

4. “He who has called me.” This speech is followed by a song in the original, which has been omitted. In this translation, all the songs except two have been omitted. These omissions occur after the following speeches:

   “Was there no water to be had anywhere else in this whole village?”
   “You won’t understand, Mother, you won’t.”
   “I do not fear what does not fear me.”
   “Do not be so afraid, Mother.”
   “How can I bring him back?”
   “To undo this spell may cost me my life.”
   “Until that moment let the spell work.”
   “I knew something greater than fear.”
   “Keep trying. Don’t give up.”
   “I am afraid to, Mother.”

5. Pali (Buddha’s language). The word for monk is actually Bhikku, which means one who has been initiated into the Buddhist order. In many instances in the original the word wayfarer is substituted, because these monks were often wanderers.

6. See note 4 above.

7. “Blessed am I says the flower who belongs to the earth.” This song is based on a translation by Tagore.

8. See note 4 above.

9. See note 4 above.

10. See note 4 above.

11. A chant of four lines beginning “To the most pure Buddha, ocean of mercy.”

12. See note 4 above.

13. See note 4 above.

14. See note 4 above.

15. See note 4 above.

16. See note 4 above.

17. See note 4 above.
ON INDIA

Encouragement for Tagore’s ideas on the necessity for a supernational consciousness has been expressed in all corners of the world. The following quotations from The Golden Book of Tagore are printed here as examples:

“Nationalism, especially when it urges us to fight for freedom, is noble and life-giving. But often it becomes a narrow creed, and limits and encompasses its votaries and makes them forget the many-sidedness of life. But Rabindranath Tagore has given to our nationalism the outlook of internationalism and has enriched it with art and music and the magic of his words, so that it has become the full-blooded emblem of India’s awakened spirit.”

Jawaharlal Nehru
Allahabad, 1931

“Perhaps the most valuable contribution which can be made to our perplexing age is a revelation of the essential unity and validity of all human experiences, that our intellectual and emotional understanding may approach our commercial and political arrangements. In spite of the magnificent methods of communication modern science has placed at our disposal, such a revelation can be made only in the age-old way—through the spirit of genius. This message to be natural and inevitable must be varied as well as profound, romantic as well as classical, delightful as well as poignant; above all it must be clothed in Beauty sufficient to carry it over the gulfs lying between different peoples, especially those who live in the East and those who live in the West.

“Rabindranath Tagore has met all the requirements of genius combined in a man who is at once a poet, a philosopher, a humanitarian, an educator. . . . He has once more made clear to us the saying we so often used in the early days of the University Settlement—the things that make us alike are finer and deeper than the things that make us different.”

Jane Addams
Hull House
Chicago, 1931

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EDUCATION

In order not to give the impression that Tagore neglected the purely practical element in education, the following statement by Prabodh Chandra Bagchi, the late Vice-Chancellor of Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan is included (from Visva-Bharati News, Silver Jubilee Number, 1957, pp. 32–34):

“Our education under foreign rule was planned to produce clerks only, as Macaulay admitted. The replacement of our Pathsalas by an urban system of education helped the growth of the number of clerks in the country, but almost the entire nation remained sunk in the stupor of ignorance, because in India, villages largely outnumber the towns and our agriculturists are so many. To this vast mass of humanity the fruits of our new system of education did not reach. The existing schools in the villages also began to close down. The fruits of this new system of education did not reach them. Gurudeva [Tagore] recognized the malady and started this institution, not with a view to prepare clerks but to give effect to the concept of total education. He wished that, along with the cultivation of knowledge, the students would do manual labor as well, and that they should not be ashamed of it. Thus he wanted to spread education in every walk of life. To it were added art, music, handicrafts, etc., so that the students might come out with more accomplishment and ability.

“Having had this objective in view, Gurudeva established Sriniketan side by side with Santiniketan, because he thought that there would be no real emancipation of our country if the so-called education of the townsmen remained as their monopoly and failed to reach the vast multitude in the countryside. So he took up the upliftment of our villages. Sriniketan became the center. It explains how Santiniketan by not being divorced from the interests of Sriniketan was not converted into a mere replica of urban education.

“Along with rural education, Sriniketan has developed Cooperative Health Societies. Hundreds of families within the jurisdiction of Bolpur Police Station are members of these societies and have been deriving enormous benefits. Cooperative storehouses have also been organized for storing paddy at times of good harvests and for distribution of paddy at times of bad ones.

“Sriniketan has been carrying on other important activities with no mean results. One of these is in connection with the organization of Bratibalaka. Very often there is a tendency to confuse these bratibalakas with scouts. In fact it is not so. The main purpose of the bratibalaka or-
ganization is to do away with the caste prejudices. These *bratibalakas* are composed of boys of different castes and religion. It is hoped that they live together in a cooperative manner. Also that they will foster social welfare through voluntary service to the community. Sriniketan has been also helping the villagers by initiating better farming methods and techniques and by effecting a system of improved communication. In short, it has been trying to create the constituents of joy by providing manifold opportunities to live and let others live.

“In this connection another important feature of Sriniketan’s activities deserves mention. It is cottage industry training, development and extension. To provide better means of work and to ensure marketability of their products Sriniketan has been training up the village craftsmen in better techniques of production and creating markets for sale of their products.” [Editor's note. Leonard and Dorothy Elmhirst and the late Kalimohan Ghosh played a great role in the development of the rural welfare units of Visva-Bharati at Sriniketan, the sister institution two miles from Santiniketan.]

Tagore discussed his educational theories and projects with such internationally known educators as Madame Montessori, the pioneer in children’s education in the West, and with John Dewey. In this light, the following excerpt from a letter to Tagore by Helen Keller (published in *The Golden Book of Tagore, 1931*) is included:

“... With observing eye and listening ear you journeyed, and saw the curse of division, the darkness of prejudice, the deafness of hate in which men live as strangers and enemies. But, looking long and patiently, you found the dynamic force of love hidden in humanity. . . .

“Your school at Visva-Bharati is a bright pledge of a nobler civilization; for it is a meeting-ground of the East and the West. There you teach in object-lessons of sympathy and goodwill that the true happiness of individuals and nations is identified with the highest good of mankind. When this supreme truth is grasped, the dream of all the greatest teachers spoken through the ages shall be fulfilled; wars will be dead; hatred will be dead; dogmas will be dead; man will live, he will possess something greater than all these, . . . the whole of earth for his country and the whole of Heaven for his hope.”

Tagore's idea of bringing education to the homes and farms of Indian villagers was greatly extended and applied on a nationwide basis in the Basic Education Program of Mahatma Gandhi.
ART AND LITERARY CRITICISM

Tagore’s Western tour in 1930, during which he gave the Hibbert Lectures at Oxford, acquainted the West with another aspect of his artistic expression. Exhibitions of his paintings and drawings appeared in Paris, Birmingham, London, Berlin, Dresden, Munich, Copenhagen, Moscow, New York, and Boston.

About this new form of expression, Tagore once wrote:

“The only training which I had from my young days was the training in rhythm, the rhythm in thought, the rhythm in sound! I had come to know that rhythm gives reality to that which is desultory, which is insignificant in itself. And therefore, when the scratches in my manuscript cried, like sinners, for salvation, and assailed my eyes with the ugliness of their irrelevance, I often took more time in rescuing them into a merciful finality of rhythm than in carrying on what was my obvious task.”

Rabindra Sadana, the Tagore Memorial Museum at Santiniketan, has a collection of nearly eighteen hundred paintings and drawings of Tagore. A number also are in various public and private collections in India and abroad. The total number amounts to well over two thousand paintings and drawings, and are generally datable between 1925–1939.


3. Duhshashan. One of the Kaurava brothers (Mahabharata) who tried to insult Draupadi (queen of the Pandavas) by disrobing her in public.


9. "Nocturne."
10. "A Summer Day."
11. "Two Letters from Chang-Kan."

PHILOSOPHICAL MEDITATIONS

1. Mahatma Gandhi. To the world outside India, Tagore and Gandhi were the two great personalities who represented the spiritual genius of India. Apart from their specific contributions in the area of literature and national service, both of them met on the common ground of a profound concern for humanity, and exemplified the great traditions of Indian thought. Gandhi’s recognition of Tagore, not only as a poetic personality, but as a man of pure thought, is applicable here. In The Golden Book of Tagore (1931) he wrote:

"In common with thousands of his countrymen I owe much to one who by his poetic genius and singular purity of life has raised India in the estimation of the world. Did he not harbor in Santiniketan the inmates of my Ashram who had preceded me from South Africa? The other ties and memories are too sacred to bear mention in a public tribute."

As a general note to Tagore’s philosophic and religious thought, it is significant to quote here Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan’s summary in his Great Indians (Hind Katabs, Ltd., Bombay, 1949), p. 92:

"In all Rabindranath’s work three features are striking: (1) The ultimateness of spiritual values to be obtained by inward honesty and cultivation of inner life; (2) the futility of mere negation or renunciation and the need for a holy or a whole development of life; and (3) the positive attitude of sympathy for all, even the lowly and the lost. It is a matter for satisfaction to find an Indian leader insisting on these real values of life at a time when so many old things are crumbling away and a thousand new ones are springing up."

POETRY

Tagore was critical about his own English translations. In a letter to William Rothenstein quoted in Rothenstein’s Men and Memories (Coward-McCann, Inc., New York, 1932), p. 301, he wrote:
“My translations are frankly prose—my aim is to make them simple with just a suggestion of rhythm to give them a touch of the lyric, avoiding all archaism and poetical conventions.”

André Gide, who translated Gitanjali and Post Office, from Paris sent the following statement to be included in The Golden Book of Tagore (1931).

“Rabindranath Tagore ne comptait encore, en Angleterre même, que de très rares lecteurs, lorsque en 1912, je traduisis son Gitanjali. L’incomparable pureté poétique de ce petit livre rayonnait à mes yeux d’un tel éclat que je tiens à honneur d’en apporter un reflet à la France. A travers la guerre, au dessus de toutes nos dissensions politiques ou confessionnelles cette étoile fixe a continué de luire et de verser sur la monde une tranquille lumière d’amour, de confiance et de paix. Je suis heureux d’apporter aujourd’hui mon tribut d’hommage et de reconnaissance à la grande figure que vous vous proposez d’honorer.”

The same volume included the following letter from Yeats in Dublin:

“Since we met I have married, I have now two children, a boy and a girl, and feel more knitted into life; and life, when I think of it as separated from all that is not itself, from all that is complicated and mechanical, takes to my imagination an Asiatic form. That form I found first in your books and afterwards in certain Chinese poetry and Japanese prose writers. What an excitement the first reading of your poems, which seemed to come out of the fields and the rivers and have their changelessness!”

Brown Weber, in Hart Crane, A Biographical and Critical Study, The Bodley Press, New York, 1948, includes the following statements about Tagore’s relationship with Hart Crane:

“From Mrs. Moody, too, Hart heard news of the poets and novelists in and about Chicago, many of whom shared her hospitality while in that city. One of these writers was Rabindranath Tagore of India, whose first visit to Chicago had occurred in 1913, shortly after several of his poems from his Gitanjali appeared in an issue of the newly-founded Poetry. When Tagore came again to the United States in 1916, he stopped off in Cleveland. One of the few interviews he granted at that time was to Hart, who returned home impressed of the Indian writer and philosopher. Hart was now at a stage where he easily appreciated Tagore’s insistence upon the fusion of religion with everyday life, as well as his distaste for the supremacy of American business and scientific ideals over the values of art.”
“Undoubtedly he read the cadenced English translations of Tagore’s Bengali poems and responded to the poet’s . . . conception of God’s immanence, his imagery of infinite sky and bottomless ocean depths, and his faith in the motive-power of love. In later years, one of Tagore’s poems was to make a strange reappearance in a poem written by Crane” [pp. 9–10].

“During September, [1921] Crane completed ‘The Bottom of the Sea Is Cruel’ which, after rejection by The Dial and The Little Review, was printed in Secession in 1923, and finally took its place in White Buildings as ‘Voyages I.’ The poem treats the sea as the same cruel agency of ‘The Bridge of Estador.’ It is difficult to tell when Crane began to write the poem, for it is strikingly reminiscent of Tagore’s ‘On the Seashore’ (The Crescent Moon, 1913), which Crane probably read many years before. Tagore describes children playing on the beach with ‘empty shells’ and ‘withered leaves’ who are aware only that ‘the sea surges up with laughter’; they fail to observe that ‘the death-dealing waves sing meaningless ballads . . . like a mother while rocking her baby’s cradle.’ In Crane’s poem, too, the sea is an ambivalent force, alternately attracting and repelling with surges of maternal love and clutching death. The poet watches colorfully-dressed children playing on the shore . . . .” [pp. 105–106]. [Note: This passage was brought to the attention of the editor by Henry Braun, Boston University.]

4. “Thou art the ruler”—Bengali original (song), 1912; poet’s own translation, in Poems (Visva-Bharati, Calcutta, 1942); India’s new national anthem.
7. “You were born”—Bengali original, November 3, 1929, published in Puravi; translated by the editor for this volume.
8. “The worshiper offers leaves and flowers”—Bengali original, January 16, 1925, published in Puravi; translated by the editor for this volume.

9. “When I was a boy”—Bengali original, May 4, 1931, published in Parishesh, 1932; translated by the editor for this volume.


12. “From afar I thought”—Bengali original, July 1, 1932; published in Parishesh; translation by Kshitis Roy in Visva-Bharati Quarterly, August-October, 1943; revised for this volume.

13. “Door, always open”—Bengali original, 1924, published in Parishesh; translated by the editor for this volume.

14. “Scattered in this room”—Bengali original in Akashpradi, 1938; translated by the editor for this volume.

15. “The journey nears the road-end”—Bengali original, April 13, 1924, published in Parishesh; translated by the editor for this volume.

16. “In the center of the universe”—Bengali original, November 13, 1940, Rogashajay; translated by the editor for this volume.


18. “I have won blessings”—original Bengali, January 28, 1941; published in posthumous volume Shesh-lekha; translated by the editor in Poems (Visva-Bharati, Calcutta, 1942), revised.

19. “On the bank of Rup-Narain”—Bengali original, May 13, 1941; translated by the editor in Poems (Visva-Bharati, Calcutta, 1942); revised.

20. “Here in the universe”—Bengali original, November 4, 1940; translated by the editor in Poems (Visva-Bharati, Calcutta, 1942); revised.


22. “How little I know of this world”—Bengali original, January 21, 1941; translated by Kshitis Roy and the editor, published in the Modern Review, Calcutta, March 1921; revised.

23. “Sheltered by the distant throne”—Bengali original, January 24, 1941, Jammadine; translated by the editor in Asian Horizon, Calcutta, 1947; revised.

24. “On that birthday morning”—Bengali original, February 21, 1941, Jammadine; translated by the editor for this volume.

25. “Shunned at the temple-gates”—Bengali original, May 1, 1936,
Patraput; translated by Kshitis Roy in Visva-Bharati Quarterly, November, 1938; revised.

26. “Floating on time’s stream”—Bengali original, February 23, 1941, Arogya; translated by the editor in Poems (Visva-Bharati, Calcutta, 1942); revised.

27. “You have covered the path of your creation”—This was the last poem dictated by the poet, July 30, 1941, and could not be corrected by him; published in posthumous volume Shesh-lekha; translated by the editor in Poems (Visva-Bharati, Calcutta, 1942); revised.

28. “There lies the ocean of peace”—Bengali original, December 3, 1939, published posthumously in Shesh-lekha (1941); translated by the editor in Poems (Visva-Bharati, Calcutta, 1942); revised.

29. “The first day’s sun”—Bengali original, July 27, 1941, Rogashajyay; translated by the editor in Poems (Visva-Bharati, Calcutta, 1942); revised.

30. “Soon, I feel”—Bengali original, February 1941; Arogya, translated by the editor in Poems (Visva-Bharati, Calcutta, 1942); revised.