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# Rabindranath Tagore

## - poems -

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# Rabindranath Tagore(7 May 1861 – 7 August 1941)

Rabindranath Tagore (Bengali: রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর) sobriquet Gurudev, was a Bengali polymath who reshaped his region's literature and music. Author of *Gitanjali* and its "profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse", he became the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913. In translation his poetry was viewed as spiritual and mercurial; his seemingly mesmeric personality, flowing hair, and other-worldly dress earned him a prophet-like reputation in the West. His "elegant prose and magical poetry" remain largely unknown outside Bengal. Tagore introduced new prose and verse forms and the use of colloquial language into Bengali literature, thereby freeing it from traditional models based on classical Sanskrit. He was highly influential in introducing the best of Indian culture to the West and vice versa, and he is generally regarded as the outstanding creative artist of modern India.

A Pirali Brahmin from Calcutta, Tagore wrote poetry as an eight-year-old. At age sixteen, he released his first substantial poems under the pseudonym Bhanusi'ha ("Sun Lion"), which were seized upon by literary authorities as long-lost classics. He graduated to his first short stories and dramas—and the aegis of his birth name—by 1877. As a humanist, universalist internationalist, and strident anti-nationalist he denounced the Raj and advocated independence from Britain. As an exponent of the Bengal Renaissance, he advanced a vast canon that comprised paintings, sketches and doodles, hundreds of texts, and some two thousand songs; his legacy endures also in the institution he founded, Visva-Bharati University

Tagore modernised Bengali art by spurning rigid classical forms and resisting linguistic strictures. His novels, stories, songs, dance-dramas, and essays spoke to topics political and personal. *Gitanjali* (Song Offerings), *Gora* (Fair-Faced), and *Ghare-Baire* (The Home and the World) are his best-known works, and his verse, short stories, and novels were acclaimed—or panned—for their lyricism, colloquialism, naturalism, and unnatural contemplation. His compositions were chosen by two nations as national anthems: the Republic of India's *Jana Gana Mana* and Bangladesh's *Amar Shonar Bangla*. The composer of Sri Lanka's national anthem: *Sri Lanka Matha* was a student of Tagore, and the song is inspired by Tagore's style.

**Early Life: 1861–1878**

The youngest of thirteen surviving children, Tagore was born in the Jorasanko mansion in Calcutta, India to parents Debendranath Tagore (1817–1905) and

Sarada Devi (1830–1875). Tagore family patriarchs were the Brahmo founders of the Adi Dharm faith. The loyalist "Prince" Dwarkanath Tagore, who employed European estate managers and visited with Victoria and other royalty, was his paternal grandfather. Debendranath had formulated the Brahmoist philosophies espoused by his friend Ram Mohan Roy, and became focal in Brahmo society after Roy's death.

"Rabi" was raised mostly by servants; his mother had died in his early childhood and his father travelled widely. His home hosted the publication of literary magazines; theatre and recitals of both Bengali and Western classical music featured there regularly, as the Jorasanko Tagores were the center of a large and art-loving social group. Tagore's oldest brother Dwijendranath was a respected philosopher and poet. Another brother, Satyendranath, was the first Indian appointed to the elite and formerly all-European Indian Civil Service. Yet another brother, Jyotirindranath, was a musician, composer, and playwright. His sister Swarnakumari became a novelist. Jyotirindranath's wife Kadambari, slightly older than Tagore, was a dear friend and powerful influence. Her abrupt suicide in 1884 left him for years profoundly distraught.

Tagore largely avoided classroom schooling and preferred to roam the manor or nearby Bolpur and Panihati, idylls which the family visited. His brother Hemendranath tutored and physically conditioned him—by having him swim the Ganges or trek through hills, by gymnastics, and by practicing judo and wrestling. He learned drawing, anatomy, geography and history, literature, mathematics, Sanskrit, and English—his least favorite subject. Tagore loathed formal education—his scholarly travails at the local Presidency College spanned a single day. Years later he held that proper teaching does not explain things; proper teaching stokes curiosity:

"[It] knock[s] at the doors of the mind. If any boy is asked to give an account of what is awakened in him by such knocking, he will probably say something silly. For what happens within is much bigger than what comes out in words. Those who pin their faith on university examinations as the test of education take no account of this."

After he underwent an upanayan initiation at age eleven, he and his father left Calcutta in February 1873 for a months-long tour of the Raj. They visited his father's Santiniketan estate and rested in Amritsar en route to the Himalayan Dhauladhars, their destination being the remote hill station at Dalhousie. Along the way, Tagore read biographies; his father tutored him in history, astronomy, and Sanskrit declensions. He read biographies of Benjamin Franklin among other figures; they discussed [Edward Gibbon's](http://www.poemhunter.com/edward-gibbon/) *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman*

Empire; and they examined the poetry of [Kalidasa](http://www.poemhunter.com/kalidasa/). In mid-April they reached the station, and at 2,300 metres (7,546 ft) they settled into a house that sat atop Bakrota Hill. Tagore was taken aback by the region's deep green gorges, alpine forests, and mossy streams and waterfalls. They stayed there for several months and adopted a regime of study and privation that included daily twilight baths taken in icy water.

He returned to Jorasanko and completed a set of major works by 1877, one of them a long poem in the Maithili style of Vidyapati; they were published pseudonymously. Regional experts accepted them as the lost works of Bhanusimha, a newly discovered 17th-century Vaishnava poet. He debuted the short-story genre in Bengali with "Bhikharini" ("The Beggar Woman"), and his *Sandhya Sangit* (1882) includes the famous poem "Nirjharer Swapnabhanga" ("The Rousing of the Waterfall"). Servants subjected him to an almost ludicrous regimentation in a phase he dryly reviled as the "servocracy". His head was water-dunked—to quiet him. He irked his servants by refusing food; he was confined to chalk circles in parody of Sita's forest trial in the *Ramayana*; and he was regaled with the heroic criminal exploits of Bengal's outlaw-dacoits. Because the Jorasanko manor was in an area of north Calcutta rife with poverty and prostitution,[35] he was forbidden to leave it for any purpose other than traveling to school. He thus became preoccupied with the world outside and with nature. Of his 1873 visit to Santiniketan, he wrote:

“What I could not see did not take me long to get over—what I did see was quite enough. There was no servant rule, and the only ring which encircled me was the blue of the horizon, drawn around these solitudes by their presiding goddess. Within this I was free to move about as I chose.”

**Shelaidaha: 1878–1901**

Because Debendranath wanted his son to become a barrister, Tagore enrolled at a public school in Brighton, East Sussex, England in 1878. He stayed for several months at a house that the Tagore family owned near Brighton and Hove, in Medina Villas; in 1877 his nephew and niece—Suren and Indira Devi, the children of Tagore's brother Satyendranath—were sent together with their mother, Tagore's sister-in-law, to live with him. He briefly read law at University College London, but again left school. He opted instead for independent study of [Shakespeare](http://www.poemhunter.com/william-shakespeare/), *Religio Medici*, *Coriolanus*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*. Lively English, Irish, and Scottish folk tunes impressed Tagore, whose own tradition of Nidhubabu-authored kirtans and tappas and Brahmo hymnody was subdued. In 1880 he

returned to Bengal degree-less, resolving to reconcile European novelty with Brahmo traditions, taking the best from each. In 1883 he married Mrinalini Devi, born Bhabatarini, 1873–1902; they had five children, two of whom died in childhood.

In 1890 Tagore began managing his vast ancestral estates in Shelaidaha (today a region of Bangladesh); he was joined by his wife and children in 1898. Tagore released his *Manasi* poems (1890), among his best-known work. As Zamindar Babu, Tagore criss-crossed the riverine holdings in command of the Padma, the luxurious family barge. He collected mostly token rents and blessed villagers who in turn honoured him with banquets—occasionally of dried rice and sour milk. He met Gagan Harkara, through whom he became familiar with Baul Lalon Shah, whose folk songs greatly influenced Tagore. Tagore worked to popularise Lalon's songs. The period 1891–1895, Tagore's *Sadhana* period, named after one of Tagore's magazines, was his most productive; in these years he wrote more than half the stories of the three-volume, 84-story *Galpaguchchha*. Its ironic and grave tales examined the voluptuous poverty of an idealised rural Bengal.

<b>Santiniketan: 1901–1932</b>

In 1901 Tagore moved to Santiniketan to found an ashram with a marble-floored prayer hall—The Mandir—an experimental school, groves of trees, gardens, a library. There his wife and two of his children died. His father died in 1905. He received monthly payments as part of his inheritance and income from the Maharaja of Tripura, sales of his family's jewelry, his seaside bungalow in Puri, and a derisory 2,000 rupees in book royalties. He gained Bengali and foreign readers alike; he published *Naivedya* (1901) and *Kheya* (1906) and translated poems into free verse. In November 1913, Tagore learned he had won that year's Nobel Prize in Literature: the Swedish Academy appreciated the idealistic—and for Westerners—accessible nature of a small body of his translated material focussed on the 1912 *Gitanjali: Song Offerings*. In 1915, the British Crown granted Tagore a knighthood. He renounced it after the 1919 Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

In 1921, Tagore and agricultural economist Leonard Elmhirst set up the "Institute for Rural Reconstruction", later renamed Shriniketan or "Abode of Welfare", in Surul, a village near the ashram. With it, Tagore sought to moderate Gandhi's *Swaraj* protests, which he occasionally blamed for British India's perceived mental—and thus ultimately colonial—decline.[48] He sought aid from donors, officials, and scholars worldwide to "free village[s] from the shackles of helplessness and ignorance" by "vitalis[ing] knowledge". In the early 1930s he targeted ambient "abnormal caste consciousness" and untouchability. He lectured

against these, he penned Dalit heroes for his poems and his dramas, and he campaigned—successfully—to open Guruvayoor Temple to Dalits.

**Twilight years: 1932–1941**

Tagore's life as a "peripatetic litterateur" affirmed his opinion that human divisions were shallow. During a May 1932 visit to a Bedouin encampment in the Iraqi desert, the tribal chief told him that "Our prophet has said that a true Muslim is he by whose words and deeds not the least of his brother-men may ever come to any harm ..."

Tagore confided in his diary: "I was startled into recognizing in his words the voice of essential humanity."

To the end Tagore scrutinised orthodoxy—and in 1934, he struck. That year, an earthquake hit Bihar and killed thousands. Gandhi hailed it as seismic karma, as divine retribution avenging the oppression of Dalits. Tagore rebuked him for his seemingly ignominious inferences. He mourned the perennial poverty of Calcutta and the socioeconomic decline of Bengal. He detailed these newly plebeian aesthetics in an unrhymed hundred-line poem whose technique of searing double-vision foreshadowed Satyajit Ray's film *Apur Sansar*. Fifteen new volumes appeared, among them prose-poem works *Punashcha* (1932), *Shes Saptak* (1935), and *Patraput* (1936). Experimentation continued in his prose-songs and dance-dramas: *Chitra* (1914), *Shyama* (1939), and *Chandalika* (1938); and in his novels: *Dui Bon* (1933), *Malancha* (1934), and *Char Adhyay* (1934).

Tagore's remit expanded to science in his last years, as hinted in *Visva-Parichay*, 1937 collection of essays. His respect for scientific laws and his exploration of biology, physics, and astronomy informed his poetry, which exhibited extensive naturalism and verisimilitude. He wove the process of science, the narratives of scientists, into stories in *Se* (1937), *Tin Sangi* (1940), and *Galpasalpa* (1941). His last five years were marked by chronic pain and two long periods of illness. These began when Tagore lost consciousness in late 1937; he remained comatose and near death for a time. This was followed in late 1940 by a similar spell. He never recovered. Poetry from these valetudinary years is among his finest. A period of prolonged agony ended with Tagore's death on 7 August 1941, aged eighty; he was in an upstairs room of the Jorasanko mansion he was raised in. The date is still mourned. A. K. Sen, brother of the first chief election commissioner, received dictation from Tagore on 30 July 1941, a day prior to a scheduled operation: his last poem.

"I'm lost in the middle of my birthday. I want my friends, their touch, with the

earth's last love. I will take life's final offering, I will take the human's last blessing. Today my sack is empty. I have given completely whatever I had to give. In return if I receive anything—some love, some forgiveness—then I will take it with me when I step on the boat that crosses to the festival of the wordless end.”

### <b>Travels</b>

Between 1878 and 1932, Tagore set foot in more than thirty countries on five continents. In 1912, he took a sheaf of his translated works to England, where they gained attention from missionary and [Gandhi](http://www.poemhunter.com/mohandas-k-gandhi/) protégé Charles F. Andrews, Irish poet [William Butler Yeats](http://www.poemhunter.com/william-butler-yeats/), [Ezra Pound](http://www.poemhunter.com/ezra-pound/), [Robert Bridges](http://www.poemhunter.com/robert-bridges/biography/), Ernest Rhys, [Thomas Sturge Moore](http://www.poemhunter.com/thomas-sturge-moore/), and others. Yeats wrote the preface to the English translation of Gitanjali; Andrews joined Tagore at Santiniketan. In November 1912 Tagore began touring the United States and the United Kingdom, staying in Butterton, Staffordshire with Andrews's clergymen friends. From May 1916 until April 1917, he lectured in Japan and the United States. He denounced nationalism. His essay "Nationalism in India" was scorned and praised; it was admired by Romain Rolland and other pacifists.

Shortly after returning home the 63-year-old Tagore accepted an invitation from the Peruvian government. He travelled to Mexico. Each government pledged US\$100,000 to his school to commemorate the visits. A week after his 6 November 1924 arrival in Buenos Aires, an ill Tagore shifted to the Villa Miralrío at the behest of Victoria Ocampo. He left for home in January 1925. In May 1926 Tagore reached Naples; the next day he met [Mussolini](http://www.poemhunter.com/benito-mussolini/) in Rome. Their warm rapport ended when Tagore pronounced upon Il Duce's fascist finesse. He had earlier enthused:

"without any doubt he is a great personality. There is such a massive vigour in that head that it reminds one of Michael Angelo's chisel." A "fire-bath" of fascism was to have educes "the immortal soul of Italy ... clothed in quenchless light".

On 14 July 1927 Tagore and two companions began a four-month tour of Southeast Asia. They visited Bali, Java, Kuala Lumpur, Malacca, Penang, Siam, and Singapore. The resultant travelogues compose Jatri (1929). In early 1930 he

left Bengal for a nearly year-long tour of Europe and the United States. Upon returning to Britain—and as his paintings exhibited in Paris and London—he lodged at a Birmingham Quaker settlement. He wrote his Oxford Hibbert Lectures? and spoke at the annual London Quaker meet. There, addressing relations between the British and the Indians—a topic he would tackle repeatedly over the next two years—Tagore spoke of a "dark chasm of aloofness". He visited Aga Khan III, stayed at Dartington Hall, toured Denmark, Switzerland, and Germany from June to mid-September 1930, then went on into the Soviet Union. In April 1932 Tagore, intrigued by the Persian mystic [Hafez](http://www.poemhunter.com/hafez-ibrahim/), was hosted by Reza Shah Pahlavi. In his other travels, Tagore interacted with [Henri Bergson](http://www.poemhunter.com/henri-bergson/), [Albert Einstein](http://www.poemhunter.com/albert-einstein/), [Robert Frost](http://www.poemhunter.com/robert-frost/), [Thomas Mann](http://www.poemhunter.com/thomas-mann/), [George Bernard Shaw](http://www.poemhunter.com/george-bernard-shaw/), [H.G. Wells](http://www.poemhunter.com/h-g-herbert-george-wells/) and Romain Rolland. Visits to Persia and Iraq (in 1932) and Sri Lanka (in 1933) composed Tagore's final foreign tour, and his dislike of communalism and nationalism only deepened. Vice President of India M. Hamid Ansari has said that Rabindranath Tagore heralded the cultural rapprochement between communities, societies and nations much before it became the liberal norm of conduct. Tagore was a man ahead of his time. He wrote in 1932, while on a visit to Iran, that "each country of Asia will solve its own historical problems according to its strength, nature and needs, but the lamp they will each carry on their path to progress will converge to illuminate the common ray of knowledge." His ideas on culture, gender, poverty, education, freedom, and a resurgent Asia remain relevant today.

## **Works**

Known mostly for his poetry, Tagore wrote novels, essays, short stories, travelogues, dramas, and thousands of songs. Of Tagore's prose, his short stories are perhaps most highly regarded; he is indeed credited with originating the Bengali-language version of the genre. His works are frequently noted for their rhythmic, optimistic, and lyrical nature. Such stories mostly borrow from deceptively simple subject matter: commoners. Tagore's non-fiction grappled with history, linguistics, and spirituality. He wrote autobiographies. His travelogues, essays, and lectures were compiled into several volumes, including Europe Jatrir Patro (Letters from Europe) and Manusher Dhormo (The Religion of Man). His brief chat with [Einstein](http://www.poemhunter.com/albert-einstein/), "Note on the Nature of Reality", is included as an



appendix to the latter. On the occasion of Tagore's 150th birthday an anthology (titled *Kalanukromik Rabindra Rachanabali*) of the total body of his works is currently being published in Bengali in chronological order. This includes all versions of each work and fills about eighty volumes. In 2011, Harvard University Press collaborated with Visva-Bharati University to publish *The Essential Tagore*, the largest anthology of Tagore's works available in English; it was edited by Fakrul Alam and Radha Chakravathy and marks the 150th anniversary of Tagore's birth.

### <b>Music and Art</b>

Tagore composed 2,230 songs and was a prolific painter. His songs compose *rabindrasangit* ("Tagore Song"), which merges fluidly into his literature, most of which—poems or parts of novels, stories, or plays alike—were lyricised. Influenced by the *thumri* style of Hindustani music, they ran the entire gamut of human emotion, ranging from his early dirge-like Brahmo devotional hymns to quasi-erotic compositions.[90] They emulated the tonal color of classical ragas to varying extents. Some songs mimicked a given raga's melody and rhythm faithfully; others newly blended elements of different ragas. Yet about nine-tenths of his work was not *bhanga gaan*, the body of tunes revamped with "fresh value" from select Western, Hindustani, Bengali folk and other regional flavours "external" to Tagore's own ancestral culture. Scholars have attempted to gauge the emotive force and range of Hindustani ragas:

"...the pathos of the *purabi* raga reminded Tagore of the evening tears of a lonely widow, while *kanara* was the confused realization of a nocturnal wanderer who had lost his way. In *bhupali* he seemed to hear a voice in the wind saying 'stop and come hither'. *Paraj* conveyed to him the deep slumber that overtook one at night's end."

—Reba Som, *Rabindranath Tagore: The Singer and His Song*.

Tagore influenced sitar maestro Vilayat Khan and sarodiyas Buddhadev Dasgupta and Amjad Ali Khan. His songs are widely popular and undergird the Bengali ethos to an extent perhaps rivaling Shakespeare's impact on the English-speaking world. It is said that his songs are the outcome of five centuries of Bengali literary churning and communal yearning. Dhan Gopal Mukerji has said that these songs transcend the mundane to the aesthetic and express all ranges and categories of human emotion. The poet gave voice to all—big or small, rich or poor. The poor Ganges boatman and the rich landlord air their emotions in them. They birthed a distinctive school of music whose practitioners can be fiercely traditional: novel interpretations have drawn severe censure in both West

Bengal and Bangladesh.

For Bengalis, the songs' appeal, stemming from the combination of emotive strength and beauty described as surpassing even Tagore's poetry, was such that the Modern Review observed that "there is in Bengal no cultured home where Rabindranath's songs are not sung or at least attempted to be sung ... Even illiterate villagers sing his songs". Arthur Strangways of The Observer introduced non-Bengalis to rabindrasangit in The Music of Hindostan, calling it a "vehicle of a personality ... [that] go behind this or that system of music to that beauty of sound which all systems put out their hands to seize."

In 1971, Amar Shonar Bangla became the national anthem of Bangladesh. It was written—ironically—to protest the 1905 Partition of Bengal along communal lines: lopping Muslim-majority East Bengal from Hindu-dominated West Bengal was to avert a regional bloodbath. Tagore saw the partition as a ploy to upend the independence movement, and he aimed to rekindle Bengali unity and tar communalism. Jana Gana Mana was written in shadhu-bhasha, a Sanskritised register of Bengali, and is the first of five stanzas of a Brahmo hymn that Tagore composed. It was first sung in 1911 at a Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress and was adopted in 1950 by the Constituent Assembly of the Republic of India as its national anthem.

At sixty, Tagore took up drawing and painting; successful exhibitions of his many works—which made a debut appearance in Paris upon encouragement by artists he met in the south of France<sup>[95]</sup>—were held throughout Europe. He was likely red-green color blind, resulting in works that exhibited strange colour schemes and off-beat aesthetics. Tagore was influenced by scrimshaw from northern New Ireland, Haida carvings from British Columbia, and woodcuts by Max Pechstein. His artist's eye for his handwriting were revealed in the simple artistic and rhythmic leitmotifs embellishing the scribbles, cross-outs, and word layouts of his manuscripts. Some of Tagore's lyrics corresponded in a synesthetic sense with particular paintings.

**Theatre**

At sixteen, Tagore led his brother Jyotirindranath's adaptation of [Molière's](http://www.poemhunter.com/moli-re-jean-baptiste-poquelin/) Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme. At twenty he wrote his first drama-opera: Valmiki Pratibha (The Genius of Valmiki). In it the pandit [Valmiki](http://www.poemhunter.com/valmiki/) overcomes his sins, is blessed by Saraswati, and compiles the Ramayana. Through it Tagore explores a wide range of dramatic styles and emotions, including usage of revamped

kirtans and adaptation of traditional English and Irish folk melodies as drinking songs. Another play, *Dak Ghar* (*The Post Office*), describes the child Amal defying his stuffy and puerile confines by ultimately "fall[ing] asleep", hinting his physical death. A story with borderless appeal—gleaning rave reviews in Europe—*Dak Ghar* dealt with death as, in Tagore's words, "spiritual freedom" from "the world of hoarded wealth and certified creeds". In the Nazi-besieged Warsaw Ghetto, Polish doctor-educator Janusz Korczak had orphans in his care stage *The Post Office* in July 1942. In *The King of Children*, biographer Betty Jean Lifton suspected that Korczak, agonising over whether one should determine when and how to die, was easing the children into accepting death. In mid-October, the Nazis sent them to Treblinka.

"[...] but the meaning is less intellectual, more emotional and simple. The deliverance sought and won by the dying child is the same deliverance which rose before his imagination, [...] when once in the early dawn he heard, amid the noise of a crowd returning from some festival, this line out of an old village song, "Ferryman, take me to the other shore of the river." It may come at any moment of life, though the child discovers it in death, for it always comes at the moment when the "I", seeking no longer for gains that cannot be "assimilated with its spirit", is able to say, "All my work is thine" [...]."

—W. B. Yeats, Preface, *The Post Office*, 1914.

His other works fuse lyrical flow and emotional rhythm into a tight focus on a core idea, a break from prior Bengali drama. Tagore sought "the play of feeling and not of action". In 1890 he released what is regarded as his finest drama: *Visarjan* (*Sacrifice*). It is an adaptation of *Rajarshi*, an earlier novella of his. "A forthright denunciation of a meaningless [and] cruel superstitious rite[s]", the Bengali originals feature intricate subplots and prolonged monologues that give play to historical events in seventeenth-century Udaipur. The devout Maharaja of Tripura is pitted against the wicked head priest Raghupati. His latter dramas were more philosophical and allegorical in nature; these included *Dak Ghar*. Another is Tagore's *Chandalika* (*Untouchable Girl*), which was modeled on an ancient Buddhist legend describing how Ananda, the Gautama Buddha's disciple, asks a tribal girl for water.

In *Raktakarabi* ("Red" or "Blood Oleanders"), a kleptocrat rules over the residents of Yakshapuri. He and his retainers exploits his subjects—who are benumbed by alcohol and numbered like inventory—by forcing them to mine gold for him. The naive maiden-heroine Nandini rallies her subject-compatriots to defeat the greed of the realm's sardar class—with the morally roused king's belated help. Skirting the "good-vs-evil" trope, the work pits a vital and joyous *lèse majesté* against the monotonous fealty of the king's varletry, giving rise to

an allegorical struggle akin to that found in *Animal Farm* or *Gulliver's Travels*. The original, though prized in Bengal, long failed to spawn a "free and comprehensible" translation, and its archaic and sonorous didacticism failed to attract interest from abroad. *Chitrangada*, *Chandalika*, and *Shyama* are other key plays that have dance-drama adaptations, which together are known as *Rabindra Nritya Natya*.

### <b>Novels</b>

Tagore wrote eight novels and four novellas, among them *Chaturanga*, *Shesher Kobita*, *Char Odhay*, and *Noukadubi*. *Ghare Baire* (*The Home and the World*)—through the lens of the idealistic zamindar protagonist Nikhil—repudiates the frog-march of nativism, terrorism, and religious querulousness popular among segments of the *Swadeshi* movement. A frank expression of Tagore's conflicted sentiments, it was conceived of during a 1914 bout of depression. The novel ends in grody Hindu-Muslim interplay and Nikhil's likely death from a head wound.

*Gora*, nominated by many Bengali critics as his finest tale, raises controversies regarding connate identity and its ultimate fungibility. As with *Ghare Baire* matters of self-identity (*jati*), personal freedom, and religion are vividly vivisected in a context of family and romance. In it an Irish boy orphaned in the Sepoy Mutiny is raised by Hindus as the titular *gora*—"whitey". Ignorant of his foreign origins, he chastises Hindu religious backsliders out of love for the indigenous Indians and solidarity with them against his hegemon-compatriots. He falls for a Brahmo girl, compelling his worried foster father to reveal his lost past and cease his nativist zeal. As a "true dialectic" advancing "arguments for and against strict traditionalism", it tackles the colonial conundrum by "portray[ing] the value of all positions within a particular frame [...] not only syncretism, not only liberal orthodoxy, but the extremest reactionary traditionalism he defends by an appeal to what humans share." Among these Tagore highlights "identity [...] conceived of as *dharma*."

In *Jogajog* (*Relationships*), the heroine Kumudini—bound by the ideals of *Siva-Sati*, exemplified by *Dakshayani*—is torn between her pity for the sinking fortunes of her progressive and compassionate elder brother and his foil: her roue of a husband. Tagore flaunts his feminist leanings; pathos depicts the plight and ultimate demise of women trapped by pregnancy, duty, and family honour; he simultaneously trucks with Bengal's putrescent landed gentry. The story revolves around the underlying rivalry between two families—the *Chatterjees*, aristocrats now on the decline (*Biprodas*) and the *Ghosals* (*Madhusudan*), representing new money and new arrogance. Kumudini, *Biprodas*' sister, is caught between the two as she is married off to *Madhusudan*. She had risen in

an observant and sheltered traditional home, as had all her female relations.

Others were uplifting: *Shesher Kobita*—translated twice as *Last Poem* and *Farewell Song*—is his most lyrical novel, with poems and rhythmic passages written by a poet protagonist. It contains elements of satire and postmodernism and has stock characters who gleefully attack the reputation of an old, outmoded, oppressively renowned poet who, incidentally, goes by a familiar name: "Rabindranath Tagore". Though his novels remain among the least-appreciated of his works, they have been given renewed attention via film adaptations by Ray and others: *Chokher Bali* and *Ghare Baire* are exemplary. In the first, Tagore inscribes Bengali society via its heroine: a rebellious widow who would live for herself alone. He pillories the custom of perpetual mourning on the part of widows, who were not allowed to remarry, who were consigned to seclusion and loneliness. Tagore wrote of it: "I have always regretted the ending".

### <b>Stories</b>

Tagore's three-volume *Galpaguchchha* comprises eighty-four stories that reflect upon the author's surroundings, on modern and fashionable ideas, and on mind puzzles. Tagore associated his earliest stories, such as those of the "Sadhana" period, with an exuberance of vitality and spontaneity; these traits were cultivated by zamindar Tagore's life in Patisar, Shajadpur, Shelaidaha, and other villages. Seeing the common and the poor, he examined their lives with a depth and feeling singular in Indian literature up to that point. In "The Fruitseller from Kabul", Tagore speaks in first person as a town dweller and novelist imputing exotic perquisites to an Afghan seller. He channels the lucubrate lust of those mired in the blasé, nidorous, and sudorific morass of subcontinental city life: for distant vistas. "There were autumn mornings, the time of year when kings of old went forth to conquest; and I, never stirring from my little corner in Calcutta, would let my mind wander over the whole world. At the very name of another country, my heart would go out to it [...] I would fall to weaving a network of dreams: the mountains, the glens, the forest [...]."

The *Golpoguchchho* (Bunch of Stories) was written in Tagore's *Sabuj Patra* period, which lasted from 1914 to 1917 and was named for another of his magazines. These yarns are celebrated fare in Bengali fiction and are commonly used as plot fodder by Bengali film and theatre. The Ray film *Charulata* echoed the controversial Tagore novella *Nastanirh* (The Broken Nest). In *Atithi*, which was made into another film, the little Brahmin boy Tarapada shares a boat ride with a village zamindar. The boy relates his flight from home and his subsequent wanderings. Taking pity, the elder adopts him; he fixes the boy to marry his own

daughter. The night before his wedding, Tarapada runs off—again. Strir Patra (The Wife's Letter) is an early treatise in female emancipation. Mrinal is wife to a Bengali middle class man: prissy, preening, and patriarchal. Travelling alone she writes a letter, which comprehends the story. She details the pettiness of a life spent entreating his viraginous virility; she ultimately gives up married life, proclaiming, Amio bachbo. Ei bachlum: "And I shall live. Here, I live."

Haimanti assails Hindu arranged marriage and spotlights their often dismal domesticity, the hypocrisies plaguing the Indian middle classes, and how Haimanti, a young woman, due to her insufferable sensitivity and free spirit, foredid herself. In the last passage Tagore blasts the reification of Sita's self-immolation attempt; she had meant to appease her consort Rama's doubts of her chastity. Musalmani Didi eyes recrudescant Hindu-Muslim tensions and, in many ways, embodies the essence of Tagore's humanism. The somewhat auto-referential Darpaharan describes a fey young man who harbours literary ambitions. Though he loves his wife, he wishes to stifle her literary career, deeming it unfeminine. In youth Tagore likely agreed with him. Darpaharan depicts the final humbling of the man as he ultimately acknowledges his wife's talents. As do many other Tagore stories, Jibito o Mrito equips Bengalis with a ubiquitous epigram: Kadombini moriya proman korilo she more nai—"Kadombini died, thereby proving that she hadn't."

## <b>Poetry</b>

Tagore's poetic style, which proceeds from a lineage established by 15th- and 16th-century Vaishnava poets, ranges from classical formalism to the comic, visionary, and ecstatic. He was influenced by the atavistic mysticism of <a href="http://www.poemhunter.com/veda-vyasa/">Vyasa</a> and other rishi-authors of the Upanishads, the Bhakti-Sufi mystic <a href="http://www.poemhunter.com/kabir/">Kabir</a>, and <a href="http://www.poemhunter.com/ramprasad-sen/">Ramprasad Sen</a>. Tagore's most innovative and mature poetry embodies his exposure to Bengali rural folk music, which included mystic Baul ballads such as those of the bard Lalou. These, rediscovered and repopularised by Tagore, resemble 19th-century Kartabhaja hymns that emphasise inward divinity and rebellion against bourgeois bhadralok religious and social orthodoxy. During his Shelaidaha years, his poems took on a lyrical voice of the moner manush, the Bauls' "man within the heart" and Tagore's "life force of his deep recesses", or meditating upon the jeevan devata—the demiurge or the "living God within". This figure connected with divinity through appeal to nature and the emotional interplay of human drama. Such tools saw use in his Bhanusi?ha poems chronicling the Radha-Krishna romance, which were repeatedly revised over the course of seventy years.

Tagore reacted to the halfhearted uptake of modernist and realist techniques in Bengali literature by writing matching experimental works in the 1930s. These include *Africa* and *Camalia*, among the better known of his latter poems. He occasionally wrote poems using *Shadhu Bhasha*, a Sanskritised dialect of Bengali; he later adopted a more popular dialect known as *Cholti Bhasha*. Other works include *Manasi*, *Sonar Tori* (Golden Boat), *Balaka* (Wild Geese, a name redolent of migrating souls), and *Purobi*. *Sonar Tori*'s most famous poem, dealing with the fleeting endurance of life and achievement, goes by the same name; hauntingly it ends: *Shunno nodir tire rohinu pori / Jaha chhilo loe gêlo shonar tori*—"all I had achieved was carried off on the golden boat—only I was left behind." *Gitanjali* (?????????) is Tagore's best-known collection internationally, earning him his Nobel.

Song VII of *Gitanjali*:

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"Amar e gan chherechhe tar shôkol ôlongkar  
 Tomar kachhe rakhe ni ar shajer ôhongkar  
 Ôlongkar je majhe pôre milônete aral kôre,  
 Tomar kôtha dhake je tar mukhôro jhôngkar.

Tomar kachhe khate na mor kobir gôrbo kôra,  
 Môhakobi, tomar pae dite chai je dhôra.  
 Jibon loe jôton kori jodi shôrol bãshi gori,

Apon shure dibe bhorî sôkol chhidro tar."

Tagore's free-verse translation:

"My song has put off her adornments.  
She has no pride of dress and decoration.  
Ornaments would mar our union; they would come  
between thee and me; their jingling would drown thy whispers.  
My poet's vanity dies in shame before thy sight.  
O master poet, I have sat down at thy feet.  
Only let me make my life simple and straight,  
like a flute of reed for thee to fill with music."

"Klanti" (????????; "Weariness"):

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??? ??? ??????? ???? ????  
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??? ????????? ?????? ??, ?????? ??, ?????? ?? ???????

"Klanti amar khôma kôro probhu,  
Pôthe jodi pichhie pori kobhu.  
Ei je hia thôro thôro kãpe aji êmontôro,  
Ei bedona khôma kôro khôma kôro probhu.

Ei dinota khôma kôro probhu,  
Pichhon-pane takai jodi kobhu.  
Diner tape roudrojalee shukae mala pujar thalae,  
Shei mlanota khôma kôro khôma kôro, probhu."

Gloss by Tagore scholar Reba Som:

"Forgive me my weariness O Lord  
Should I ever lag behind  
For this heart that this day trembles so  
And for this pain, forgive me, forgive me, O Lord  
For this weakness, forgive me O Lord,  
If perchance I cast a look behind



And in the day's heat and under the burning sun  
The garland on the platter of offering wilts,  
For its dull pallor, forgive me, forgive me O Lord."

Tagore's poetry has been set to music by composers: Arthur Shepherd's triptych for soprano and string quartet, Alexander Zemlinsky's famous Lyric Symphony, Josef Bohuslav Foerster's cycle of love songs, Leoš Janáček's famous chorus "Potulný šílenec" ("The Wandering Madman") for soprano, tenor, baritone, and male chorus—JW 4/43—inspired by Tagore's 1922 lecture in Czechoslovakia which Janáček attended, and Garry Schyman's "Praan", an adaptation of Tagore's poem "Stream of Life" from Gitanjali. The latter was composed and recorded with vocals by Palbasha Siddique to accompany Internet celebrity Matt Harding's 2008 viral video. In 1917 his words were translated adeptly and set to music by Anglo-Dutch composer Richard Hageman to produce a highly regarded art song: "Do Not Go, My Love". The second movement of Jonathan Harvey's "One Evening" (1994) sets an excerpt beginning "As I was watching the sunrise ..." from a letter of Tagore's, this composer having previously chosen a text by the poet for his piece "Song Offerings" (1985).

<b>Politics</b>

Tagore's political thought was tortuous. He opposed imperialism and supported Indian nationalists, and these views were first revealed in *Manast*, which was mostly composed in his twenties. Evidence produced during the Hindu–German Conspiracy Trial and latter accounts affirm his awareness of the Ghadarites, and stated that he sought the support of Japanese Prime Minister Terauchi Masatake and former Premier Okuma Shigenobu. Yet he lampooned the Swadeshi movement; he rebuked it in "The Cult of the Charka", an acrid 1925 essay. He urged the masses to avoid victimology and instead seek self-help and education, and he saw the presence of British administration as a "political symptom of our social disease". He maintained that, even for those at the extremes of poverty, "there can be no question of blind revolution"; preferable to it was a "steady and purposeful education".

Such views enraged many. He escaped assassination—and only narrowly—by Indian expatriates during his stay in a San Francisco hotel in late 1916; the plot failed when his would-be assassins fell into argument. Yet Tagore wrote songs lionising the Indian independence movement Two of Tagore's more politically charged compositions, "Chitto Jetha Bhayshunyo" ("Where the Mind is Without Fear") and "Ekla Chalo Re" ("If They Answer Not to Thy Call, Walk Alone"), gained mass appeal, with the latter favoured by Gandhi. Though somewhat critical of Gandhian activism, Tagore was key in resolving a <a

<http://www.poemhunter.com/mohandas-k-gandhi/>>Gandhi</a>—Ambedkar dispute involving separate electorates for untouchables, thereby mooting at least one of Gandhi's fasts "unto death".

### <b>Repudiation of Knighthood</b>

Tagore renounced his knighthood, in response to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in 1919. In the repudiation letter to the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, he wrote:

"The time has come when badges of honour make our shame glaring in the incongruous context of humiliation, and I for my part, wish to stand, shorn, of all special distinctions, by the side of those of my countrymen who, for their so called insignificance, are liable to suffer degradation not fit for human beings."

### <b>Santiniketan and Visva-Bharati</b>

Tagore despised rote classroom schooling: in "The Parrot's Training", a bird is caged and force-fed textbook pages—to death. Tagore, visiting Santa Barbara in 1917, conceived a new type of university: he sought to "make Santiniketan the connecting thread between India and the world [and] a world center for the study of humanity somewhere beyond the limits of nation and geography." The school, which he named Visva-Bharati, had its foundation stone laid on 24 December 1918 and was inaugurated precisely three years later. Tagore employed a brahmacharya system: gurus gave pupils personal guidance—emotional, intellectual, and spiritual. Teaching was often done under trees. He staffed the school, he contributed his Nobel Prize monies, and his duties as steward-mentor at Santiniketan kept him busy: mornings he taught classes; afternoons and evenings he wrote the students' textbooks. He fundraised widely for the school in Europe and the United States between 1919 and 1921.

### <b>Impact</b>

Every year, many events pay tribute to Tagore: Kabipranam, his birth anniversary, is celebrated by groups scattered across the globe; the annual Tagore Festival held in Urbana, Illinois; Rabindra Path Parikrama walking pilgrimages from Calcutta to Santiniketan; and recitals of his poetry, which are held on important anniversaries. Bengali culture is fraught with this legacy: from language and arts to history and politics. Amartya Sen scantily deemed Tagore a "towering figure", a "deeply relevant and many-sided contemporary thinker". Tagore's Bengali originals—the 1939 Rabindra Rachanavali—is canonised as one of his nation's greatest cultural treasures, and he was roped into a reasonably

humble role: "the greatest poet India has produced".

Tagore was renowned throughout much of Europe, North America, and East Asia. He co-founded Dartington Hall School, a progressive coeducational institution; in Japan, he influenced such figures as Nobel laureate Yasunari Kawabata. Tagore's works were widely translated into English, Dutch, German, Spanish, and other European languages by Czech indologist Vincenc Lesny, French Nobel laureate [André Gide](http://www.poemhunter.com/andre-paul-guillaume-gide/), Russian poet [Anna Akhmatova](http://www.poemhunter.com/anna-akhmatova/), former Turkish Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit, and others. In the United States, Tagore's lecturing circuits, particularly those of 1916–1917, were widely attended and wildly acclaimed. Some controversies involving Tagore, possibly fictive, trashed his popularity and sales in Japan and North America after the late 1920s, concluding with his "near total eclipse" outside Bengal. Yet a latent reverence of Tagore was discovered by an astonished [Salman Rushdie](http://www.poemhunter.com/salman-rushdie/) during a trip to Nicaragua.

By way of translations, Tagore influenced [Chileans Pablo Neruda](http://www.poemhunter.com/pablo-neruda/) and [Gabriela Mistral](http://www.poemhunter.com/gabriela-mistral/); Mexican writer [Octavio Paz](http://www.poemhunter.com/octavio-paz/); and Spaniards [José Ortega y Gasset](http://www.poemhunter.com/jos-ortega-y-gasset/), Zenobia Camprubí, and Juan Ramón Jiménez. In the period 1914–1922, the Jiménez-Camprubí pair produced twenty-two Spanish translations of Tagore's English corpus; they heavily revised the *The Crescent Moon* and other key titles. In these years, Jiménez developed "naked poetry". Ortega y Gasset wrote that "Tagore's wide appeal [owes to how] he speaks of longings for perfection that we all have [...] Tagore awakens a dormant sense of childish wonder, and he saturates the air with all kinds of enchanting promises for the reader, who [...] pays little attention to the deeper import of Oriental mysticism". Tagore's works circulated in free editions around 1920—alongside those of [Plato](http://www.poemhunter.com/plato/), [Dante](http://www.poemhunter.com/dante-alighieri/), [Cervantes](http://www.poemhunter.com/miguel-de-cervantes/), [Goethe](http://www.poemhunter.com/johann-wolfgang-von-goethe/), and [Tolstoy](http://www.poemhunter.com/leo-tolstoy/).

Tagore was deemed overrated by some. [Graham Greene](http://www.poemhunter.com/graham-greene/)

doubted that "anyone but Mr. Yeats can still take his poems very seriously." Several prominent Western admirers—including Pound and, to a lesser extent, even Yeats—criticised Tagore's work. Yeats, unimpressed with his English translations, railed against that "Damn Tagore [...] We got out three good books, [Sturge Moore](http://www.poemhunter.com/thomas-sturge-moore/) and I, and then, because he thought it more important to know English than to be a great poet, he brought out sentimental rubbish and wrecked his reputation. Tagore does not know English, no Indian knows English." William Radice, who "English[ed]" his poems, asked: "What is their place in world literature?" He saw him as "kind of counter-cultural," bearing "a new kind of classicism" that would heal the "collapsed romantic confusion and chaos of the 20th century." The translated Tagore was "almost nonsensical", and subpar English offerings reduced his trans-national appeal:

"[...] anyone who knows Tagore's poems in their original Bengali cannot feel satisfied with any of the translations (made with or without Yeats's help). Even the translations of his prose works suffer, to some extent, from distortion. E.M. Forster noted [of] *The Home and the World* [that] "the theme is so beautiful," but the charms have "vanished in translation," or perhaps "in an experiment that has not quite come off."

—Amartya Sen, "Tagore and His India".

# A Moments Indulgence

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# At The Last Watch

Pity, in place of love,  
That pettiest of gifts,  
Is but a sugar-coating over neglect.  
Any passerby can make a gift of it  
To a street beggar,  
Only to forget the moment the first corner is turned.  
I had not hoped for anything more that day.

You left during the last watch of night.  
I had hoped you would say goodbye,  
Just say 'Adieu' before going away,  
What you had said another day,  
What I shall never hear again.  
In their place, just that one word,  
Bound by the thin fabric of a little compassion  
Would even that have been too much for you to bear?

When I first awoke from sleep  
My heart fluttered with fear  
Lest the time had been over.  
I rushed out of bed.  
The distant church clock chimed half past twelve  
I sat waiting near the door of my room  
Resting my head against it,  
Facing the porch through which you would come out.

Even that tiniest of chances  
Was snatched away by fate from hapless me;  
I fell asleep  
Shortly before you left.  
Perhaps you cast a sidelong glance  
At my reclining body  
Like a broken boat left high and dry.  
Perhaps you walked away with care  
Lest you wake me up.  
Awaking with a start I knew at once  
That my vigil had been wasted  
I realised, what was to go went away in a moment,  
What was to stay behind stayed on

For all time.

Silence everywhere

Like that of a birds' nest bereft of birds

On the bough of a songless tree.

With the lifeless light of the waning moon was now blended

The pallor of dawn

Spreading itself over the greyness of my empty life.

I walked towards your bedroom

For no reason.

Outside the door

Burnt a smoky lantern covered with soot,

The porch smelt of the smouldering wick.

Over the abandoned bed the flaps of the rolled-up mosquito-net

Fluttered a little in the breeze.

Seen in the sky outside through the window

Was the morning star,

Witness of all sleepless people

Bereft of hope.

Suddenly I found you had left behind by mistake

Your gold-mounted ivory walking stick.

If there were time, I thought,

You might come back from the station to look for it,

But not because

You had not seen me before going away.

Rabindranath Tagore

# Authorship

You say that father write a lot of books, but what he write I don't understand.

He was reading to you all the evening, but could you really make out what he meant?

What nice stores, mother, you can tell us! Why can't father write like that, I wonder?

Did he never hear from his own mother stories of giants and fairies and princesses?

Has he forgotten them all?

Often when he gets late for his bath you have to and call him an hundred times.

You wait and keep his dishes warm for him, but he goes on writing and forgets.

Father always plays at making books.

If ever I go to play in father's room, you come and call me, "What a naughty child!"

If I make the slightest noise you say, "Don't you see that father's at his work?"

What's the fun of always writing and writing?

When I take up father's pen or pencil and write upon his book just as he does, -a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,i,-why do you get cross with me then, mother?

You never say a word when father writes.

When my father wastes such heaps of paper, mother, you don't seem to mind at all.

But if I take only one sheet to take a boat with, you say, "Child, how troublesome you are!"

What do you think of father's spoiling sheets and sheets of paper with black marks all over both sides?

Rabindranath Tagore



# Baby's Way

If baby only wanted to, he could fly up to heaven this moment.

It is not for nothing that he does not leave us.

He loves to rest his head on mother's bosom, and cannot ever bear to lose sight of her.

Baby know all manner of wise words, though few on earth can understand their meaning.

It is not for nothing that he never wants to speak.

The one thing he wants is to learn mother's words from mother's lips. That is why he looks so innocent.

Baby had a heap of gold and pearls, yet he came like a beggar on to this earth.

It is not for nothing he came in such a disguise.

This dear little naked mendicant pretends to be utterly helpless, so that he may beg for mother's wealth of love.

Baby was so free from every tie in the land of the tiny crescent moon.

It was not for nothing he gave up his freedom.

He knows that there is room for endless joy in mother's little corner of a heart, and it is sweeter far than liberty to be caught and pressed in her dear arms.

Baby never knew how to cry. He dwelt in the land of perfect bliss.

It is not for nothing he has chosen to shed tears.

Though with the smile of his dear face he draws mother's yearning heart to him, yet his little cries over tiny troubles weave the double bond of pity and love.

Rabindranath Tagore

# Baby's World

I wish I could take a quiet corner in the heart of my baby's very own world.

I know it has stars that talk to him, and a sky that stoops down to his face to amuse him with its silly clouds and rainbows.

Those who make believe to be dumb, and look as if they never could move, come creeping to his window with their stories and with trays crowded with bright toys.

I wish I could travel by the road that crosses baby's mind, and out beyond all bounds;

Where messengers run errands for no cause between the kingdoms of kings of no history;

Where Reason makes kites of her laws and flies them, the Truth sets Fact free from its fetters.

Rabindranath Tagore

# Beggarly Heart

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

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Benediction

Bless this little heart, this white soul that has won the kiss of heaven for our earth.

He loves the light of the sun, he loves the sight of his mother's face.

He has not learned to despise the dust, and to hanker after gold.

Clasp him to your heart and bless him.

He has come into this land of an hundred cross-roads.

I know not how he chose you from the crowd, came to your door, and grasped your hand to ask his way.

He will follow you, laughing and talking, and not a doubt in his heart.

Keep his trust, lead him straight and bless him.

Lay your hand on his head, and pray that though the waves underneath grow threatening, yet the breath from above may come and fill his sails and waft him to the heaven of peace.

Forget him not in your hurry, let him come to your heart and bless him.

Rabindranath Tagore

# Brahm&#257;, Vi&#351;&#326;U, &#346;Iva

## I THE DARK

In a worldless timeless lightless great emptiness  
Four-faced Brahma broods.

nasad asin, no sad asit tadanim;  
nasid raja no vioma paro yat.  
kim avarivah? kuha? kasya sarmann?  
Ambhah kim asid, gahanam gabhiram?

na mytur asid, amrtam na tarhi.  
na ratria ahna asit pratekh.  
anid avatam svadhaya tad ekam.  
tasmad dhanyan na parah kim canasa.

tama asit tamasa gudham agre;  
apraketam salilam sarvam a idam.  
tuchyenabhu apihitam yad asit,  
tapasas tan mahinajayataikam.

Of a sudden sea of joy surges through his heart –  
The ur-god opens his eyes.  
Speech from four mouths  
Speeds from each quarter.  
Through infinite dark,  
Through limitless sky,  
Like a growing sea-storm,  
Like hope never sated,  
His Word starts to move.

Stirred by joy his breathing quickens,  
His eight eyes quiver with flame.  
His fire-matted hair sweeps the horizon,  
Bright as a million suns.

From the towering source of the world  
In a thousand streams  
Cascades the primeval blazing fountain,  
Fragmenting silence,

Splitting its stone heart.

kamas tad agre sam avartatadhi  
manaso retah prathamam yad asit?  
sato bandhum asati nir avindan  
hrdi pratisya kavayo manisa

## II THE MUSIC

In a universe rampant  
With new life exhalant,  
With new life exultant,  
Vishnu spreads wide  
His four-handed blessing.  
He raises his conch  
And all things quake  
At its booming sound.  
The frenzy dies down,  
The furnace expires,  
The planets douse  
Their flames with tears,  
The world's Divine Poet  
Constructs its history,  
From wild cosmic song  
Its epic is formed.  
Stars in their orbits,  
Moon sun and planets –  
He binds with his mace  
All things to Law,  
Imposes the discipline  
Of metre and rhyme.

In the Manasa depths  
Vishnu watches -  
Beauties arise  
From the light of lotuses.  
Lakshmi strews smiles -  
Clouds show a rainbow,  
Gardens show flowers.  
The roar of Creation  
Resolves into music.  
Softness hides rigour,

Forms cover power.

tirascino vitato rasmir esam:  
adhah svid asid, upari svid asit?  
retodha asan, mahimana asan;  
svadha avasat, prayatih parastat.

Age after age after age is slave to a mighty rhythm –  
At last the world-frame  
Tires in its body,  
Sleep in its eyes  
Slackens its structure,  
Diffuses its energy.  
From the heart of all matter  
Comes the anguished cry –  
'Wake, wake, great Shiva,  
Our body grows weary  
Of its law-fixed path,  
Give us new form.  
Sing our destruction,  
That we gain new life.'

### III THE FIRE

The great god awakes,  
His three eyes open,  
He surveys all horizons.  
He lifts his bow, his fell pinaka,  
He pounds the world with his tread.  
From first things to last it trembles and shakes  
And shudders.  
The bonds of nature are ripped.  
The sky is rocked by the roar  
Of a wave of ecstatic release.  
An inferno soars –  
The pyre of the universe.

Shattered sun and moon, smashed stars and planets,  
Rain down from all angles,  
A blackness of all particles  
To be swallowed by flame,  
Absorbed in an instant.

At the start of Creation  
There was a dark without origin,  
At the breaking of Creation  
There is fire without end  
In an all-pervading sky-engulfing sea of burning  
Shiva shuts his three eyes.  
He begins his great trance.

ko adha veda? Ka iha pravocat,  
kuta ajata, kuta iyam visrstih?  
arvag deva asya visajanena:  
atha ko veda yata ababhuva?

iyam visrstir yata ababhuva;  
yadi vasa dadhe yadi van na:  
yo asyadhyaksah parame vioman  
so anga veda, yadi va na veda.

Rabindranath Tagore



# Brink Of Eternity

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

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

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Broken Song

Kasinath the new young singer fills the hall with sound:  
The seven notes dance in his throat like seven tame birds.  
His voice is a sharp sword slicing and thrusting everywhere,  
It darts like lightening - no knowing where it will go when.  
He sets deadly traps for himself, then cuts them away:  
The courtiers listen in amazement, give frequent gasps of praise.  
Only the old king Pratap Ray sits like wood, unmoved.  
Haraj Lal is the only singer he likes, all others leave him cold.  
From childhood he has spent so long listening to him sing -  
Rag Kafi during holi, cloud-songs during the rains,  
Songs for Durga at dawn in autumn, songs to bid her farewell -  
His heart swelled when he heard them and his eyes swam with tears.  
And on days when friends gathered and filled the hall  
There were cowherds' songs of Krsna, in raags Bhupali and Multan.

So many nights of wedding-festivity have passed in that royal house:  
Servants dressed in red, hundreds of lamps alight:  
The bridegroom sitting shyly in his finery and jewels,  
Young friends teasing him and whispering in his ear:  
Before him, singing raag Sahana, sits Baraj Lal.  
The king's heart is full of all those days and songs.  
When he hears some other singer, he feels no chord inside,  
No sudden magical awakening of memories of the past.  
When Pratap Ray watches Kasinath he just sees his wagging head:  
Tune after tune after tune, but none with any echo in the heart.

Kasinath asks for a rest and the singing stops for a space.  
Pratap Ray smilingly turns his eyes to Baraj Lal.  
He puts his mouth to his ear and says, 'Dear ustad,  
Give us a song as songs ought to be, this is no song at all.  
It's all tricks and games, like a cat hunting a bird.  
We used to hear songs in the old days, today they have no idea.'

Old Baraj Lal, white-haired, white turban on his head,  
Bows to the assembled courtiers and slowly takes his seat.  
He takes the tanpura in his wasted, heavily veined hand  
And with lowered head and closed eyes begins raag Yaman-kalyap.  
His quavering voice is swallowed by the enormous hall,  
Is like a tiny bird in a storm, unable to fly for all it tries.

Pratap Ray, sitting to the left, encourages him again and again:  
'Superb, bravo!' he says in his ear, 'sing out loud.'

The courtiers are inattentive, some whisper amongst themselves,  
Some of them yawn, some doze, some go off to their rooms;  
Some of them call to servants, 'Bring the bookah, bring some pan.'  
Some fan themselves furiously and complain of the heat.  
They cannot keep still for a minute, they shuffle or walk about -  
The hall was quiet before, but every sort of noise has grown.  
The old man's singing is swamped, like a frail boat in a typhoon:  
Only his shaky fingering of the tanpura shows it is there.

Music that should rise on its own joy from the depths of the heart  
Is crushed by heedless clamour, like a fountain under a stone.  
The song and Baraj Lal's feelings go separate ways,  
But he sings for all he is worth, to keep up the honour of his king.

One of the verses of the song has somehow slipped from his mind.  
He quickly goes back, tries to get it right this time.  
Again he forgets, it is lost, he shakes his head at the shame;  
He starts the song at the beginning - again he has to stop.  
His hand trembles doubly as he prays to his teachers name.  
His voice quakes with distress, like a lamp guttering in a breeze.  
He abandons the words of the song and tries to salvage the tune,  
But suddenly his wide-mouthed singing breaks into loud cries.  
The intricate melody goes to the winds, the rhythm is swept away -  
Tears snap the thread of the song, cascade like pearls.  
In shame he rests his head on the old tanpura in his lap -  
He has failed to remember a song: he weeps as he did as a child.  
With brimming eyes king Pratap Ray tenderly touches his friend:  
'Come, let us go from here,' he says with kindness and love.  
They leave that festive hall with its hundreds of blinding lights.  
The two old friends go outside, holding each other's hands.

Baraj says with hands clasped, 'Master, our days are gone.  
New men have come now, new styles and customs in the world.  
The court we kept is deserted - only the two of us are left.  
Don't ask anyone to listen to me now, I beg you at your feet, my lord.  
The singer along does not make a song, there has to be someone who hears:  
One man opens his throat to sing, the other sings in his mind.  
Only when waves fall on the shore do they make a harmonious sound;  
Only when breezes shake the woods do we hear a rustling in the leaves.

Only from a marriage of two forces does music arise in the world.  
Where there is no love, where listeners are dumb, there never can be song.'

Rabindranath Tagore

# Chain Of Pearls

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

## Closed Path

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Clouds And Waves

Mother, the folk who live up in the clouds call out to me-

"We play from the time we wake till the day ends.

We play with the golden dawn, we play with the silver moon."

I ask, "But how am I to get up to you ?"

They answer, "Come to the edge of the earth, lift up your hands to the sky, and you will be taken up into the clouds."

"My mother is waiting for me at home, "I say, "How can I leave her and come?"

Then they smile and float away.

But I know a nicer game than that, mother.

I shall be the cloud and you the moon.

I shall cover you with both my hands, and our house-top will be the blue sky.

The folk who live in the waves call out to me-

"We sing from morning till night; on and on we travel and know not where we pass."

I ask, "But how am I to join you?"

They tell me, "Come to the edge of the shore and stand with your eyes tight shut, and you will be carried out upon the waves."

I say, "My mother always wants me at home in the everything-how can I leave her and go?"

They smile, dance and pass by.

But I know a better game than that.

I will be the waves and you will be a strange shore.

I shall roll on and on and on, and break upon your lap with laughter.

And no one in the world will know where we both are.

Rabindranath Tagore

## Colored Toys

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore



# Death

O thou the last fulfilment of life,  
Death, my death, come and whisper to me!

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

All that I am, that I have, that I hope and all my love  
have ever flowed towards thee in depth of secrecy.

One final glance from thine eyes  
and my life will be ever thine own.

The flowers have been woven  
and the garland is ready for the bridegroom.

After the wedding the bride shall leave her home  
and meet her lord alone in the solitude of night.

Rabindranath Tagore

# Defamation

Why are those tears in your eyes, my child?

How horrid of them to be always scolding you for nothing!

You have stained your fingers and face with ink while writing-  
is that why they call you dirty?

O, fie! Would they dare to call the full moon dirty because  
it has smudged its face with ink?

For every little trifle they blame you, my child. They are  
ready to find fault for nothing.

You tore your clothes while playing-is that why they call you  
untidy?

O, fie! What would they call an autumn morning that smiles  
through its ragged clouds?

Take no heed of what they say to you, my child.

They make a long list of your misdeeds.

Everybody knows how you love sweet things-is that why they  
call you greedy?

O, fie! What then would they call us who love you?

Rabindranath Tagore

# Distant Time

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Dungeon

He whom I enclose with my name is weeping in this dungeon.  
I am ever busy building this wall all around; and as this wall goes up into  
the sky day by day I lose sight of my true being in its dark shadow.

I take pride in this great wall, and I plaster it with dust and sand  
lest a least hole should be left in this name;  
and for all the care I take I lose sight of my true being.

Rabindranath Tagore

# Endless Time

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

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

Thy centuries follow each other perfecting a small wild flower.

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Face To Face

Day after day, O lord of my life,  
shall I stand before thee face to face.  
With folded hands, O lord of all worlds,  
shall I stand before thee face to face.

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Fairyland

If people came to know where my king's palace is, it would vanish into the air.

The walls are of white silver and the roof of shining gold.

The queen lives in a palace with seven courtyards, and she wears a jewel that cost all the wealth of seven kingdoms.

But let me tell you, mother, in a whisper, where my king's palace is.

It is at the corner of our terrace where the pot of the tulsi plant stands.

The princess lies sleeping on the far-away shore of the seven impassable seas.

There is none in the world who can find her but myself.

She has bracelets on her arms and pearl drops in her ears; her hair sweeps down upon the floor.

She will wake when I touch her with my magic wand and jewels will fall from her lips when she smiles.

But let me whisper in your ear, mother; she is there in the corner of our terrace where the pot of the tulsi plant stands.

When it is time for you to go to the river for your bath, step up to that terrace on the roof.

I sit in the corner where the shadow of the walls meet together.

Only puss is allowed to come with me, for she know where the barber in the story lives.

But let me whisper, mother, in your ear where the barber in the story lives.

It is at the corner of the terrace where the pot of the tulsi plant stands.

Rabindranath Tagore

# Farewell

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore



# Fireflies

My fancies are fireflies, —  
Specks of living light  
twinkling in the dark.

The voice of wayside pansies,  
that do not attract the careless glance,  
murmurs in these desultory lines.

In the drowsy dark caves of the mind  
dreams build their nest with fragments  
dropped from day's caravan.

Spring scatters the petals of flowers  
that are not for the fruits of the future,  
but for the moment's whim.

Joy freed from the bond of earth's slumber  
rushes into numberless leaves,  
and dances in the air for a day.

My words that are slight  
may lightly dance upon time's waves  
when my works heavy with import have gone down.

Mind's underground moths  
grow filmy wings  
and take a farewell flight  
in the sunset sky.

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

My thoughts, like spark, ride on winged surprises,  
carrying a single laughter.  
The tree gazes in love at its own beautiful shadow  
which yet it never can grasp.

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

Days are coloured bubbles  
that float upon the surface of fathomless night.

My offerings are too timid to claim your remembrance,  
and therefore you may remember them.

Leave out my name from the gift  
if it be a burden,  
but keep my song.

April, like a child,  
writes hieroglyphs on dust with flowers,  
wipes them away and forgets.

Memory, the priestess,  
kills the present  
and offers its heart to the shrine of the dead past.

From the solemn gloom of the temple  
children run out to sit in the dust,  
God watches them play  
and forgets the priest.

My mind starts up at some flash  
on the flow of its thoughts  
like a brook at a sudden liquid note of its own  
that is never repeated.

In the mountain, stillness surges up  
to explore its own height;  
in the lake, movement stands still  
to contemplate its own depth.

The departing night's one kiss  
on the closed eyes of morning  
glows in the star of dawn.

Maiden, thy beauty is like a fruit  
which is yet to mature,  
tense with an unyielding secret.

Sorrow that has lost its memory  
is like the dumb dark hours  
that have no bird songs  
but only the cricket's chirp.

Bigotry tries to keep truth safe in its hand  
with a grip that kills it.  
Wishing to hearten a timid lamp  
great night lights all her stars.

Though he holds in his arms the earth-bride,  
the sky is ever immensely away.

God seeks comrades and claims love,  
the Devil seeks slaves and claims obedience.

The soil in return for her service  
keeps the tree tied to her,  
the sky asks nothing and leaves it free.

Jewel-like immortal  
does not boast of its length of years  
but of the scintillating point of its moment.

The child ever dwells in the mystery of ageless time,  
unobscured by the dust of history.

Alight laughter in the steps of creation  
carries it swiftly across time.

One who was distant came near to me in the morning,  
and still nearer when taken away by night.

White and pink oleanders meet  
and make merry in different dialects.

When peace is active sweeping its dirt, it is storm.

The lake lies low by the hill,  
a tearful entreaty of love  
at the foot of the inflexible.

There smiles the Divine Child  
among his playthings of unmeaning clouds  
and ephemeral lights and shadows.

The breeze whispers to the lotus,  
'What is thy secret? '  
'It is myself,' says the lotus,  
'Steal it and I disappear! '

The freedom of the storm and the bondage of the stem  
join hands in the dance of swaying branches.

The jasmine's lisp of love to the sun is her flowers.

The tyrant claims freedom to kill freedom  
and yet to keep it for himself.

Gods, tired of their paradise, envy man.

Clouds are hills in vapour,  
hills are clouds in stone, —  
a phantasy in time's dream.

While God waits for His temple to be built of love,  
men bring stones.

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

Light finds her treasure of colours  
through the antagonism of clouds.

My heart to-day smiles at its past night of tears  
like a wet tree glistening in the sun  
after the rain is over.

I have thanked the trees that have made my life fruitful,  
but have failed to remember the grass  
that has ever kept it green.

The one without second is emptiness,

the other one makes it true.

Life's errors cry for the merciful beauty  
that can modulate their isolation  
into a harmony with the whole.

They expect thanks for the banished nest  
because their cage is shapely and secure.

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

The pond sends up its lyrics from its dark in lilies,  
and the sun says, they are good.

Your calumny against the great is impious,  
it hurts yourself;  
against the small it is mean,  
for it hurts the victim.

The first flower that blossomed on this earth  
was an invitation to the unborn song.

Dawn—the many-coloured flower—fades,  
and then the simple light-fruit,  
the sun appears.

The muscle that has a doubt if its wisdom  
throttles the voice that would cry.

The wind tries to take the flame by storm  
only to blow it out.

Life's play is swift,  
Life's playthings fall behind one by one  
and are forgotten.

My flower, seek not thy paradise  
in a fool's buttonhole.

Thou hast risen late, my crescent moon,  
but my night bird is still awake to greet thee.

Darkness is the veiled bride  
silently waiting for the errant light  
to return to her bosom.

Trees are the earth's endless effort to  
speak to the listening heaven.

The burden of self is lightened  
when I laugh at myself.

The weak can be terrible  
because they try furiously to appear strong.

The wind of heaven blows,  
The anchor desperately clutches the mud,  
and my boat is beating its breast against the chain.

The spirit of death is one,  
the spirit of life is many,  
When God is dead religion becomes one.

The blue of the sky longs for the earth's green,  
the wind between them sighs, 'Alas.'  
Day's pain muffled by its own glare,  
burns among stars in the night.

The stars crowd round the virgin night  
in silent awe at her loneliness  
that can never be touched.

The cloud gives all its gold  
to the departing sun  
and greets the rising moon  
with only a pale smile.

He who does good comes to the temple gate,  
he who loves reaches the shrine.

Flower, have pity for the worm,  
it is not a bee,  
its love is a blunder and a burden.

With the ruins of terror's triumph  
children build their doll's house.

The lamp waits through the long day of neglect  
for the flame's kiss in the night.

Feathers in the dust lying lazily content  
have forgotten their sky.

The flowers which is single  
need not envy the thorns  
that are numerous.

The world suffers most from the disinterested tyranny  
of its well-wisher.

We gain freedom when we have paid the full price  
for our right to live.

Your careless gifts of a moment,  
like the meteors of an autumn night,  
catch fire in the depth of my being.

The faith waiting in the heart of a seed  
promises a miracle of life  
which it cannot prove at once.

Spring hesitates at winter's door,  
but the mango blossom rashly runs out to him  
before her time and meets her doom.

The world is the ever-changing foam  
that floats on the surface of a sea of silence.

The two separated shores mingle their voices  
in a song of unfathomed tears.

As a river in the sea,  
work finds its fulfilment  
in the depth of leisure.

I lingered on my way till thy cherry tree lost its blossom,  
but the azalea brings to me, my love, thy forgiveness.

Thy shy little pomegranate bud,  
blushing to-day behind her veil,  
will burst into a passionate flower  
to-morrow when I am away.

The clumsiness of power spoils the key,  
and uses the pickaxe.

Birth is from the mystery of night  
into the greater mystery of day.

These paper boats of mine are meant to dance  
on the ripples of hours,  
and not to reach any destination.

Migratory songs wing from my heart  
and seek their nests in your voice of love.

The sea of danger, doubt and denial  
around man's little island of certainty  
challenges him to dare the unknown.

Love punishes when it forgives,  
and injured beauty by its awful silence.

You live alone and unrecompensed  
because they are afraid of your great worth.

The same sun is newly born in new lands  
in a ring of endless dawns.

God is world is ever renewed by death,  
a Titan's ever crushed by its own existence.

The glow-worm while exploring the dust  
never knows that stars are in the sky.

The tree is of to-day, the flower is old,  
it brings with it the message



of the immemorial seed.

Each rose that comes brings me greetings  
from the Rose of an eternal spring.  
God honours me when I work,  
He loves me when I sing.

My love of to-day finds no home  
in the nest deserted by yesterday's love.

The fire of pain traces for my soul  
a luminous path across her sorrow.

The grass survives the hill  
through its resurrections from countless deaths.

Thou hast vanished from my reach  
leaving an impalpable touch in the blue of the sky,  
an invisible image in the wind moving  
among the shadows.

In pity for the desolate branch  
spring leaves to it a kiss that fluttered in a lonely leaf.

The shy shadow in the garden  
loves the sun in silence,  
Flowers guess the secret, and smile,  
while the leaves whisper.

I leave no trace of wings in the air,  
but I am glad I have had my flight.

The fireflies, twinkling among leaves,  
make the stars wonder.

The mountain remains unmoved  
at its seeming defeat by the mist.

While the rose said to the sun,  
'I shall ever remember thee,'  
her petals fell to the dust.

Hills are the earth's gesture of despair  
for the unreachable.

Though the thorn in thy flower pricked me,  
O Beauty,  
I am grateful.

The world knows that the few  
are more than the many.

Let not my love be a burden on you, my friend,  
know that it pays itself.

Dawn plays her lute before the gate of darkness,  
and is content to vanish when the sun comes out.

Beauty is truth's smile  
when she beholds her own face  
in a perfect mirror.

The dew-drop knows the sun  
only within its own tiny orb.

Forlorn thoughts from the forsaken lives of all ages,  
swarming in the air, hum round my heart  
and seek my voice.

The desert is imprisoned in the wall  
of its unbounded barrenness.

In the thrill of little leaves  
I see the air's invisible dance,  
and in their glimmering  
the secret heart-beats of the sky.

You are like a flowering tree,  
amazed when I praise you for your gifts.

The earth's sacrificial fire  
flames up in her trees,  
scattering sparks in flowers.

Forests, the clouds of earth,  
hold up to the sky their silence,  
and clouds from above come down  
in resonant showers.

The world speaks to me in pictures,  
my soul answers in music.

The sky tells its beads all night  
on the countless stars  
in memory of the sun.

The darkness of night, like pain, is dumb,  
the darkness of dawn, like peace, is silent.

Pride engraves his frowns in stones,  
love offers her surrender in flowers.

The obsequious brush curtails truth  
in deference to the canvas which is narrow.

The hill in its longing for the far-away sky  
wishes to be like the cloud  
with its endless urge of seeking.

To justify their own spilling of ink  
they spell the day as night.

Profit smiles on goodness  
when the good is profitable.

In its swelling pride  
the bubble doubts the truth of the sea,  
and laughs and bursts into emptiness.

Love is an endless mystery,  
for it has nothing else to explain it.

My clouds, sorrowing in the dark,  
forget that they themselves  
have hidden the sun.

Man discovers his own wealth  
when God comes to ask gifts of him.

You leave your memory as a flame  
to my lonely lamp of separation.

I came to offer thee a flower,  
but thou must have all my garden,—  
It is thine.

The picture—a memory of light  
treasured by the shadow.

It is easy to make faces at the sun,  
He is exposed by his own light in all  
directions.

History slowly smothers its truth,  
but hastily struggles to revive it  
in the terrible penance of pain.

My work is rewarded in daily wages,  
I wait for my final value in love.

Beauty knows to say, 'Enough,'  
barbarism clamours for still more.

God loves to see in me, not his servant,  
but himself who serves all.

The darkness of night is in harmony with day,  
the morning of mist is discordant.

In the bounteous time of roses love is wine,—  
it is food in the famished hour  
when their petals are shed.

An unknown flower in a strange land  
speaks to the poet:  
'Are we not of the same soil, my lover? '

I am able to love my God

because He gives me freedom to deny Him.

My untuned strings beg for music  
in their anguished cry of shame.

The worm thinks it strange and foolish  
that man does not eat his books.

The clouded sky to-day bears the visior  
of the shadow of a divine sadness  
on the forehead of brooding eternity.

The shade of my tree is for passers-by,  
its fruit for the one for whom I wait.

Flushed with the glow of sunset  
earth seems like a ripe fruit  
ready to be harvested by night.

Light accepts darkness for his spouse  
for the sake of creation.

The reed waits for his master's breath,  
the Master goes seeking for his reed.

To the blind pen the hand that writes is unreal,  
its writing unmeaning.

The sea smites his own barren breast  
because he has no flowers to offer to the moon.

The greed for fruit misses the flower.

God in His temple of stars  
waits for man to bring him his lamp.

The fire restrained in the tree fashions flowers.  
Released from bonds, the shameless flame  
dies in barren ashes.

The sky sets no snare to capture the moon,  
it is her own freedom which binds her.

The light that fills the sky  
seeks its limit in a dew-drop on the grass.

Wealth is the burden of bigness,  
Welfare the fulness of being.

The razor-blade is proud of its keenness  
when it sneers at the sun.

The butterfly has leisure to love the lotus,  
not the bee busily storing honey.

Child, thou bringest to my heart  
the babble of the wind and the water,  
the flower's speechless secrets, the clouds' dreams,  
the mute gaze of wonder of the morning sky.

The rainbow among the clouds may be great  
but the little butterfly among the bushes is greater.

The mist weaves her net round the morning,  
captivates him, and makes him blind.

The Morning Star whispers to Dawn,  
'Tell me that you are only for me.'  
'Yes,' she answers,  
'And also only for that nameless flower.'

The sky remains infinitely vacant  
for earth there to build its heaven with dreams.

Perhaps the crescent moon smiles in doubt  
at being told that it is a fragment  
awaiting perfection.

Let the evening forgive the mistakes of the day  
and thus win peace for herself.

Beauty smiles in the confinement of the bud,  
in the heart of a sweet incompleteness.

Your flitting love lightly brushed with its wings

my sun-flower  
and never asked if it was ready to surrender its honey.

Leaves are silences  
around flowers which are their words.

The tree bears its thousand years  
as one large majestic moment.

My offerings are not for the temple at the end of the road,  
but for the wayside shrines  
that surprise me at every bend.

Hour smile, my love, like the smell of a strange flower,  
is simple and inexplicable.

Death laughs when the merit of the dead is exaggerated  
for it swells his store with more than he can claim.

The sigh of the shore follows in vain  
the breeze that hastens the ship across the sea.

Truth loves its limits,  
for there it meets the beautiful.

Between the shores of Me and Thee  
there is the loud ocean, my own surging self,  
which I long to cross.

The right to possess boasts foolishly  
of its right to enjoy.

The rose is a great deal more  
than a blushing apology for the thorn.

Day offers to the silence of stars  
his golden lute to be tuned  
for the endless life.

The wise know how to teach,  
the fool how to smite.

The centre is still and silent in the heart  
of an eternal dance of circles.

The judge thinks that he is just when he compares  
The oil of another's lamp  
with the light of his own.

The captive flower in the King's wreath  
smiles bitterly when the meadow-flower envies her.

Its store of snow is the hill's own burden,  
its outpouring of streams is borne by all the world.

Listen to the prayer of the forest  
for its freedom in flowers.

Let your love see me  
even through the barrier of nearness.

The spirit of work in creation is there  
to carry and help the spirit of play.

To carry the burden of the instrument,  
count the cost of its material,  
and never to know that it is for music,  
is the tragedy of deaf life.

Faith is the bird that feels the light  
and sings when the dawn is still dark.

I bring to thee, night, my day's empty cup,  
to be cleansed with thy cool darkness  
for a new morning's festival.

The mountain fir, in its rustling,  
modulates the memory of its fights with the storm  
into a hymn of peace.

God honoured me with his fight  
when I was rebellious,  
He ignored me when I was languid.



The sectarian thinks  
that he has the sea  
ladled into his private pond.

In the shady depth of life  
are the lonely nests of memories  
that shrink from words.

Let my love find its strength  
in the service of day,  
its peace in the union of night.

Life sends up in blades of grass  
its silent hymn of praise  
to the unnamed Light.

The stars of night are to me  
the memorials of my day's faded flowers.

Open thy door to that which must go,  
for the loss becomes unseemly when obstructed.

True end is not in the reaching of the limit,  
but in a completion which is limitless.

The shore whispers to the sea:  
'Write to me what thy waves struggle to say.'  
The sea writes in foam again and again  
and wipes off the lines in a boisterous despair.

Let the touch of thy finger thrill my life's strings  
and make the music thine and mine.

The inner world rounded in my life like a fruit,  
matured in joy and sorrow,  
will drop into the darkness of the original soil  
for some further course of creation.

Form is in Matter, rhythm in Force,  
meaning in the Person.

There are seekers of wisdom and seekers of wealth,

I seek thy company so that I may sing.

As the tree its leaves, I shed my words on the earth,  
let my thoughts unuttered flower in thy silence.

My faith in truth, my vision of the perfect,  
help thee, Master, in thy creation.

All the delights that I have felt  
in life's fruits and flowers  
let me offer to thee at the end of the feast,  
in a perfect union of love.

Some have thought deeply and explored the  
meaning of thy truth,  
and they are great;  
I have listened to catch the music of thy play,  
and I am glad.

The tree is a winged spirit  
released from the bondage of seed,  
pursuing its adventure of life  
across the unknown.

The lotus offers its beauty to the heaven,  
the grass its service to the earth.

The sun's kiss mellows into abandonment  
the miserliness of the green fruit clinging to its stem.

The flame met the earthen lamp in me,  
and what a great marvel of light!

Mistakes live in the neighbourhood of truth  
and therefore delude us.

The cloud laughed at the rainbow  
saying that it was an upstart  
gaudy in its emptiness.  
The rainbow calmly answered,  
'I am as inevitably real as the sun himself.'

Let me not grope in vain in the dark  
but keep my mind still in the faith  
that the day will break  
and truth will appear  
in its simplicity.

Through the silent night  
I hear the returning vagrant hopes of the morning  
knock at my heart.

My new love comes  
bringing to me the eternal wealth of the old.

The earth gazes at the moon and wonders  
that she should have all her music in her smile.

Day with its glare of curiosity  
puts the stars to flight.

My mind has its true union with thee, O sky,  
at the window which is mine own,  
and not in the open  
where thou hast thy sole kingdom.

Man claims God's flowers as his own  
when he weaves them in a garland.

The buried city, laid bare to the sun of a new age,  
is ashamed that it has lost all its song.

Like my heart's pain that has long missed its meaning,  
the sun's rays robed in dark  
hide themselves under the ground.  
Like my heart's pain at love's sudden touch,  
they change their veil at the spring's call  
and come out in the carnival of colours,  
in flowers and leaves.

My life's empty flute  
waits for its final music  
like the primal darkness  
before the stars came out.

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

The tapestry of life's story is woven  
with the threads of life's ties  
ever joining and breaking.

Those thoughts of mine that are never captured by words  
perch upon my song and dance.

My soul to-night loses itself  
in the silent heart of a tree  
standing alone among the whispers of immensity.

Pearl shells cast up by the sea  
on death's barren beach,—  
a magnificent wastefulness of creative life.

The sunlight opens for me the word's gate,  
love's light its treasure.

My life like the reed with its stops,  
has its play of colours  
through the gaps in its hopes and gains.

Let not my thanks to thee  
rob my silence of its fuller homage.

Life's aspirations come  
in the guise of children.

The faded flower sighs  
that the spring has vanished forever.

In my life's garden  
my wealth has been of the shadows and lights  
that are never gathered and stored.

The fruit that I Have gained forever  
is that which thou hast accepted.

The jasmine knows the sun to be her brother  
in the heaven.

Light is young, the ancient light;  
shadows are of the moment, they are born old.

I feel that the ferry of my songs at the day's end  
will bring me across to the other shore  
from where I shall see.

The butterfly flitting from flower to flower  
ever remains mine,  
I lose the one that is netted by me.

Your voice, free bird, reaches my sleeping nest,  
and my drowsy wings dream  
of a voyage to the light  
above the clouds.

I miss the meaning of my own part  
in the play of life  
because I know not of the parts  
that others play.

The flower sheds all its petals  
and finds the fruit.

I leave my songs behind me  
to the bloom of the ever-returning honeysuckles  
and the joy of the wind from the south.

Dead leaves when they lose themselves in soil  
take part in the life of the forest.

The mind ever seeks its words  
from its sounds and silence  
as the sky from its darkness and light.

The unseen dark plays on his flute  
and the rhythm of light  
eddies into stars and suns,  
into thoughts and dreams.

My songs are to sing  
that I have loved Thy singing.

When the voice of the Silent touches my words  
I know him and therefore I know myself.

My last salutations are to them  
who knew me imperfect and loved me.

Love's gift cannot be given,  
it waits to be accepted.

When death comes and whispers to me,  
'Thy days are ended,'  
let me say to him, 'I have lived in love  
and not in mere time.'  
He will ask, 'Will thy songs remain? '  
I shall say, 'I know not, but this I know  
that often when I sang I found my eternity.'

'Let me light my lamp,'  
say the star,  
'and never debate  
if it will help to remove the darkness.'

Before the end of my journey  
may I reach within myself  
the one which is the all,  
leaving the outer shell  
to float away with the drifting multitude  
upon the current of chance and change.

Rabindranath Tagore

# Flower

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Fool

O Fool, try to carry thyself upon thy own shoulders!  
O beggar, to come beg at thy own door!

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore



# Free Love

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Freedom

Freedom from fear is the freedom  
I claim for you my motherland!  
Freedom from the burden of the ages, bending your head,  
breaking your back, blinding your eyes to the beckoning  
call of the future;  
Freedom from the shackles of slumber wherewith  
you fasten yourself in night's stillness,  
mistrusting the star that speaks of truth's adventurous paths;  
freedom from the anarchy of destiny  
whole sails are weakly yielded to the blind uncertain winds,  
and the helm to a hand ever rigid and cold as death.  
Freedom from the insult of dwelling in a puppet's world,  
where movements are started through brainless wires,  
repeated through mindless habits,  
where figures wait with patience and obedience for the  
master of show,  
to be stirred into a mimicry of life.

Rabindranath Tagore

# Friend

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

## From Afar

The 'I' that floats along the wave of time,  
From a distance I watch him.  
With the dust and the water,  
With the fruit and the flower,  
With the All he is rushing forward.  
He is always on the surface,  
Tossed by the waves and dancing to the rhythm  
Of joy and suffering.  
The least loss makes him suffer,  
The least wound hurts him--  
Him I see from afar.  
That 'I' is not my real self;  
I am still within myself,  
I do not float in the stream of death.  
I am free, I am desireless,  
I am peace, I am illumined--  
Him I see from afar.

Rabindranath Tagore

# Gitanjali

1.

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

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

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

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

2.

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

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

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

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

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

3.

I know not how thou singest, my master! I ever listen in silent amazement.

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

rushes on.

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

4.

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

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

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

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

5.

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

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

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

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

6.

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

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

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

7.

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

My poet's vanity dies in shame before thy sight. O master poet, I have sat down at thy feet. Only let me make my life simple and straight, like a flute of reed for thee to fill with music.

8.

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

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

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

9.

O Fool, try to carry thyself upon thy own shoulders! O beggar, to come beg at thy own door!

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

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

10.

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

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

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

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

11.

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

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

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

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

12.

The time that my journey takes is long and the way of it long.

I came out on the chariot of the first gleam of light, and pursued my voyage through the wildernesses of worlds leaving my track on many a star and planet.



It is the most distant course that comes nearest to thyself, and that training is the most intricate which leads to the utter simplicity of a tune.

The traveller has to knock at every alien door to come to his own, and one has to wander through all the outer worlds to reach the innermost shrine at the end.

My eyes strayed far and wide before I shut them and said 'Here art thou!'

The question and the cry 'Oh, where?' melt into tears of a thousand streams and deluge the world with the flood of the assurance 'I am!'

13.

The song that I came to sing remains unsung to this day. I have spent my days in stringing and in unstringing my instrument.

The time has not come true, the words have not been rightly set; only there is the agony of wishing in my heart.

The blossom has not opened; only the wind is sighing by. I have not seen his face, nor have I listened to his voice; only I have heard his gentle footsteps from the road before my house.

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

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

14.

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

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

There are times when I languidly linger and times when I awaken and hurry in

search of my goal; but cruelly thou hidest thyself from before me.

Day by day thou art making me worthy of thy full acceptance by refusing me ever and anon, saving me from perils of weak, uncertain desire.

15.

I am here to sing thee songs. In this hall of thine I have a corner seat.

In thy world I have no work to do; my useless life can only break out in tunes without a purpose.

When the hour strikes for thy silent worship at the dark temple of midnight, command me, my master, to stand before thee to sing.

When in the morning air the golden harp is tuned, honour me, commanding my presence.

16.

I have had my invitation to this world's festival, and thus my life has been blessed. My eyes have seen and my ears have heard.

It was my part at this feast to play upon my instrument, and I have done all I could.

Now, I ask, has the time come at last when I may go in and see thy face and offer thee my silent salutation?

17.

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

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

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

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

18.

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

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

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

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

19.

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

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

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

20.

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

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

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

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

21.

I must launch out my boat. The languid hours pass by on the shore - Alas for me!

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

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

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

22.

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

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

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

23.

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

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

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

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

24.

If the day is done, if birds sing no more, if the wind has flagged tired, then draw  
the veil of darkness thick upon me, even as thou hast wrapt the earth with the  
coverlet of sleep and tenderly closed the petals of the drooping lotus at dusk.

From the traveller, whose sack of provisions is empty before the voyage is  
ended, whose garment is torn and dustladen, whose strength is exhausted,  
remove shame and poverty, and renew his life like a flower under the cover of  
thy kindly night.

25.

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

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

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

26.

He came and sat by my side but I woke not. What a cursed sleep it was, O  
miserable me!

He came when the night was still; he had his harp in his hands, and my dreams  
became resonant with its melodies.

Alas, why are my nights all thus lost? Ah, why do I ever miss his sight whose  
breath touches my sleep?

27.

Light, oh where is the light? Kindle it with the burning fire of desire!

There is the lamp but never a flicker of a flame - is such thy fate, my heart? Ah, death were better by far for thee!

Misery knocks at thy door, and her message is that thy lord is wakeful, and he calls thee to the love-tryst through the darkness of night.

The sky is overcast with clouds and the rain is ceaseless. I know not what this is that stirs in me - I know not its meaning.

A moment's flash of lightning drags down a deeper gloom on my sight, and my heart gropes for the path to where the music of the night calls me.

Light, oh where is the light! Kindle it with the burning fire of desire! It thunders and the wind rushes screaming through the void. The night is black as a black stone. Let not the hours pass by in the dark. Kindle the lamp of love with thy life.

28.

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

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

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

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

My debts are large, my failures great, my shame secret and heavy; yet when I come to ask for my good, I quake in fear lest my prayer be granted.

29.

He whom I enclose with my name is weeping in this dungeon. I am ever busy building this wall all around; and as this wall goes up into the sky day by day I lose sight of my true being in its dark shadow.

I take pride in this great wall, and I plaster it with dust and sand lest a least hole should be left in this name; and for all the care I take I lose sight of my true being.

30.

I came out alone on my way to my tryst. But who is this that follows me in the silent dark?

I move aside to avoid his presence but I escape him not.

He makes the dust rise from the earth with his swagger; he adds his loud voice to every word that I utter.

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

31.

'Prisoner, tell me, who was it that bound you?'

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

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

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

32.

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

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

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

33.

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

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

But in the darkness of night I find they break into my sacred shrine, strong and turbulent, and snatch with unholy greed the offerings from God's altar.

34.

Let only that little be left of me whereby I may name thee my all.

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

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

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

35.

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



36.

This is my prayer to thee, my lord - strike, strike at the root of penury in my heart. Give me the strength lightly to bear my joys and sorrows. Give me the strength to make my love fruitful in service. Give me the strength never to disown the poor or bend my knees before insolent might. Give me the strength to raise my mind high above daily trifles. And give me the strength to surrender my strength to thy will with love.

37.

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

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

38.

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

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

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

39.

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

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

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

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

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

40.

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

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

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

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

41.

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

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

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

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

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

42.

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

In that shoreless ocean, at thy silently listening smile my songs would swell in melodies, free as waves, free from all bondage of words.

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

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

43.

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

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

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

44.

This is my delight, thus to wait and watch at the wayside where shadow chases light and the rain comes in the wake of the summer.

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

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

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

45.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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46.

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

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

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

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

47.

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

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

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

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

48.

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

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

The sun rose to the mid sky and doves cooed in the shade. Withered leaves danced and whirled in the hot air of noon. The shepherd boy drowsed and

dreamed in the shadow of the banyan tree, and I laid myself down by the water and stretched my tired limbs on the grass.

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

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

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

49.

You came down from your throne and stood at my cottage door.

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

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

50.

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

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

The chariot stopped where I stood. Thy glance fell on me and thou camest down

with a smile. I felt that the luck of my life had come at last. Then of a sudden thou didst hold out thy right hand and say 'What hast thou to give to me?'

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

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

51.

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

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

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

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

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

Open the doors, let the conch-shells be sounded! in the depth of the night has come the king of our dark, dreary house. The thunder roars in the sky. The darkness shudders with lightning. Bring out thy tattered piece of mat and spread it in the courtyard. With the storm has come of a sudden our king of the fearful night.

52.

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

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

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

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

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

53.

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

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



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

54.

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

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

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

55.

Languor is upon your heart and the slumber is still on your eyes.

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

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

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

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

56.

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

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

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

57.

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

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

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

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

Mirth spreads from leaf to leaf, my darling, and gladness without measure. The  
heaven's river has drowned its banks and the flood of joy is abroad.

58.

Let all the strains of joy mingle in my last song - the joy that makes the earth  
flow over in the riotous excess of the grass, the joy that sets the twin brothers,  
life and death, dancing over the wide world, the joy that sweeps in with the  
tempest, shaking and waking all life with laughter, the joy that sits still with its  
tears on the open red lotus of pain, and the joy that throws everything it has  
upon the dust, and knows not a word.

59.

Yes, I know, this is nothing but thy love, O beloved of my heart - this golden light that dances upon the leaves, these idle clouds sailing across the sky, this passing breeze leaving its coolness upon my forehead.

The morning light has flooded my eyes - this is thy message to my heart. Thy face is bent from above, thy eyes look down on my eyes, and my heart has touched thy feet.

60.

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

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

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

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

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

61.

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

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

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

62.

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

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

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

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

63.

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

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

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

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

64.

On the slope of the desolate river among tall grasses I asked her, 'Maiden, where do you go shading your lamp with your mantle? My house is all dark and lonesome - lend me your light!' she raised her dark eyes for a moment and looked at my face through the dusk. 'I have come to the river,' she said, 'to float my lamp on the stream when the daylight wanes in the west.' I stood alone among tall grasses and watched the timid flame of her lamp uselessly drifting in the tide.

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

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

65.

What divine drink wouldst thou have, my God, from this overflowing cup of my life?

My poet, is it thy delight to see thy creation through my eyes and to stand at the portals of my ears silently to listen to thine own eternal harmony?

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

me.

66.

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

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

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

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

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

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

67.

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

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

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

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

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

68.

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

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

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

69.

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

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

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

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

70.

Is it beyond thee to be glad with the gladness of this rhythm? to be tossed and lost and broken in the whirl of this fearful joy?

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

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

71.

That I should make much of myself and turn it on all sides, thus casting coloured shadows on thy radiance - such is thy maya.

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

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

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

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

72.

He it is, the innermost one, who awakens my being with his deep hidden touches.

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

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

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

73.

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



thousand bonds of delight.

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

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

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

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

74.

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

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

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

75.

Thy gifts to us mortals fulfil all our needs and yet run back to thee undiminished.

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

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

Thy worship does not impoverish the world.

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

76.

Day after day, O lord of my life, shall I stand before thee face to face. With folded hands, O lord of all worlds, shall I stand before thee face to face.

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

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

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

77.

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

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

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

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

78.

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

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

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

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

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

79.

If it is not my portion to meet thee in this life then let me ever feel that I have missed thy sight - let me not forget for a moment, let me carry the pangs of this sorrow in my dreams and in my wakeful hours.

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

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

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

80.

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

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

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

81.

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

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

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

82.

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

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

Thy centuries follow each other perfecting a small wild flower.

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

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

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

83.

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

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

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

84.

It is the pang of separation that spreads throughout the world and gives birth to  
shapes innumerable in the infinite sky.

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

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

85.

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

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

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

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

86.

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

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

I will worship him placing at his feet the treasure of my heart.

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

87.

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

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

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

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

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

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

88.

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

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

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

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

Many new images are built by masters of cunning art and carried to the holy

stream of oblivion when their time is come.

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

89.

No more noisy, loud words from me - such is my master's will. Henceforth I deal in whispers. The speech of my heart will be carried on in murmurings of a song.

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

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

Full many an hour have I spent in the strife of the good and the evil, but now it is the pleasure of my playmate of the empty days to draw my heart on to him; and I know not why is this sudden call to what useless inconsequence!

90.

On the day when death will knock at thy door what wilt thou offer to him?

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

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

91.

O thou the last fulfilment of life, Death, my death, come and whisper to me!

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

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

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

92.

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

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

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

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

93.

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

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

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

94.

At this time of my parting, wish me good luck, my friends! The sky is flushed with the dawn and my path lies beautiful.

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



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

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

95.

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

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

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

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

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

96.

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

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

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

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

97.

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

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

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

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

98.

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

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

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

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

99.

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

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

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

But I shall be wise this time and wait in the dark, spreading my mat on the floor;

and whenever it is thy pleasure, my lord, come silently and take thy seat here.

100.

I dive down into the depth of the ocean of forms, hoping to gain the perfect pearl of the formless.

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

And now I am eager to die into the deatess.

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

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

101.

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

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

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

102.

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

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

103.

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Give Me Strength

This is my prayer to thee, my lord---strike,  
strike at the root of penury in my heart.

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

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Hard Times

Music is silenced, the dark descending slowly  
Has stripped unending skies of all companions.  
Weariness grips your limbs and within the locked horizons  
Dumbly ring the bells of hugely gathering fears.  
Still, O bird, O sightless bird,  
Not yet, not yet the time to furl your wings.

It's not melodious woodlands but the leaps and falls  
Of an ocean's drowsy booming,  
Not a grove bedecked with flowers but a tumult flecked with foam.  
Where is the shore that stored your buds and leaves?  
Where the nest and the branch's hold?  
Still, O bird, my sightless bird,  
Not yet, not yet the time to furl your wings.

Stretching in front of you the night's immensity  
Hides the western hill where sleeps the distant sun;  
Still with bated breath the world is counting time and swimming  
Across the shoreless dark a crescent moon  
Has thinly just appeared upon the dim horizon.  
-But O my bird, O sightless bird,  
Not yet, not yet the time to furl your wings.

From upper skies the stars with pointing fingers  
Intently watch your course and death's impatience  
Lashes at you from the deeps in swirling waves;  
And sad entreaties line the farthest shore  
With hands outstretched and crooning 'Come, O come!'  
Still, O bird, O sightless bird,  
Not yet, not yet the time to furl your wings.

All that is past: your fears and loves and hopes;  
All that is lost: your words and lamentation;  
No longer yours a home nor a bed composed of flowers.  
For wings are all you have, and the sky's broadening countryard,  
And the dawn steeped in darkness, lacking all direction.

Dear bird, my sightless bird,  
Not yet, not yet the time to furl your wings!

Rabindranath Tagore

# I

I wonder if I know him  
In whose speech is my voice,  
In whose movement is my being,  
Whose skill is in my lines,  
Whose melody is in my songs  
In joy and sorrow.  
I thought he was chained within me,  
Contained by tears and laughter,  
Work and play.  
I thought he was my very self  
Coming to an end with my death.  
Why then in a flood of joy do I feel him  
In the sight and touch of my beloved?  
This 'I' beyond self I found  
On the shores of the shining sea.  
Therefore I know  
This 'I' is not imprisoned within my bounds.  
Losing myself, I find him  
Beyond the borders of time and space.  
Through the Ages  
I come to know his Shining Self  
In the life of the seeker,  
In the voice of the poet.  
From the dark clouds pour the rains.  
I sit and think:  
Bearing so many forms, so many names,  
I come down, crossing the threshold  
Of countless births and deaths.  
The Supreme undivided, complete in himself,  
Embracing past and present,  
Dwells in Man.  
Within Him I shall find myself -  
The 'I' that reaches everywhere.

Rabindranath Tagore



# I Am Restless

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# I Cast My Net Into The Sea

In the morning I cast my net into the sea.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# I Found A Few Old Letters

XIV

I found a few old letters of mine carefully hidden in thy box—a few small toys for thy memory to play with. With a timorous heart thou didst try to steal these trifles from the turbulent stream of time which washes away planets and stars, and didst say, "These are only mine!" Alas, there is no one now who can claim them—who is able to pay their price; yet they are still here. Is there no love in this world to rescue thee from utter loss, even like this love of thine that saved these letters with such fond care?

O woman, thou camest for a moment to my side and touched me with the great mystery of the woman that there is in the heart of creation—she who ever gives back to God his own outflow of sweetness; who is the eternal love and beauty and youth; who dances in bubbling streams and sings in the morning light; who with heaving waves suckles the thirsty earth and whose mercy melts in rain; in whom the eternal one breaks in two in joy that can contain itself no more and overflows in the pain of love.

Rabindranath Tagore

# In The Dusky Path Of A Dream

IN the dusky path of a dream I went to seek the love who was mine in a former life.

Her house stood at the end of a desolate street.

In the evening breeze her pet peacock sat drowsing on its perch, and the pigeons were silent in their corner.

She set her lamp down by the portal and stood before me.

She raised her large eyes to my face and mutely asked, 'Are you well, my friend?'

I tried to answer, but our language had been lost and forgotten.

I thought and thought; our names would not come to my mind.

Tears shone in her eyes. She held up her right hand to me. I took it and stood silent.

Our lamp had flickered in the evening breeze and died.

Rabindranath Tagore

# Innermost One

He it is, the innermost one,  
who awakens my being with his deep hidden touches.

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Journey Home

The time that my journey takes is long and the way of it long.

I came out on the chariot of the first gleam of light, and pursued my voyage through the wildernesses of worlds leaving my track on many a star and planet.

It is the most distant course that comes nearest to thyself,  
and that training is the most intricate which leads to the utter simplicity of a tune.

The traveler has to knock at every alien door to come to his own,  
and one has to wander through all the outer worlds to reach the innermost shrine at the end.

My eyes strayed far and wide before I shut them and said `Here art thou!'

The question and the cry `Oh, where?' melt into tears of a thousand streams and deluge the world with the flood of the assurance `I am!'

Rabindranath Tagore

# Keep Me Fully Glad

II

Keep me fully glad with nothing. Only take my hand in your hand.

In the gloom of the deepening night take up my heart and play with it as you list.

Bind me close to you with nothing.

I will spread myself out at your feet and lie still. Under this clouded sky I will meet silence with silence. I will become one with the night clasping the earth in my breast.

Make my life glad with nothing.

The rains sweep the sky from end to end. Jasmines in the wet untamable wind revel in their own perfume. The cloud-hidden stars thrill in secret. Let me fill to the full my heart with nothing but my own depth of joy.

Rabindranath Tagore

# Krishnakali

In the village they call her the dark girl  
but to me she is the flower Krishnakali  
On a cloudy day in a field  
I saw the dark girl's dark gazelle-eyes.  
She had no covering on her head,  
her loose hair had fallen on her back.

Dark? However dark she be,  
I have seen her dark gazelleeyes.

Two black cows were lowing,  
as it grew dark under the heavy clouds.  
So with anxious, hurried steps,  
the dark girl came from her hut.  
Raising her eyebrows toward the sky,  
she listened a moment to the clouds' rumble.

Dark? However dark she be,  
I have seen her dark gazelle-eyes.

A gust of the east wind  
rippled the rice plants.  
I was standing by a ridge,  
alone in the field.  
Whether or not she looked at me  
Is known only to us two.

Dark? However dark she be,  
I have seen her dark gazelle-eyes.

This how the Kohldark cloud  
rises in the northeast in Jaistha;  
the soft dark shadow  
descends on the Tamal grove in Asharh;  
and sudden delight floods the heart  
in the night of Sravan.

Dark? However dark she be,  
I have seen her dark gazelle-eyes.



To me she is the flower Krishnakali,  
whatever she may be called by others.  
In a field in Maynapara village  
I saw the dark girl's dark gazelle-eyes.  
She did not cover her head,  
not having the time to feel embarrassed.

Dark? However dark she be,  
I have seen her dark gazelle-eyes.

Rabindranath Tagore

# Lamp Of Love

Light, oh where is the light?  
Kindle it with the burning fire of desire!

There is the lamp but never a flicker of a flame--is such thy fate, my heart?  
Ah, death were better by far for thee!

Misery knocks at thy door,  
and her message is that thy lord is wakeful,  
and he calls thee to the love-tryst through the darkness of night.

The sky is overcast with clouds and the rain is ceaseless.  
I know not what this is that stirs in me--I know not its meaning.

A moment's flash of lightning drags down a deeper gloom on my sight,  
and my heart gropes for the path to where the music of the night calls me.

Light, oh where is the light!  
Kindle it with the burning fire of desire!  
It thunders and the wind rushes screaming through the void.  
The night is black as a black stone.  
Let not the hours pass by in the dark.  
Kindle the lamp of love with thy life.

Rabindranath Tagore

# Last Curtain

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Leave This

Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads!  
Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all  
shut?

Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee!

He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground  
and where the pathmaker is breaking stones.

He is with them in sun and in shower,  
and his garment is covered with dust.

Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil!

Deliverance?

Where is this deliverance to be found?

Our master himself has joyfully taken upon him the bonds of creation;  
he is bound with us all for ever.

Come out of thy meditations and leave aside thy flowers and incense!

What harm is there if thy clothes become tattered and stained?

Meet him and stand by him in toil and in sweat of thy brow.

Rabindranath Tagore

# Let Me Not Forget

If it is not my portion to meet thee in this life  
then let me ever feel that I have missed thy sight  
---let me not forget for a moment,  
let me carry the pangs of this sorrow in my dreams  
and in my wakeful hours.

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Light

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

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

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

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

Mirth spreads from leaf to leaf, my darling,  
and gladness without measure.  
The heaven's river has drowned its banks  
and the flood of joy is abroad.

Rabindranath Tagore

## Little Flute

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Little Of Me

Let only that little be left of me  
whereby I may name thee my all.

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

Let only that little be left of me  
whereby I may never hide thee.  
Let only that little of my fetters be left  
whereby I am bound with thy will,  
and thy purpose is carried out in my life---and that is the fether of thy love.

Rabindranath Tagore



# Lord Of My Life

Thou who art the innermost Spirit of my being,  
art thou pleased, Lord of my Life?  
For I give to thee my cup filled with all  
the pain and delight that the crushed  
grapes of my heart had surrendered,  
I wove with rhythm of colors and song cover for thy bed,  
And with the molten gold of my desires  
I fashioned playthings for thy passing hours.  
I know not why thou chosest me for thy partner,  
Lord of my life.

Didst thou store my days and nights,  
my deeds and dreams for the alchemy of thy art,  
and string in the chain of thy music my songs of autumn and spring,  
and gather the flowers from my mature moments for thy crown?

I see thine eyes gazing at the dark of my heart,  
Lord of my life,  
I wonder if my failure and wrongs are forgiven.  
For many were my days without service  
and nights of forgetfulness; futile were the flowers  
that faded in the shade not offered to thee.

Often the tied strings of my lute slackened  
at the strains of thy tunes.  
And often at the ruin of wasted hours  
my desolate evenings were filled with tears.

But have my days come to their end at last,  
Lord of my life, while my arms round thee  
grow limp, my kisses losing their truth?  
Then break up the meeting of this languid day!  
Renew the old in me in fresh forms of delight;  
and let the wedding come once again in  
a new ceremony of life.

Rabindranath Tagore

# Lost Star

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

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Lost Time

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Lotus

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

## Lover's Gifts II: Come To My Garden Walk

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 elude.

For lover'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 flame that will flicker.

Rabindranath Tagore

## Lover's Gifts Iv: She Is Near To My Heart

She is near to my heart as the meadow-flower to the earth; she is sweet to me as sleep is to tired limbs. My love for her is my life flowing in its fullness, like a river in autumn flood, running with serene abandonment. My songs are one with my love, like the murmur of a stream, that sings with all its waves and current.

Rabindranath Tagore

## Lover's Gifts Lii: Tired Of Waiting

Tired of waiting, you burst your bonds, impatient flowers, before the winter had gone. Glimpses of the unseen comer reached your wayside watch, and you rushed out running and panting, impulsive jasmines, troops of riotous roses.

You were the first to march to the breach of death, your clamour of colour and perfume troubled the air. You laughed and pressed and pushed each other, bared your breast and dropped in heaps.

The Summer will come in its time, sailing in the flood-tide of the south wind. But you never counted slow moments to be sure of him. You recklessly spent your all in the road, in the terrible joy of faith.

You heard his footsteps from afar, and flung your mantle of death for him to tread upon. Your bonds break even before the rescuer is seen, you make him your own ere he can come and claim you.

Rabindranath Tagore

## Lover's Gifts Liv: In The Beginning Of Time

In the beginning of time, there rose from the churning of God's dream two women. One is the dancer at the court of paradise, the desired of men, she who laughs and plucks the minds of the wise from their cold meditations and of fools from their emptiness; and scatters them like seeds with careless hands in the extravagant winds of March, in the flowering frenzy of May.

The other is the crowned queen of heaven, the mother, throned on the fullness of golden autumn; she who in the harvest-time brings straying hearts to the smile sweet as tears, the beauty deep as the sea of silence, -brings them to the temple of the Unknown, at the holy confluence of Life and Death.

Rabindranath Tagore



## Lover's Gifts Lvi: The Evening Was Lonely

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?

Rabindranath Tagore

## Lover's Gifts Lviii: Things Throng And Laugh

Things throng and laugh loud in the sky; the sands and dust dance and whirl like children. Man's mind is aroused by their shouts; his thoughts long to be the playmates of things.

Our dreams, drifting in the stream of the vague, stretch their arms to clutch the earth, -their efforts stiffen into bricks and stones, and thus the city of man is built.

Voices come swarming from the past,-seeking answers from the living moments. Beats of their wings fill the air with tremulous shadows, and sleepless thoughts in our minds leave their nests to take flight across the desert of dimness, in the passionate thirst for forms. They are lampless pilgrims, seeking the shore of light, to find themselves in things. They will be lured into poets's rhymes, they will be housed in the towers of the town not yet planned, they have their call to arms from the battle fields of the future, they are bidden to join hands in the strife of peace yet to come.

Rabindranath Tagore

## Lover's Gifts Lxx: Take Back Your Coins

Take back your coins, King's Councillor. I am of those women you sent to the forest shrine to decoy the young ascetic who had never seen a women. I failed in your bidding.

Dimly day was breaking when the hermit boy came to bathe in the stream, his tawny locks crowded on his shoulders, like a cluster of morning clouds, and his limbs shining like a streak of sunbeam. We laughed and sang as we rowed in our boat; we jumped into the river in a mad frolic, and danced around him, when the sun rose staring at us from the water's edge in a flush of divine anger.

Like a child-god, the boy opened his eyes and watched our movements, the wonder deepening till his eyes shone like morning stars. He lifted his clasped hands and chanted a hymn of praise in his bird-like young voice, thrilling every leaf of the forest. Never such words were sung to a mortal woman before; they were like the silent hymn to the dawn which rises from the hushed hills. The women hid their mouths with their hands, their bodies swaying with laughter, and a spasm of doubt ran across his face. Quickly came I to his side, sorely pained, and, bowing to his feet, I said, "Lord, accept my service."

I led him to the grassy bank, wiped his body with the end of my silken mantle, and, kneeling on the ground, I dried his feet with my trailing hair. When I raised my face and looked into his eyes, I thought I felt the world's first kiss to the first woman, -Blessed am I, blessed is God, who made me a woman. I heard him say to me, "What God unknown are you? YOur touch is the touch of the Immortal, your eyes have the mystery of the midnight."

Ah, no, not that smile, King's Councillor, -the dust of worldly wisdom has covered your sight, old man. But this boy's innocence pierced the mist and saw the shining truth, the woman divine....

The women clapped their hands, and laughed their obscene laugh, and with veils dragged on the dust and hair hanging loose they began to pelt him with flowers.

Alas, my spotless sun, could not my shame weave fiery mist to cover you in its folds? I fell at his feet and cried, "Forgive me. " I fled like a stricken deer through shade and sun, and cried as I fled, " Forgive me. " The women's foul laughter pressed me like a cracking fire, but the words ever rang in my ears, " What God

unknown are you?"

Rabindranath Tagore

## Lover's Gifts V: I Would Ask For Still More

I would ask for still more, if I had the sky with all its stars,  
and the world with its endless riches; but I would be content with  
the smallest corner of this earth if only she were mine.

Rabindranath Tagore

## Lover's Gifts Viii: There Is Room For You

There is room for you. You are alone with your few sheaves of rice. My boat is crowded, it is heavily laden, but how can I turn you away? Your young body is slim and swaying; there is a twinkling smile in the edge of your eyes, and your robe is coloured like the rain cloud.

The travellers will land for different roads and homes. You will sit for a while on the prow of my boat, and at the journey's end none will keep you back.

Where do you go, and to what home, to garner your sheaves? I will not question you, but when I fold my sails and moor my boat I shall sit and wonder in the evening, -Where do you go, and to what home, to garner your sheaves?

Rabindranath Tagore

## Lover's Gifts Xiii: Last Night In The Garden

Last night in the garden I offered you my youth's foaming wine. You lifted the cup to your lips, you shut your eyes and smiled while I raised your veil, unbound your tresses, drawing down upon my breast your face sweet with its silence, last night when the moon's dream overflowed the world of slumber.

To-day in the dew-cooled calm of the dawn you are walking to God's temple, bathed and robed in white, with a basketful of flowers in your hand. I stand aside in the shade under the tree, with my head bent, in the calm of the dawn by the lonely road to the temple.

Rabindranath Tagore

## Lover's Gifts Xix: It Is Written In The Book

It is written in the book that Man, when fifty, must leave the noisy world, to go to the forest seclusion. But the poet proclaims that the forest hermitage is only for the young. For it is the birthplace of flowers and the haunt of birds and bees; and hidden hooks are waiting there for the thrill of lovers' whispers. There the moon-light, that is all one kiss for the malati flowers, has its deep message, but those who understand it are far below fifty.

And alas, youth is inexperienced and wilful, therefore it is but meet that the old should take charge of the household, and the young take to the seclusion of forest shades and the severe discipline of courting.

Rabindranath Tagore



## Lover's Gifts XI: A Message Came

A message came from my youth of vanished days, saying, " I wait for you among the quivering of unborn May, where smiles ripen for tears and hours ache with songs unsung."

It says, "Come to me across the worn-out track of age, through the gates of death. For dreams fade, hopes fail, the fathered fruits of the year decay, but I am the eternal truth, and you shall meet me again and again in your voyage of life from shore to shore."

Rabindranath Tagore

## Lover's Gifts Xlii: Are You A Mere Picture

Are you a mere picture, and not as true as those stars, true as this dust? They throb with the pulse of things, but you are immensely aloof in your stillness, painted form.

The day was when you walked with me, your breath warm, your limbs singing of life. My world found its speech in your voice, and touched my heart with your face. You suddenly stopped in your walk, in the shadow-side of the Forever, and I went on alone.

Life, like a child, laughs, shaking its rattle of death as it runs; it beckons me on, I follow the unseen; but you stand there, where you stopped behind that dust and those stars; and you are a mere picture.

No, it cannot be. Had the life-flood utterly stopped in you, it would stop the river in its flow, and the foot-fall of dawn in her cadence of colours. Had the glimmering dusk of your hair vanished in the hopeless dark, the woodland shade of summer would die with its dreams.

Can it be true that I forgot you? We haste on without heed, forgetting the flowers on the roadside hedge. Yet they breathe unaware into our forgetfulness, filling it with music. You have moved from my world, to take seat at the root of my life, and therefore is this forgetting-remembrance lost in its own depth.

You are no longer before my songs, but one with them. You came to me with the first ray of dawn. I lost you with the last gold of evening. Ever since I am always finding you through the dark. No, you are no mere picture.

Rabindranath Tagore

## Lover's Gifts Xliii: Dying, You Have Left Behind

Dying, you have left behind you the great sadness of the Eternal in my life. You have painted my thought's horizon with the sunset colours of your departure, leaving a track of tears across the earth to love's heaven. Clasped in your dear arms, life and death united in me in a marriage bond.

I think I can see you watching there in the balcony with your lamp lighted, where the end and the beginning of all things meet. My world went hence through the doors that you opened-you holding the cup of death to my lips, filling it with life from your own.

Rabindranath Tagore

## Lover's Gifts Xliv: Where Is Heaven

Where is heaven? you ask me, my child,-the sages tell us it is beyond the limits of birth and death, unswayed by the rhythm of day and night; it is not of the earth.

But your poet knows that its eternal hunger is for time and space, and it strives evermore to be born in the fruitful dust. Heaven is fulfilled in your sweet body, my child, in your palpitating heart.

The sea is beating its drums in joy, the flowers are a-tiptoe to kiss you. For heaven is born in you, in the arms of the mother-dust.

Rabindranath Tagore

## Lover's Gifts Xlvii: The Road Is

The road is my wedded companion. She speaks to me under my feet all day, she sings to my dreams all night.

My meeting with her had no beginning, it begins endlessly at each daybreak, renewing its summer in fresh flowers and songs, and her every new kiss is the first kiss to me.

The road and I are lovers. I change my dress for her night after night, leaving the tattered cumber of the old in the wayside inns when the day dawns.

Rabindranath Tagore

## Lover's Gifts Xlviii: I Travelled The Old Road

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

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

## Lover's Gifts Xvi: She Dwelt Here By The Pool

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

## Lover's Gifts XVIII: Your Days

Your days will be full of cares, if you must give me your heart.  
My house by the cross-roads has its doors open and my mind is  
absent, -for I sing.

I shall never be made to answer for it, if you must give me  
your heart. If I pledge my word to you in tunes now, and am too  
much in earnest to keep it when music is silent, you must forgive  
me; for the law laid down in May is best broken in December.

Do not always keep remembering it, if you must give me your  
heart. When your eyes sing with love, and your voice ripples with  
laughter, my answers to your questions will be wild, and not  
miserly accurate in facts, -they are to be believed for ever and  
then forgotten for good.

Rabindranath Tagore



## Lover's Gifts Xxii: I Shall Gladly Suffer

I shall gladly suffer the pride of culture to die out in my house,  
if only in some happy future I am born a herd-boy in the Brinda  
forest.

The herd-boy who grazes his cattle sitting under the banyan  
tree, and idly weaves gunja flowers into garlands, who loves to  
splash and plunge in the Jamuna's cool deep stream.

He calls his companions to wake up when morning dawns, and all  
the houses in the lane hum with the sound of the churn, clouds of  
dust are raised by the cattle, the maidens come out in the  
courtyard to milk the king.

As the shadows deepen under the tomal trees, and the dusk  
gathers on the river-banks; when the milkmaids, while crossing the  
turbulent water, tremble with fear; and loud peacocks, with tails  
outspread, dance in the forest, he watches the summer clouds.

When the April night is sweet as a fresh-blown flower, he  
disappears in the forest with a peacock's plume in his hair; the  
swing ropes are twined with flowers on the branches; the south wind  
throbs with music, and the merry shepherd boys crowd on the banks  
of the blue river.

No, I will never be the leader, brothers, of this new age of  
new Bengal; I shall not trouble to light the lamp of culture for  
the benighted. If only I could be born, under the shady asoka  
groves, in some village of Brinda, where milk is churned by the  
maidens!

Rabindranath Tagore

## Lover's Gifts Xxviii: I Dreamt

I dreamt that she sat by my head, tenderly ruffling my hair with her fingers, playing the melody of her touch. I looked at her face and struggled with my tears, till the agony of unspoken words burst my sleep like a bubble.

I sat up and saw the glow of the Milky Way above my window, like a world of silence on fire, and I wondered if at this moment she had a dream that rhymed with mine.

Rabindranath Tagore

## Lover's Gifts Xxxix: There Is A Looker-On

There is a looker-on who sits behind my eyes. I 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.

Rabindranath Tagore

## Maran-Milan (Death-Wedding)

Why do you speak so softly, Death, Death,  
Creep upon me, watch me so stealthily?  
This is not how a lover should behave.  
When evening flowers droop upon their tired  
Stems, when cattle are brought in from the fields  
After a whole day's grazing, you, Death,  
Death, approach me with such gentle steps,  
Settle yourself immovably by my side.  
I cannot understand the things you say.

Alas, will this be how you will take me, Death,  
Death? Like a thief, laying heavy sleep  
On my eyes as you descend to my heart?  
Will you thus let your tread be a slow beat  
In my sleep-numbed blood, your jingling ankle-bells  
A drowsy rumble in my ear? Will you, Death,  
Death, wrap me, finally, in your cold  
Arms and carry me away while I dream?  
I do not know why you thus come and go.

Tell me, is this the way you wed, Death,  
Death? Unceremonially, with no  
Weight of sacrament or blessing or prayer?  
Will you come with your massy tawny hair  
Unkempt, unbound into a bright coil-crown?  
Will no one bear your victory-flag before  
Or after, will no torches glow like red  
Eyes along the river, Death, Death?  
Will earth not quake in terror at your step?

When fierce-eyed Siva came to take his bride,  
Remember all the pomp and trappings, Death,  
Death: the flapping tiger-skins he wore;  
His roaring bull; the serpents hissing round  
His hair; the bom-bom sound as he slapped his cheeks;  
The necklace of skulls swinging round his neck;  
The sudden raucous music as he blew  
His horn to announce his coming - was this not  
A better way of wedding, Death, Death?

And as that deathly wedding-party's din  
Grew nearer, Death, Death, tears of joy  
Filled Gauri's eyes and the garments at her breast  
Quivered; her left eye fluttered and her heart  
Pounded; her body quailed with thrilled delight  
And her mind ran away with itself, Death, Death;  
Her mother wailed and smote her head at the thought  
Of receiving so wild a groom; and in his mind  
Her father agreed calamity had struck.

Why must you always come like a thief, Death,  
Death, always silently, at night's end,  
Leaving only tears? Come to me festively,  
Make the whole night ring with your triumph, blow  
Your victory-conch, dress me in blood-red robes,  
Grasp me by the hand and sweep me away!  
Pay no heed to what others may think, Death,  
Death, for I shall of my own free will  
Resort to you if you but take me gloriously.

If I am immersed in work in my room  
When you arrive, Death, Death, then break  
My work, thrust my unreadiness aside.  
If I am sleeping, sinking all desires  
In the dreamy pleasure of my bed, or I lie  
With apathy gripping my heart and my eyes  
Flickering between sleep and waking, fill  
Your conch with your destructive breath and blow,  
Death, Death, and I shall run to you.

I shall go to where your boat is moored,  
Death, Death, to the sea where the wind rolls  
Darkness towards me from infinity.  
I may see black clouds massing in the far  
North-east corner of the sky; fiery snakes  
Of lightning may rear up with their hoods raised,  
But I shall not flinch in unfounded fear -  
I shall pass silently, unswervingly  
Across that red storm-sea, Death, Death.



# Maya

That I should make much of myself and turn it on all sides,  
thus casting colored shadows on thy radiance  
---such is thy Maya.

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Moment's Indulgence

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore



# My Dependence

I like to be dependent, and so for ever  
with warmth and care of my mother  
my father , to love, kiss and embrace  
wear life happily in all their grace.

I like to be dependent, and so for ever  
on my kith and kin, for they all shower  
harsh and warm advices, complaints  
full wondering ,true and info giants.

I like to be dependent, and so for ever  
for my friends, chat and want me near  
with domestic,family and romantic tips  
colleagues as well , guide me work at risks.

I like to be dependent, and so for ever  
for my neighbours too, envy at times  
when at my rise of fortune like to hear  
my daily steps , easy and odd things too.

Rabindranath Tagore

# My Friend

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# My Polar Star

I have made You the polar star of my  
existence; never again can I lose my way in the  
voyage of life.

Wherever I go, You are always there to  
shower your beneficence all around me. Your face  
is ever present before my mind's eyes.

If I lose sight of You even for a moment, I  
almost lose my mind.

Whenever my heart is about to go astray, just  
a glance of You makes it feel ashamed of itself.

Rabindranath Tagore

# My Song

This song of mine will wind its music around you, my child, like the fond arms of love.

This song of mine will touch your forehead like a kiss of blessing.

When you are alone it will sit by your side and whisper in your ear, when you are in the crowd it will fence you about with aloofness.

My song will be like a pair of wings to your dreams, it will transport your heart to the verge of the unknown.

It will be like the faithful star overhead when dark night is over your road.

My song will sit in the pupils of your eyes, and will carry your sight into the heart of things.

And when my voice is silent in death, my song will speak in your living heart.

Rabindranath Tagore

# O Fool

O Fool, try to carry thyself upon thy own shoulders!  
O beggar, to come beg at thy own door!

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Ocean Of Forms

I dive down into the depth of the ocean of forms,  
hoping to gain the perfect pearl of the formless.

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

And now I am eager to die into the deathless.

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Old And New

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# On The Nature Of Love

The night is black and the forest has no end;  
a million people thread it in a million ways.  
We have trysts to keep in the darkness, but where  
or with whom - of that we are unaware.  
But we have this faith - that a lifetime's bliss  
will appear any minute, with a smile upon its lips.  
Scents, touches, sounds, snatches of songs  
brush us, pass us, give us delightful shocks.  
Then peradventure there's a flash of lightning:  
whomever I see that instant I fall in love with.  
I call that person and cry: `This life is blest!  
for your sake such miles have I traversed!'  
All those others who came close and moved off  
in the darkness - I don't know if they exist or not.

Rabindranath Tagore



# On The Seashore

On the seashore of endless worlds children meet.

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

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# One Day In Spring....

One day in spring, a woman came  
In my lonely woods,  
In the lovely form of the Beloved.  
Came, to give to my songs, melodies,  
To give to my dreams, sweetness.  
Suddenly a wild wave  
Broke over my heart's shores  
And drowned all language.  
To my lips no name came,  
She stood beneath the tree, turned,  
Glanced at my face, made sad with pain,  
And with quick steps, came and sat by me.  
Taking my hands in hers, she said:  
'You do not know me, nor I you-  
I wonder how this could be?'  
I said:  
'We two shall build, a bridge for ever  
Between two beings, each to the other unknown,  
This eager wonder is at the heart of things.'

The cry that is in my heart is also the cry of her heart;  
The thread with which she binds me binds her too.  
Her have I sought everywhere,  
Her have I worshipped within me,  
Hidden in that worship she has sought me too.  
Crossing the wide oceans, she came to steal my heart.  
She forgot to return, having lost her own.  
Her own charms play traitor to her,  
She spreads her net, knowing not  
Whether she will catch or be caught.

Rabindranath Tagore

# Only Thee

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Palm Tree

Palm-tree: single-legged giant,  
topping other trees,  
peering at the firmament -  
It longs to pierce the black cloud-ceiling  
and fly away, away,  
if only it had wings.

The tree seems to express its wish  
in the tossing of its head:  
its fronds heave and swish -  
It thinks, Maybe my leaves are feathers,  
and nothing stops me now  
from rising on their flutter.

All day the fronds the windblown tree  
soar and flap and shudder  
as though it thinks it can fly,  
As though it wanders in the skies,  
travelling who knows where,  
wheeling past the stars -

And then as soon as the wind dies down,  
the fronds subside, subside:  
the mind of the tree returns.  
To earth, recalls that earth is its mother:  
and then it likes once more  
its earthly corner.

Rabindranath Tagore

# Paper Boats

Day by day I float my paper boats one by one down the running stream.

In bid black letters I write my name on them and the name of the village where I live.

I hope that someone in some strange land will find them and know who I am.

I load my little boats with shiuli flower from our garden, and hope that these blooms of the dawn will be carried safely to land in the night.

I launch my paper boats and look up into the sky and see the little clouds setting thee white bulging sails.

I know not what playmate of mine in the sky sends them down the air to race with my boats!

When night comes I bury my face in my arms and dream that my paper boats float on and on under the midnight stars.

The fairies of sleep are sailing in them, and the lading ins their baskets full of dreams.

Rabindranath Tagore

## Parting Words

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Passing Breeze

Yes, I know, this is nothing but thy love,  
O beloved of my heart---this golden light that dances upon the leaves,  
these idle clouds sailing across the sky,  
this passing breeze leaving its coolness upon my forehead.

The morning light has flooded my eyes---this is thy message to my heart.  
Thy face is bent from above, thy eyes look down on my eyes,  
and my heart has touched thy feet.

Rabindranath Tagore

# Patience

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore



# Playthings

Child, how happy you are sitting in the dust, playing with a broken twig all the morning.

I smile at your play with that little bit of a broken twig.

I am busy with my accounts, adding up figures by the hour.

Perhaps you glance at me and think, "What a stupid game to spoil your morning with!"

Child, I have forgotten the art of being absorbed in sticks and mud-pies.

I seek out costly playthings, and gather lumps of gold and silver.

With whatever you find you create your glad games, I spend both my time and my strength over things I never can obtain.

In my frail canoe I struggle to cross the sea of desire, and forget that I too am playing a game.

Rabindranath Tagore

# Poems On Beauty

Beauty is truth's smile  
when she beholds her own face in a perfect mirror.

Beauty is in the ideal of perfect harmony  
which is in the universal being;  
truth the perfect comprehension of the universal mind.

Rabindranath Tagore

## Poems On Life

Life is given to us,  
we earn it by giving it.

Let the dead have the immortality of fame,  
but the living the immortality of love.

Life's errors cry for the merciful beauty  
that can modulate their isolation into a  
harmony with the whole.

Life, like a child, laughs,  
shaking its rattle of death as it runs.

Rabindranath Tagore

# Poems On Love

Love adorns itself;  
it seeks to prove inward joy by outward beauty.

Love does not claim possession,  
but gives freedom.

Love is an endless mystery,  
for it has nothing else to explain it.

Love's gift cannot be given,  
it waits to be accepted.

Rabindranath Tagore

# Poems On Man

Man goes into the noisy crowd  
to drown his own clamour of silence.

Man is immortal; therefore he must die endlessly.  
For life is a creative idea;  
it can only find itself in changing forms.

Man's abiding happiness is not in getting anything  
but in giving himself up to what is greater than himself,  
to ideas which are larger than his individual life,  
the idea of his country,  
of humanity,  
of God.

Rabindranath Tagore

## Poems On Time

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

Time is a wealth of change,  
but the clock in its parody makes it mere change and no wealth.

Let your life lightly dance on the edges of Time  
like dew on the tip of a leaf.

Rabindranath Tagore

# Prisoner

` Prisoner, tell me, who was it that bound you?'

` It was my master,' said the prisoner.

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

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

` It was I,' said the prisoner, ` who forged this chain very carefully.

I thought my invincible power would hold the world captive  
leaving me in a freedom undisturbed.

Thus night and day I worked at the chain  
with huge fires and cruel hard strokes.

When at last the work was done  
and the links were complete and unbreakable,  
I found that it held me in its grip.'

Rabindranath Tagore

# Purity

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore



# Roaming Cloud

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Sail Away

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

In that shoreless ocean,  
at thy silently listening smile my songs would swell in melodies,  
free as waves, free from all bondage of words.

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Salutation

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Seashore

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

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Senses

Deliverance is not for me in renunciation.

I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight.

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

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

No, I will never shut the doors of my senses.

The delights of sight and hearing and touch will bear thy delight.

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# She

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

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

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Signet Of Eternity

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Silent Steps

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

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

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore



## Sit Smiling

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Sleep

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Sleep-Stealer

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

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

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

The shepherd boy lay asleep under the shadow of the banyan tree.

The crane stood grave and still in the swamp near the mango grove.

In the meanwhile the Sleep-stealer came and, snatching sleep from baby's eyes, flew away.

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

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

I must look into that dark cave, where, through boulders and scowling stones, trickles a tiny stream.

I must search in the drowsy shade of the bakula grove, where pigeons coo in their corner, and fairies' anklets tinkle in the stillness of starry nights.

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

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

Shouldn't I give her a good lesson if I could only catch her!

I would raid her nest and see where she hoards all her stolen sleep.

I would plunder it all, and carry it home.

I would bind her two wings securely, set her on the bank of the river, and then let her play at fishing with a reed among the rushes and water-lilies.

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

"Whose sleep will you steal now?"

Rabindranath Tagore

# Song Unsung

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

I have spent my days in stringing and in unstringing my instrument.

The time has not come true, the words have not been rightly set;  
only there is the agony of wishing in my heart.

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Still Heart

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Stray Birds 1 - 10

1

STRAY birds of summer come to my window  
to sing and fly away.  
And yellow leaves of autumn,  
which have no songs,  
flutter and fall there with a sigh.

2

O TROUPE of little vagrants of the world,  
leave your footprints in my words.

3

THE world puts off its mask of vastness to its lover.  
It becomes small as one song,  
as one kiss of the eternal.

4

IT is the tears of the earth  
that keep her smiles in bloom.

5

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

6

IF you shed tears when you miss the sun,  
you also miss the stars.

7

THE sands in your way beg for your song  
and your movement,  
dancing water.  
Will you carry the burden of their lameness?

8

HER wistful face haunts my dreams  
like the rain at night.

9

ONCE we dreamt that we were strangers.  
We wake up to find that we were dear to each other.

10

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

Rabindranath Tagore

## Stray Birds 11- 20

11

SOME unseen fingers, like idle breeze,  
are playing upon my heart the music of the ripples.

12

'WHAT language is thine, O sea?'  
'The language of eternal question.'  
'What language is thy answer, O sky?'  
'The language of eternal silence.'

13

LISTEN,  
my heart,  
to the whispers of the world  
with which it makes love to you.

14

THE mystery of creation  
is like the darkness of night--  
it is great.

Delusions of knowledge are like  
the fog of the morning.

15

DO not seat your love upon a precipice because it is high.

16

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

17

THESE little thoughts are the rustle of leaves;



they have their whisper of  
joy in my mind.

18

WHAT you are you do not see,  
what you see is your shadow.

19

MY wishes are fools, they shout across thy songs, my Master.  
Let me but listen.

20

I CANNOT choose the best.  
The best chooses me.

Rabindranath Tagore

## Stray Birds 21- 30

21

THEY throw their shadows before them  
who carry their lantern on their back.

22

THAT I exist  
is a perpetual surprise  
which is life.

23

'WE, the rustling leaves,  
have a voice that answers the storms,  
but who are you so silent?'  
'I am a mere flower.'

24

REST belongs to the work  
as the eyelids to the eyes.

25

MAN is a born child,  
his power is the power of growth.

26

GOD expects answers for the flowers he sends us,  
not for the sun  
and the earth.

27

THE light that plays, like a naked child,  
among the green leaves happily knows not  
that man can lie.

28

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

29

MY heart beats her waves at the shore of the world  
and writes upon it her signature in tears with the words,  
'I love thee.'

30

'MOON,  
for what do you wait?'  
'To salute the sun for whom I must make way.'

Rabindranath Tagore

## Stray Birds 31 - 40

31

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

32

HIS own mornings are new surprises to God.

33

LIFE finds its wealth by the claims of the world,  
and its worth by the claims of love.

34

THE dry river-bed finds no thanks for its past.

35

THE bird wishes it were a cloud.  
The cloud wishes it were a bird.

36

THE waterfall sings,  
'I find my song,  
when I find my freedom.'

37

I CANNOT tell why this heart languishes in silence.  
It is for small needs it never asks,  
or knows or remembers.

38

WOMAN,  
when you move about in your household service

your limbs sing like a hill stream among its pebbles.

39

THE sun goes to cross the Western sea,  
leaving its last salutation to the East.

40

DO not blame your food because you have no appetite.

Rabindranath Tagore

## Stray Birds 41 - 50

41

THE trees,  
like the longings of the earth,  
stand a-tiptoe to peep at the heaven.

42

YOU smiled and talked to me of nothing  
and I felt that for this I had been waiting long.

43

THE fish in the water is silent,  
the animal on the earth is noisy,  
the bird in the air is singing,  
But Man has in him  
the silence of the sea,  
the noise of the earth  
and the music of the air.

44

THE world rushes on  
over the strings of the lingering heart  
making the music of sadness.

45

HE has made his weapons his gods.  
When his weapons win he is defeated himself.

46

GOD finds himself by creating.

47

SHADOW,

with her veil drawn,  
follows Light in secret meekness,  
with her silent steps of  
love.

48

THE stars

are not afraid to appear like fireflies.

49

I THANK thee that I am none of the wheels of power  
but I am one with the living creatures  
that are crushed by it.

50

THE mind,  
sharp but not broad,  
sticks at every point  
but does not move.

Rabindranath Tagore

## Stray Birds 51 - 60

51

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

52

MAN does not reveal himself in his history,  
he struggles up through it.

53

WHILE the glass lamp rebukes the earthen for calling it cousin,  
the moon rises, and the glass lamp,  
with a bland smile, calls her,  
'My dear, dear sister.'

54

LIKE the meeting of the seagulls  
and the waves we meet and come near.  
The seagulls fly off,  
the waves roll away and we depart.

55

MY day is done,  
and I am like a boat drawn on the beach,  
listening to the dance-music of t  
he tide in the evening.

56

LIFE is given to us,  
we earn it by giving it.

57



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

58

THE sparrow is sorry for the peacock  
at the burden of its tail.

59

NEVER be afraid of the moments--  
thus sings the voice of the everlasting.

60

THE hurricane seeks the shortest road  
by the no-road,  
and suddenly ends its search in the Nowhere.

Rabindranath Tagore

## Stray Birds 61 - 70

61

TAKE my wine in my own cup, friend.  
It loses its wreath of foam  
when poured into that of others.

62

THE Perfect decks itself in beauty  
for the love of the Imperfect.

63

GOD says to man,  
'I heal you therefore I hurt,  
love you therefore punish.'

64

THANK the flame for its light,  
but do not forget the lampholder  
standing in the shade with constancy of patience.

65

TINY grass,  
your steps are small,  
but you possess the earth under your tread.

66

THE infant flower opens its bud and cries,  
'Dear World, please do not fade.'

67

GOD grows weary of great kingdoms,  
but never of little flowers.

68

WRONG cannot afford defeat  
but Right can.

69

'I GIVE my whole water in joy,  
' sings the waterfall,  
'though little of it is enough for the thirsty.'

70

WHERE is the fountain  
that throws up these flowers  
in a ceaseless outbreak of ecstasy?

Rabindranath Tagore

## Stray Birds 71 - 80

71

THE woodcutter's axe begged for its handle from the tree.  
The tree gave it.

72

IN my solitude of heart  
I feel the sigh of this widowed evening  
veiled with mist and rain.

73

CHASTITY  
is a wealth that comes from  
abundance of love.

74

THE mist,  
like love,  
plays upon the heart of the hills  
and brings out surprises of beauty.

75

WE read the world wrong  
and say that it deceives us.

76

THE poet wind is out over the sea  
and the forest to seek his own voice.

77

EVERY child  
comes with the message  
that God is not yet discouraged

of man.

78

THE grass seeks her crowd in the earth.  
The tree seeks his solitude of the sky.

79

MAN barricades against himself.

80

YOUR voice, my friend,  
wanders in my heart,  
like the muffled sound of the sea  
among these listening pines.

Rabindranath Tagore

## Stray Birds 81 - 90

81

WHAT is this unseen flame of darkness  
whose sparks are the stars?

82

LET life be beautiful like summer flowers  
and death like autumn leaves.

88

HE who wants to do good knocks at the gate;  
he who loves  
finds the gate open.

84

IN death the many becomes one;  
in life the one becomes many.  
Religion will be one  
when God is dead.

85

THE artist is the lover of Nature,  
therefore he is her slave  
and her master.

86

'HOW far are you from me, O Fruit?'  
'I am hidden in your heart, O Flower.'

87

THIS longing is for the one who is felt in the dark,  
but not seen in the day.

88

'YOU are the big drop of dew under the lotus leaf,  
I am the smaller one on its upper side,  
' said the dewdrop to the lake.

89

THE scabbard is content to be dull  
when it protects the keenness of the sword.

90

IN darkness  
the One appears as uniform;  
in the light  
the One appears as manifold.

Rabindranath Tagore

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Rabindranath Tagore

## Stray Birds 91 - 99

91

THE great earth makes herself hospitable  
with the help of the grass.

92

THE birth and death of the leaves  
are the rapid whirls of the eddy  
whose wider circles  
move slowly among stars.

93

POWER said to the world, 'You are mine.  
The world kept it prisoner on her throne.  
Love said to the world, 'I am thine.'  
The world gave it the freedom of her house.

94

THE mist is like the earth's desire.  
It hides the sun for whom she cries.

95

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

96

THE noise of the moment  
scoffs at the music of the Eternal.

97

I THINK of other ages  
that floated upon the stream of life

and love and death and are forgotten,  
and I feel the freedom of passing away.

98

THE sadness of my soul is her bride's veil.  
It waits to be lifted in the night.

99

DEATH'S stamp gives value to the coin of life;  
making it possible to buy with life what is truly precious.

Rabindranath Tagore

# Stream Of Life

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Strong Mercy

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

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

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

Day by day thou art making me worthy of thy full acceptance by  
refusing me ever and anon, saving me from perils of weak, uncertain desire.

Rabindranath Tagore

# Superior

Mother, your baby is silly! She is so absurdly childish!

She does not know the difference between the lights in the streets and the stars.

When we play at eating with pebbles, she thinks they are real food, and tries to put them into her mouth.

When I open a book before her and ask her to learn her a, b, c, she tears the leaves with her hands and roars for joy at nothing; this is your baby's way of doing her lesson.

When I shake my head at her in anger and scold her and call her naughty, she laughs and thinks it great fun.

Everybody knows that father is away, but if in play I call aloud "Father," she looks about her in excitement and thinks that father is near.

When I hold my class with the donkeys that our washer man brings to carry away the clothes and I warn her that I am the schoolmaster, she will scream for no reason and call me dada.

Your baby wants to catch the moon. She is so funny; she calls Ganesh Ganush.

Mother, your baby is silly! She is so absurdly childish!

Rabindranath Tagore

# Sympathy

If I were only a little puppy, not your baby, mother dear, would you say "No" to me if I tried to eat from your dish?

Would you drive me off, saying to me, "Get away, you naughty little puppy?"

Then go, mother, go! I will never come to you when you call me, and never let you feed me any more.

If I were only a little green parrot, and not your baby, mother dear, would you keep me chained lest I should fly away?

Would you shake your finger at me and say, "What an ungrateful wretch of a bird! It is gnawing at its chain day and night?"

The go, mother, go! I will run away into the woods; I will never let you take me in your arms again.

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Astronomer

I only said, "When in the evening the round full moon gets entangled among the branches of that Dadam tree, couldn't somebody catch it?"

But dada laughed at me and said, "Baby, you are the silliest child I have ever known. The moon is ever so far from us, how could anybody catch it?"

I said, "Dada, how foolish you are! When mother looks out of her window and smiles down at us playing, would you call her far away?"

Still dada said, "You are a stupid child! But, baby where could you find a net big enough to catch the moon with?"

I said, "Surely you could catch it with your hands."

But dada laughed and said, "You are the silliest child I have known. If it came nearer, you would see how big the moon is."

I said, "Dada, what nonsense they teach at your school! When mother bends her face down to kiss us, does her face look very big?"

But still dada says, "You are a stupid child."

Rabindranath Tagore



# The Banyan Tree

O you shaggy-headed banyan tree standing on the bank of the pond,  
have you forgotten the little child, like the birds that have  
nested in your branches and left you?

Do you not remember how he sat at the window and wondered at  
the tangle of your roots and plunged underground?

The women would come to fill their jars in the pond, and your  
huge black shadow would wriggle on the water like sleep struggling  
to wake up.

Sunlight danced on the ripples like restless tiny shuttles  
weaving golden tapestry.

Two ducks swam by the weedy margin above their shadows, and  
the child would sit still and think.

He longed to be the wind and blow through your resting  
branches, to be your shadow and lengthen with the day on the water,  
to be a bird and perch on your topmost twig, and to float like  
those ducks among the weeds and shadows.

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Beginning

"Where have I come from, where did you pick me up?" the baby asked its mother.

She answered, half crying, half laughing, and clasping the baby to her breast-

"You were hidden in my heart as its desire, my darling.

You were in the dolls of my childhood's games; and when with clay I made the image of my god every morning, I made the unmade you then.

You were enshrined with our household deity, in his worship I worshipped you.

In all my hopes and my loves, in my life, in the life of my mother you have lived.

In the lap of the deathless Spirit who rules our home you have been nursed for ages.

When in girlhood my heart was opening its petals, you hovered as a fragrance about it.

Your tender softness bloomed in my youthful limbs, like a glow in the sky before the sunrise.

Heaven's first darling, twain-born with the morning light, you have floated down the stream of the world's life, and at last you have stranded on my heart.

As I gaze on your face, mystery overwhelms me; you who belong to all have become mine.

For fear of losing you I hold you tight to my breast. What magic has snared the world's treasure in these slender arms of mine?"

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Boat

I must launch out my boat.  
The languid hours pass by on the  
shore---Alas for me!

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Chanpa Flower

Supposing I became a chanpa flower, just for fun, and grew on a branch high up that tree, and shook in the wind with laughter and danced upon the newly budded leaves, would you know me, mother?

You would call, "Baby, where are you?" and I should laugh to myself and keep quite quiet.

I should slyly open my petals and watch you at your work.

When after your bath, with wet hair spread on your shoulders, you walked through the shadow of the champ tree to the little court where you say your prayers, you would notice the scent of the flower, but not know that it came from me.

When after the midday meal you sat at the window reading ramayana, and the tree's shadow fell over your hair and your lap, I should fling my wee little shadow on to the page of your book, just where you were reading.

But would you guess that it was the tiny shadow of your little child?

When in the evening you went to the cow shed with the lighted lamp in your hand I should suddenly drop on to the earth again and be your own baby once more, and beg you to tell me a story.

"Where have you been, you naughty child?"

"I won't tell you, mother." That's what you and I would say then.

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Child-Angel

They clamour and fight, they doubt and despair, they know no end to their wrangling.

Let your life come amongst them like a flame of light, my child, unflickering and pure, and delight them into silence. They are cruel in their greed and their envy, their words are like hidden knives thirsting for blood.

Go and stand amidst their scowling hearts, my child, and let your gentle eyes fall upon them like the forgiving peace of the evening over the strife of the day.

Let them see your face, my child, and thus know the meaning of all things; let them love you and thus love each other.

Come and take your seat in the bosom of the limitless, my child. At sunrise open and raise your heart like a blossoming flower, and at sunset bend your head and in silence complete the worship of the day.

Rabindranath Tagore

# The End

It is time for me to go, mother; I am going.

When in the paling darkness of the lonely dawn you stretch out your arms for your baby in the bed, I shall say, "Baby is not here!"-mother, I am going.

I shall become a delicate draught of air and caress you and I shall be ripples in the water when you bathe, and kiss you and kiss you again.

In the gusty night when the rain patters on the leaves you will hear my whisper in your bed, and my laughter will flash with the lightning through the open window into your room.

If you lie awake, thinking of your baby till late into the night, I shall sing to you from the stars, "Sleep, mother, sleep."

One the straying moonbeams I shall steal over your bed, and lie upon your bosom while you sleep.

I shall become a dream, and through the little opening of your eyelids I shall slip into the depths of your sleep; and when you wake up and look round startled, like a twinkling firefly I shall flit out into the darkness.

When, on the great festival of puja, the neighbours' children come and play about the house, I shall melt into the music of the flute and throb in your heart all day.

Dear auntie will come with puja-presents and will ask, "Where is our baby, sister?" Mother, you will tell her softly, "He is in the pupils of my eyes, he is in my body and in my soul."

Rabindranath Tagore

# The First Jasmines

Ah, these jasmines, these white jasmines!

I seem to remember the first day when I filled my hands with these jasmines, these white jasmines.

I have loved the sunlight, the sky and the green earth;

I have heard the liquid murmur of the river thorough the darkness of midnight;

Autumn sunsets have come to me at the bend of a road in the lonely waste, like a bride raising her veil to accept her lover.

Yet my memory is still sweet with the first white jasmines that I held in my hands when I was a child.

Many a glad day has come in my life, and I have laughed with merrymakers on festival nights.

On grey mornings of rain I have crooned many an idle song.

I have worn round my neck the evening wreath of bakulas woven by the hand of love.

Yet my heart is sweet with the memory of the first fresh jasmines that filled my hands when I was a child.

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Flower-School

When storm-clouds rumble in the sky and June showers come down.

The moist east wind comes marching over the heath to blow its bagpipes among the bamboos.

Then crowds of flowers come out of a sudden, from nobody knows where, and dance upon the grass in wild glee.

Mother, I really think the flowers go to school underground.

They do their lessons with doors shut, and if they want to come out to play before it is time, their master makes them stand in a corner.

When the rain come they have their holidays.

Branches clash together in the forest, and the leaves rustle in the wild wind, the thunder-clouds clap their giant hands and the flower children rush out in dresses of pink and yellow and white.

Do you know, mother, their home is in the sky, where the stars are.

Haven't you see how eager they are to get there? Don't you know why they are in such a hurry?

Of course, I can guess to whom they raise their arms; they have their mother as I have my own.

Rabindranath Tagore



# The Further Bank

I long to go over there to the further bank of the river.

Where those boats are tied to the bamboo poles in a line;

Where men cross over in their boats in the morning with  
ploughs on their shoulders to till their far-away fields;

Where the cowherds make their lowing cattle swim across to the  
riverside pasture;

Whence they all come back home in the evening, leaving the  
jackals to howl in the island overgrown with weeds.

Mother, if you don't mind, I should like to become the boatman  
of the ferry when I am grown up.

They say there are strange pools hidden behind that high bank.

Where flocks of wild ducks come when the rains are over, and  
thick reeds grow round the margins where water-birds lay their  
eggs;

Where snipes with their dancing tails stamp their tiny  
footprints upon the clean soft mud;

Where in the evening the tall grasses crested with white  
flowers invite the moonbeam to float upon their waves.

Mother, if you don't mind, I should like to become the boatman  
of the ferryboat when I am grown up.

I shall cross and cross back from bank to bank, and all the  
boys and girls of the village will wonder at me while they are  
bathing.

When the sun climbs the mid sky and morning wears on to noon,  
I shall come running to you, saying, "Mother, I am hungry."

When the day is done and the shadows cower under the trees,  
I shall come back in the dust.

I shall never go away from you into the town to work like  
father.

Mother, if you don't mind, I should like to become the boatman  
of the ferryboat when I am grown up.

Rabindranath Tagore

## The Gardener Iv: Ah Me

Ah me, why did they build my  
house by the road to the market  
town?

They moor their laden boats near  
my trees.

They come and go and wander at  
their will.

I sit and watch them; my time  
wears on.

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

Night and day their steps sound  
by my door.

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

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

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

In the morning the bell rings in the  
temple.

They come with their baskets in  
their hands.

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

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

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

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

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

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

At night the crickets chirp in the  
woods.

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Gardener IX: When I Go Alone At Night

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

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

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Gardener Li: Then Finish The Last Song

Then finish the last song and let us  
leave.

Forget this night when the night is  
no more.

Whom do I try to clasp in my  
arms? Dreams can never be made captive.

My eager hands press emptiness to  
my heart and it bruises my breast.

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Gardener Lix: O Woman

O woman, you are not merely the  
handiwork of God, but also of men;  
these are ever endowing you with  
beauty from their hearts.

Poets are weaving for you a web  
with threads of golden imagery;  
painters are giving your form ever  
new immortality.

The sea gives its pearls, the mines  
their gold, the summer gardens their  
flowers to deck you, to cover you, to  
make you more precious.

The desire of men's hearts has shed  
its glory over your youth.

You are one half woman and one  
half dream.

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Gardener Lv: It Was Mid-Day

It was mid-day when you went  
away .

The sun was strong in the sky.

I had done my work and sat alone  
on my balcony when you went away.

Fitful gusts came winnowing  
through the smells of may distant  
fields.

The doves cooed tireless in the shade,  
and a bee strayed in my room hum-  
ming the news of many distant fields.

The village slept in the noonday  
heat. The road lay deserted.

In sudden fits the rustling of the  
leaves rose and died.

I gazed at the sky and wove in the  
blue the letters of a name I had known,  
while the village slept in the noonday  
heat.

I had forgotten to braid my hair.  
The languid breeze played with it upon  
my cheek.

The river ran unruffled under the  
shady bank.

The lazy white clouds did not move.

I had forgotten to braid my hair.

It was mid-day when you went  
away.

The dust of the road was hot and  
the fields panting.

The doves cooed among the dense  
leaves.

I was alone in my balcony when you  
went away.

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Gardener Lvii: I Plucked Your Flower

I plucked your flower, O world!  
I pressed it to my heart and the  
thorn pricked.  
When the day waned and it  
darkened, I found that the flower had  
faded, but the pain remained.  
More flowers will come to you with  
perfume and pride, O world!  
But my time for flower-gathering  
is over, and through the dark night  
I have not my rose, only the pain  
remains.

Rabindranath Tagore



# The Gardener Lxi: Peace, My Heart

Peace, my heart, let the time for  
the parting be sweet.  
Let it not be a death but completeness.  
Let love melt into memory and pain  
into songs.  
Let the flight through the sky end  
in the folding of the wings over the  
nest.  
Let the last touch of your hands be  
gentle like the flower of the night.  
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.

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Gardener Lxiv: I Spent My Day

I spent my day on the scorching  
hot dust of the road.

Now, in the cool of the evening, I  
knock at the door of the inn. It is  
deserted and in ruins.

A grim ashath tree spreads its  
hungry clutching roots through the  
gaping fissures of the walls.

Days have been when wayfarers  
came here to wash their weary feet.  
They spread their mats in the  
courtyard in the dim light of the  
early moon, and sat and talked of  
strange lands.

They woke refreshed in the morning  
when birds made them glad, and  
friendly flowers nodded their heads  
at them from the wayside.

But no lighted lamp awaited me  
when I came here.

The black smudges of smoke left by  
many a forgotten evening lamp stare,  
like blind eyes, from the wall.

Fireflies flit in the bush near the  
dried-up pond, and bamboo branches  
fling their shadows on the grass-  
grown path.

I am the guest of no one at the end  
of my day.

The long night is before me, and I  
am tired.

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Gardener Lxix: I Hunt For The Golden Stag

I hunt for the golden stag.

You may smile, my friends, but I  
pursue the vision that eludes me.

I run across hills and dales, I wander  
through nameless lands, because I am  
hunting for the golden stag.

You come and buy in the market  
and go back to your homes laden with  
goods, but the spell of the homeless  
winds has touched me I know not when  
and where.

I have no care in my heart; all my  
belongings I have left far behind me.

I run across hills and dales, I wander  
through nameless lands--because I am  
hunting for the golden stag.

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Gardener Lxviii: None Lives For Ever, Brother

None lives for ever, brother, and  
nothing lasts for long. Keep that in  
mind and rejoice.

Our life is not the one old burden,  
our path is not the one long  
journey.

One sole poet has not to sing one  
aged song.

The flower fades and dies; but he  
who wears the flower has not to  
mourn for it for ever.

Brother, keep that in mind and  
rejoice.

There must come a full pause to  
weave perfection into music.

Life droops toward its sunset to be  
drowned in the golden shadows.

Love must be called from its play  
to drink sorrow and be borne to the  
heaven of tears.

Brother, keep that in mind and  
rejoice.

We hasten to gather our flowers lest  
they are plundered by the passing  
winds.

It quickens our blood and brightens  
our eyes to snatch kisses that would  
vanish if we delayed.

Our life is eager, our desires are keen,  
for time tolls the bell of parting.

Brother, keep that in mind and  
rejoice.

There is not time for us to clasp a  
thing and crush it and fling it away to  
the dust.

The hours trip rapidly away, hiding  
their dreams in their skirts.

Our life is short; it yields but a  
few days for love.

Were it for work and drudgery it  
would be endlessly long.

Brother, keep that in mind and  
rejoice.

Beauty is sweet to us, because she  
dances to the same fleeting tune with  
our lives.

Knowledge is precious to us, because  
we shall never have time to  
complete it.

All is done and finished in the eternal  
Heaven.

But earth's flowers of illusion are  
kept eternally fresh by death.

Brother, keep that in mind and  
rejoice.

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Gardener Lxxix: I Often Wonder

I often wonder where lie hidden  
the boundaries of recognition between  
man and the beast whose heart knows  
no spoken language.

Through what primal paradise in a  
remote morning of creation ran the  
simple path by which their hearts  
visited each other.

Those marks of their constant tread  
have not been effaced though their  
kinship has been long forgotten.

Yet suddenly in some wordless  
music the dim memory wakes up  
and the beast gazes into the man's  
face with a tender trust, and the  
man looks down into its eyes with  
amused affection.

It seems that the two friends meet  
masked, and vaguely know each other  
through the disguise.

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Gardener Lxxv: At Midnight

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?"

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Gardener Lxxvi: The Fair Was On

The fair was on before the temple.  
It had rained from the early morning  
and the day came to its end.

Brighter than all the gladness of  
the crowd was the bright smile of  
a girl who bought for a farthing a  
whistle of palm leaf.

The shrill joy of that whistle floated  
above all laughter and noise.

An endless throng of people came  
and jostled together. The road was  
muddy, the river in flood, the field  
under water in ceaseless rain.

Greater than all the troubles of  
the crowd was a little boy's trouble--  
he had not a farthing to buy a painted  
stick.

His wistful eyes gazing at the shop  
made this whole meeting of men so  
pitiful.

Rabindranath Tagore



# The Gardener Lxxxi: Why Do You Whisper So Faintly

Why do you whisper so faintly in  
my ears, O Death, my Death?

When the flowers droop in the  
evening and cattle come back to their  
stalls, you stealthily come to my side  
and speak words that I do not  
understand.

Is this how you must woo and win  
me with the opiate of drowsy murmur  
and cold kisses, O Death, my Death?

Will there be no proud ceremony  
for our wedding?

Will you not tie up with a wreath  
your tawny coiled locks?

Is there none to carry your banner  
before you, and will not the night be  
on fire with your red torch-lights,  
O Death, my Death?

Come with your conch-shells sound-  
ing, come in the sleepless night.

Dress me with a crimson mantle,  
grasp my hand and take me.

Let your chariot be ready at my  
door with your horses neighing impatiently.

Raise my veil and look at my face  
proudly, O Death, my Death!

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Gardener Lxxxiii: She Dwelt On The Hillside

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

One evening the stranger came down  
from the cloud-hidden peak; his locks  
were tangled like drowsy snakes. We  
asked in wonder, "Who are you?"  
He answered not but sat by the  
garrulous stream and silently gazed at  
the hut where she dwelt. Our hearts  
quaked in fear and we came back home  
when it was night.

Next morning when the women  
came to fetch water at the spring by  
the deodar trees, they found the doors  
open in her hut, but her voice was gone  
and where was her smiling face?  
The empty jar lay on the floor and her  
lamp had burnt itself out in the  
corner. No one knew where she had  
fled to before it was morning--and the  
stranger had gone.

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

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.

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Gardener Lxxxiv: Over The Green

Over the green and yellow rice-fields  
sweep the shadows of the autumn  
clouds followed by the swift-chasing  
sun.

The bees forget to sip their honey;  
drunken with light they foolishly hover  
and hum.

The ducks in the islands of the river  
clamour in joy for mere nothing.

Let none go back home, brothers,  
this morning, let none go to work.

Let us take the blue sky by storm  
and plunder space as we run.

Laughter floats in the air like foam  
on the flood.

Brothers, let us squander our  
morning in futile songs.

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Gardener X: Let Your Work Be, Bride

Let your work be, bride. Listen, the guest has come.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Have no words with him if you are shy.

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

Have you not lit the lamp in the cowshed?

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

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

O bride, do you hear, the guest has

come?

Let your work be!

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Gardener Xi: Come As You Are

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

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

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

Come, with quick steps over the  
grass.

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

Come, with quick steps over the  
grass.

Do you see the clouds wrapping the  
sky?

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

The anxious cattle run to their stalls  
in the village.

Do you see the clouds wrapping the  
sky?

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

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

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

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

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

The sky is overcast with clouds--it  
is late.

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

Rabindranath Tagore



## The Gardener Xiii: I Asked Nothing

I asked nothing, only stood at the  
edge of the wood behind the tree.

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

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

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

And I was standing still.

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

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

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

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

I stood with my empty can.

I did not come near you.

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

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Gardener Xiv: I Was Walking By The Road

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

The prone shadows with their out-  
stretched arms clung to the feet of  
the hurrying light.

The koels were weary of their  
songs.

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

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

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

I stood before this hut, I know not  
why.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Shadows are deepening and cattle  
returning to their folds.

The light is grey upon the lonely  
meadows, and the villagers are waiting

for the ferry at the bank.

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Gardener Xix: You Walked

You walked by the riverside path  
with the full pitcher upon your hip.

Why did you swiftly turn your face  
and peep at me through your fluttering  
veil?

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Gardener XI: An Unbelieving Smile

An unbelieving smile flits on your eyes when I come to you to take my leave.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Gardener Xlii: O Mad, Superbly Drunk

O mad, superbly drunk;

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

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

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

Reck not rhyme or reason;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I let go my pride of learning and

judgment of right and of wrong.

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

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

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

I'll take the holy vow to be worthless,  
to be drunken and go to the dogs.

Rabindranath Tagore

## The Gardener Xliii: No, My Friends

No, my friends, I shall never be an ascetic, whatever you may say.

I shall never be an ascetic if she does not take the vow with me.

It is my firm resolve that if I cannot find a shady shelter and a companion for my penance, I shall never turn ascetic.

No, my friends, I shall never leave my hearth and home, and retire into the forest solitude, if rings no merry laughter in its echoing shade and if the end of no saffron mantle flutters in the wind; if its silence is not deepened by soft whispers.

I shall never be an ascetic.

Rabindranath Tagore



# The Gardener Xliv: Reverend Sir, Forgive

Reverend sir, forgive this pair of sinners. Spring winds to-day are blowing in wild eddies, driving dust and dead leaves away, and with them your lessons are all lost.

Do not say, father, that life is a vanity.

For we have made truce with death for once, and only for a few fragrant hours we two have been made immortal.

Even if the king's army came and fiercely fell upon us we should sadly shake our heads and say, Brothers, you are disturbing us. If you must have this noisy game, go and clatter your arms elsewhere. Since only for a few fleeting moments we have been made immortal.

If friendly people came and flocked around us, we should humbly bow to them and say, This extravagant good fortune is an embarrassment to us. Room is scarce in the infinite sky where we dwell. For in the spring-time flowers come in crowds, and the busy wings of bees jostle each other. Our little heaven, where dwell only we two immortals, is too absurdly narrow.

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Gardener Xlv: To The Guests

To the guests that must go bid  
God's speed and brush away all traces  
of their steps.

Take to your bosom with a smile  
what is easy and simple and near.

To-day is the festival of phantoms  
that know not when they die.

Let your laughter be but a meaning-  
less mirth like twinkles of light on  
the ripples.

Let your life lightly dance on the  
edges of Time like dew on the tip of  
a leaf.

Strike in chords from your harp  
fitful momentary rhythms.

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Gardener Xlvi: You Left Me

You left me and went on your way.

I thought I should mourn for you  
and set your solitary image in my  
heart wrought in a golden song.

But ah, my evil fortune, time is  
short.

Youth wanes year after year; the  
spring days are fugitive; the frail  
flowers die for nothing, and the wise  
man warns me that life is but a  
dewdrop on the lotus leaf.

Should I neglect all this to gaze after  
one who has turned her back on me?

That would be rude and foolish,  
for time is short.

Then, come, my rainy nights with  
pattering feet; smile, my golden  
autumn; come, careless April, scatter-  
ing your kisses abroad.

You come, and you, and you also!

My loves, you know we are mortals.  
Is it wise to break one's heart for the  
one who takes her heart away? For  
time is short.

It is sweet to sit in a corner to muse  
and write in rhymes that you are all  
my world.

It is heroic to hug one's sorrow and  
determine not to be consoled.

But a fresh face peeps across my  
door and raise its eyes to my eyes.

I cannot but wipe away my tears  
and change the tune of my song.

For time is short.

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Gardener Xlviii: Free Me

Free me from the bonds of your  
sweetness, my love! Nor more of this  
wine of kisses.

This mist of heavy incense stifles  
my heart.

Open the doors, make room for the  
morning light.

I am lost in you, wrapped in the  
folds of your caresses.

Free me from your spells, and give  
me back the manhood to offer you my  
freed heart.

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Gardener Xvi: Hands Cling To Eyes

Hands cling to hands and eyes linger  
on eyes: thus begins the record of our  
hearts.

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

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

Your veil of the saffron colour  
makes my eyes drunk.

The jasmine wreath that you wove  
me thrills to my heart like praise.

It is a game of giving and with-  
holding, revealing and screening again;  
some smiles and some little shyness,  
and some sweet useless struggles.

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

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

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

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

It is enough what we give and we  
get.

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

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



## The Gardener XVIII: When Two Sisters

When the two sisters go to fetch water, they come to this spot and they smile.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Gardener Xx: Day After Day He Comes

Day after day he comes and goes  
away.

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

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

He sits on the dust under the tree.

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore



# The Gardener Xxi: Why Did He Choose

Why did he choose to come to my  
door, the wandering youth, when the  
day dawned?

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

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

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

He weaves his songs with fresh  
tunes every time.

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

Rabindranath Tagore

## The Gardener Xxii: When She Passed By Me

When she passed by me with quick  
steps, the end of her skirt touched  
me.

From the unknown island of a  
heart came a sudden warm breath of  
spring.

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Gardener Xxiv: Do Not Keep To Yourself

Do not keep to yourself the secret of  
your heart, my friend!

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Gardener Xxix: Speak To Me My Love

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

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

I will let loose my hair. My blue  
cloak will cling round me like night. I  
will clasp your head to my bosom; and  
there in the sweet loneliness murmur  
on your heart. I will shut my eyes  
and listen. I will not look in your face.  
When your words are ended, we will  
sit still and silent. Only the trees will  
whisper in the dark.

The night will pale. The day will  
dawn. We shall look at each other's  
eyes and go on our different paths.  
Speak to me, my love! Tell me in  
words what you sang.

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Gardener Xxvi: What Comes From Your Willing Hands

"What comes from your willing hands I take. I beg for nothing more."

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

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

"But if there be thorns?"

"I will endure them."

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

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

"But if there be only cruel glances?"

"I will keep them piercing my heart."

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

Rabindranath Tagore

## The Gardener Xxvii: Trust Love

"Trust love even if it brings sorrow.  
Do not close up your heart."

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

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

## The Gardener Xxviii: Your Questioning Eyes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But it is love, my beloved.

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Gardener Xxxiv: Do Not Go, My Love

Do not go, my love, without asking  
my leave.

I have watched all night, and now  
my eyes are heavy with sleep.

I fear lest I lose you when I'm  
sleeping.

Do not go, my love, without asking  
my leave.

I start up and stretch my hands to  
touch you. I ask myself, "Is it a  
dream?"

Could I but entangle your feet with  
my heart and hold them fast to my  
breast!

Do not go, my love, without asking  
my leave.

Rabindranath Tagore



# The Gardener Xxxviii: My Love, Once Upon A Time

My love, once upon a time your poet  
launched a great epic in his mind.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Gift

I want to give you something, my child, for we are drifting in the stream of the world.

Our lives will be carried apart, and our love forgotten.

But I am not so foolish as to hope that I could buy your heart with my gifts.

Young is your life, your path long, and you drink the love we bring you at one draught and turn and run away from us.

You have your play and your playmates. What harm is there if you have no time or thought for us!

We, indeed, have leisure enough in old age to count the days that are past, to cherish in our hearts what our hands have lost for ever.

The river runs swift with a song, breaking through all barriers. But the mountain stays and remembers, and follows her with his love.

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Golden Boat

Clouds rumbling in the sky; teeming rain.  
I sit on the river bank, sad and alone.  
The sheaves lie gathered, harvest has ended,  
The river is swollen and fierce in its flow.  
As we cut the paddy it started to rain.

One small paddy-field, no one but me -  
Flood-waters twisting and swirling everywhere.  
Trees on the far bank; smear shadows like ink  
On a village painted on deep morning grey.  
On this side a paddy-field, no one but me.

Who is this, steering close to the shore  
Singing? I feel that she is someone I know.  
The sails are filled wide, she gazes ahead,  
Waves break helplessly against the boat each side.  
I watch and feel I have seen her face before.

Oh to what foreign land do you sail?  
Come to the bank and moor your boat for a while.  
Go where you want to, give where you care to,  
But come to the bank a moment, show your smile -  
Take away my golden paddy when you sail.

Take it, take as much as you can load.  
Is there more? No, none, I have put it aboard.  
My intense labour here by the river -  
I have parted with it all, layer upon layer;  
Now take me as well, be kind, take me aboard.

No room, no room, the boat is too small.  
Loaded with my gold paddy, the boat is full.  
Across the rain-sky clouds heave to and fro,  
On the bare river-bank, I remain alone -  
What had has gone: the golden boat took all.

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Hero

Mother, let us imagine we are travelling, and passing through a strange and dangerous country.

You are riding in a palanquin and I am trotting by you on a red horse.

It is evening and the sun goes down. The waste of Joradighi lies wan and grey before us. The land is desolate and barren.

You are frightened and thinking-"I know not where we have come to."

I say to you, "Mother, do not be afraid."

The meadow is prickly with spiky grass, and through it runs a narrow broken path.

There are no cattle to be seen in the wide field; they have gone to their village stalls.

It grows dark and dim on the land and sky, and we cannot tell where we are going.

Suddenly you call me and ask me in a whisper, "What light is that near the bank?"

Just then there bursts out a fearful yell, and figures come running towards us.

You sit crouched in your palanquin and repeat the names of the gods in prayer.

The bearers, shaking in terror, hide themselves in the thorny bush.

I shout to you, "Don't be afraid, mother. I am here."

With long sticks in their hands and hair all wild about their heads, they come nearer and nearer.

I shout, "Have a care, you villains! One step more and you are dead men."

They give another terrible yell and rush forward.

You clutch my hand and say, "Dear boy, for heaven's sake, keep away from them."

I say, "Mother, just you watch me."

Then I spur my horse for a wild gallop, and my sword and buckler clash against each other.

The fight becomes so fearful, mother, that it would give you a cold shudder could you see it from your palanquin.

Many of them fly, and a great number are cut to pieces.

I know you are thinking, sitting all by yourself, that your boy must be dead by this time.

But I come to you all stained with blood, and say, "Mother, the fight is over now."

You come out and kiss me, pressing me to your heart, and you say to yourself,

"I don't know what I should do if I hadn't my boy to escort me."

A thousand useless things happen day after day, and why couldn't such a thing come true by chance?

It would be like a story in a book.

My brother would say, "Is it possible? I always thought he was so delicate!"

Our village people would all say in amazement, "Was it not lucky that the boy was with his mother?"

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Home

I paced alone on the road across the field while the sunset was hiding its last gold like a miser.

The daylight sank deeper and deeper into the darkness, and the widowed land, whose harvest had been reaped, lay silent.

Suddenly a boy's shrill voice rose into the sky. He traversed the dark unseen, leaving the track of his song across the hush of the evening.

His village home lay there at the end of the waste land, beyond the sugar-cane field, hidden among the shadows of the banana and the slender areca palm, the coconut and the dark green jack-fruit trees.

I stopped for a moment in my lonely way under the starlight, and saw spread before me the darkened earth surrounding with her arms countless homes furnished with cradles and beds, mother's hearts and evening lamps, and young lives glad with a gladness that knows nothing of its value for the world.

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Journey

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

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

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

My companions laughed at me in scorn;  
they held their heads high and hurried on;  
they never looked back nor rested;  
they vanished in the distant blue haze.

They crossed many meadows and hills,  
and passed through strange, far-away countries.  
All honor to you, heroic host of the interminable path!  
Mockery and reproach pricked me to rise,  
but found no response in me.

I gave myself up for lost  
in the depth of a glad humiliation  
- -in the shadow of a dim delight.

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

At last, when I woke from my slumber and opened my eyes,

I saw thee standing by me, flooding my sleep with thy smile.  
How I had feared that the path was long and wearisome,  
and the struggle to reach thee was hard!

Rabindranath Tagore



# The Judge

Say of him what you please, but I know my child's failings.

I do not love him because he is good, but because he is my little child.

How should you know how dear he can be when you try to weigh his merits against his faults?

When I must punish him he becomes all the more a part of my being.

When I cause his tears to come my heart weeps with him.

I alone have a right to blame and punish, for he only may chastise who loves.

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Kiss

Lips' language to lips' ears.  
Two drinking each other's heart, it seems.  
Two roving loves who have left home,  
pilgrims to the confluence of lips.  
Two waves rise by the law of love  
to break and die on two sets of lips.  
Two wild desires craving each other  
meet at last at the body's limits.  
Love's writing a song in dainty letters,  
layers of kiss-calligraphy on lips.  
Plucking flowers from two sets of lips  
perhaps to thread them into a chain later.  
This sweet union of lips  
is the red marriage-bed of a pair of smiles.

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Land Of The Exile

Mother, the light has grown grey in the sky; I do not know what the time is.

There is no fun in my play, so I have come to you. It is Saturday, our holiday.

Leave off your work, mother; sit here by the window and tell me where the desert of Tepantar in the fairy tale is.

The shadow of the rains has covered the day from end to end.

The fierce lightning is scratching the sky with its nails.

When the clouds rumble and it thunders, I love to be afraid in my heart and cling to you.

When the heavy rain patters for hours on the bamboo leaves, and our windows shake and rattle at the gusts of wind, I like to sit alone in the room, mother, with you, and hear you talk about the desert of Tepantar in the fairy tale.

Where is it, mother, on the shore of what sea, at the foot of what hills, in the kingdom of what king?

There are no hedges there to mark the fields, no footpath across it by which the villagers reach their village in the evening, or the woman who gathers dry sticks in the forest can bring her load to the market. With patches of yellow grass in the sand and only one tree where the pair of wise old birds have their nest, lies the desert of Tepantar.

I can imagine how, on just such a cloudy day, the young son of the king is riding alone on a grey horse through the desert, in search of the princess who lies imprisoned in the giant's palace across that unknown water.

When the haze of the rain comes down in the distant sky, and lightning starts up like a sudden fit of pain, does he remember his unhappy mother, abandoned by the king, sweeping the cow-stall and wiping her eyes, while he rides through the desert of Tepantar in the fairy tale?

See, mother, it is almost dark before the day is over, and there are no travellers yonder on the village road.

The shepherd boy has gone home early from the pasture, and men have left their fields to sit on mats under the eaves of their huts, watching the scowling clouds.

Mother, I have left all my books on the shelf-do not ask me to do my lessons now.

When I grow up and am bid like my father, I shall learn all

that must be learnt.

But just for today, tell me, mother, where the desert of  
Tepantar in the fairy tale is.

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Last Bargain

"Come and hire me," I cried, while in the morning I was walking on the stone-paved road.

Sword in hand, the King came in his chariot.

He held my hand and said, "I will hire you with my power."

But his power counted for nought, and he went away in his chariot.

In the heat of the midday the houses stood with shut doors.

I wandered along the crooked lane.

An old man came out with his bag of gold.

He pondered and said, "I will hire you with my money."

He weighed his coins one by one, but I turned away.

It was evening. The garden hedge was all aflower.

The fair maid came out and said, "I will hire you with a smile."

Her smile paled and melted into tears, and she went back alone into the dark.

The sun glistened on the sand, and the sea waves broke waywardly.

A child sat playing with shells.

He raised his head and seemed to know me, and said, "I hire you with nothing."

From thenceforward that bargain struck in child's play made me a free man.

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Little Big Man

I am small because I am a little child. I shall be big when I am as old as my father is.

My teacher will come and say, "It is late, bring your slate and your books."

I shall tell him, "Do you not know I am as big as father? And I must not have lessons any more."

My master will wonder and say, "He can leave his books if he likes, for he is grown up."

I shall dress myself and walk to the fair where the crowd is thick.

My uncle will come rushing up to me and say, "You will get lost, my boy; let me carry you."

I shall answer, "Can't you see, uncle, I am as big as father? I must go to the fair alone."

Uncle will say, "Yes, he can go wherever he likes, for he is grown up."

Mother will come from her bath when I am giving money to my nurse, for I shall know how to open the box with my key.

Mother will say, "What are you about, naughty child?"

I shall tell her, "Mother, don't you know, I am as big as father, and I must give silver to my nurse."

Mother will say to herself, "He can give money to whom he likes, for he is grown up."

In the holiday time in October father will come home and, thinking that I am still a baby, will bring for me from the town little shoes and small silken frocks.

I shall say, "Father, give them to my data, for I am as big as you are."

Father will think and say, "He can buy his own clothes if he likes, for he is grown up."

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Lotus

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Merchant

Imagine, mother, that you are to stay at home and I am to travel into strange lands.

Imagine that my boat is ready at the landing fully laden.

Now think well, mother, before you say what I shall bring for you when I come back.

Mother, do you want heaps and heaps of gold?

There, by the banks of golden streams, fields are full of golden harvest.

And in the shade of the forest path the golden champ flower drop on the ground.

I will gather them all for you in many hundred baskets.

Mother, do you want pearls big as the raindrops of autumn?

I shall cross to the pearl island shore.

There in the early morning light pearls tremble on the meadow flowers, pearls drop on the grass, and pearls are scattered on the sand in spray by the wild sea-waves.

My brother shall have a pair of horses with wings to fly among the clouds.

For father I shall bring a magic pen that, without his knowing, will write of itself.

For you, mother, I must have the casket and jewel that cost seven kings their kingdom.

Rabindranath Tagore



# The Rainy Day

Sullen clouds are gathering fast over the black fringe of the forest.

O child, do not go out!

The palm trees in a row by the lake are smiting their heads against the dismal sky; the crows with their dragged wings are silent on the tamarind branches, and the eastern bank of the river is haunted by a deepening gloom.

Our cow is lowing loud, ties at the fence.

O child, wait here till I bring her into the stall.

Men have crowded into the flooded field to catch the fishes as they escape from the overflowing ponds; the rain-water is running in rills through the narrow lanes like a laughing boy who has run away from his mother to tease her.

Listen, someone is shouting for the boatman at the ford.

O child, the daylight is dim, and the crossing at the ferry is closed.

The sky seems to ride fast upon the madly rushing rain; the water in the river is loud and impatient; women have hastened home early from the Ganges with their filled pitchers.

The evening lamps must be made ready.

O child, do not go out!

The road to the market is desolate, the lane to the river is slippery. The wind is roaring and struggling among the bamboo branches like a wild beast tangled in a net.

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Recall

The night was dark when she went away, and she slept.

The night is dark now, and I call for her, "Come back, my darling; the world is asleep; and no one would know, if you came for a moment while stars are gazing at stars."

She went away when the trees were in bud and the spring was young.

Now the flowers are in high bloom and I call, "Come back, my darling. The children gather and scatter flowers in reckless sport. And if you come and take one little blossom no one will miss it."

Those that used to play are playing still, so spendthrift is life.

I listen to their chatter and call, "Come back, my darling, for mother's heart is full to the brim with love, and if you come to snatch only one little kiss from her no one will grudge it."

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Sailor

The boat of the boatman Madhu is moored at the wharf of Rajgunj.

It is uselessly laden with jute, and has been lying there idle for ever so long.

If he would only lend me his boat, I should man her with a hundred oars, and hoist sails, five or six or seven.

I should never steer her to stupid markets.

I should sail the seven seas and the thirteen rivers of fairyland.

But, mother, you won't weep for me in a corner.

I am not going into the forest like Ramachandra to come back only after fourteen years.

I shall become the prince of the story, and fill my boat with whatever I like.

I shall take my friend Ashu with me. We shall sail merrily across the ever seas and the thirteen rivers of fairyland.

We shall set sail in the early morning light.

When at noontide you are bathing at the pond, we shall be in the land of a strange king.

We shall pass the ford of Tirpurni, and leave behind us the desert of Tepantar.

When we come back it will be getting dark, and I shall tell you of all that we have seen.

I shall cross the seven seas and the thirteen rivers of fairyland.

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Source

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Sun Of The First Day

The sun of the first day  
Put the question  
To the new manifestation of life-  
Who are you?  
There was no answer.  
Years passed by.

The last sun of the last day  
Uttered the question  
on the shore of the western sea  
In the hush of evening-  
Who are you?  
No answer came again.

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Tame Bird Was In A Cage

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Unheeded Pageant

Ah, who was it coloured that little frock, my child, and covered  
your sweet limbs with that little red tunic?

You have come out in the morning to play in the courtyard,  
tottering and tumbling as you run.

But who was it coloured that little frock, my child?

What is it makes you laugh, my little life-bud?

Mother smiles at you standing on the threshold.

She claps her hands and her bracelets jingle, and you dance  
with your bamboo stick in your hand like a tiny little shepherd.

But what is it makes you laugh, my little life-bud?

O beggar, what do you bed for, clinging to your mother's neck  
with both your hands?

O greedy heart, shall I pluck the world like a fruit from the  
sky to place it on your little rosy palm?

O beggar, what are you begging for?

The wind carries away in glee the tinkling of your anklet  
bells.

The sun smiles and watches your toilet.

The sky watches over you when you sleep in your mother's arms,  
and the morning comes tiptoe to your bed and kisses your eyes.

The wind carried away in glee the tinkling of your anklet  
bells.

The fairy mistress of dreams is coming towards you, flying  
through the twilight sky.

The world-mother keeps her seat by you in your mother's heart.

He who plays his music to the stars is standing at your window  
with his flute.

And the fairy mistress of dreams is coming towards you, flying  
through the twilight sky.

Rabindranath Tagore

# The Wicked Postman

Why do you sit there on the floor so quiet and silent, tell me,  
mother dear?

The rain is coming in through the open window, making you all  
wet, and you don't mind it.

Do you hear the gong striking four? It is time for my brother  
to come home from school.

What has happened to you that you look so strange?

Haven't you got a letter from father today?

I saw the postman bringing letters in his bag for almost  
everybody in the town.

Only father's letters he keeps to read himself. I am sure the  
postman is a wicked man.

But don't be unhappy about that, mother dear.

Tomorrow is market day in the next village. You ask your maid  
to buy some pens and papers.

I myself will write all father's letters; you will not find  
a single mistake.

I shall write from A right up to K.

But, mother, why do you smile?

You don't believe that I can write as nicely as father does!

But I shall rule my paper carefully, and write all the letters  
beautifully big.

When I finish my writing do you think I shall be so foolish  
as father and drop it into the horrid postman's bag?

I shall bring it to you myself without waiting, and letter by  
letter help you to read my writing.

I know the postman does not like to give you the really nice  
letters.

Rabindranath Tagore



# This Dog

Every morning this dog, very attached to me,  
Quietly keeps sitting near my seat  
Till touching its head  
I recognize its company.  
This recognition gives it so much joy  
Pure delight ripples through its entire body.  
Among all dumb creatures  
It is the only living being  
That has seen the whole man  
Beyond what is good or bad in him  
It has seen  
For his love it can sacrifice its life  
It can love him too for the sake of love alone  
For it is he who shows the way  
To the vast world pulsating with life.  
When I see its deep devotion  
The offer of its whole being  
I fail to understand  
By its sheer instinct  
What truth it has discovered in man.  
By its silent anxious piteous looks  
It cannot communicate what it understands  
But it has succeeded in conveying to me  
Among the whole creation  
What is the true status of man.

Rabindranath Tagore

# Threshold

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

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Twelve O'Clock

Mother, I do want to leave off my lessons now. I have been at my book all the morning.

You say it is only twelve o'clock. Suppose it isn't any later; can't you ever think it is afternoon when it is only twelve o'clock?

I can easily imagine now that the sun has reached the edge of that rice-field, and the old fisher-woman is gathering herbs for her supper by the side of the pond.

I can just shut my eyes and think that the shadows are growing darker under the madar tree, and the water in the pond looks shiny black.

If twelve o'clock can come in the night, why can't the night come when it is twelve o'clock?

Rabindranath Tagore

# Unending Love

I seem to have loved you in numberless forms, numberless times...  
In life after life, in age after age, forever.  
My spellbound heart has made and remade the necklace of songs,  
That you take as a gift, wear round your neck in your many forms,  
In life after life, in age after age, forever.

Whenever I hear old chronicles of love, it's age-old pain,  
It's ancient tale of being apart or together.  
As I stare on and on into the past, in the end you emerge,  
Clad in the light of a pole-star piercing the darkness of time:  
You become an image of what is remembered forever.

You and I have floated here on the stream that brings from the fount.  
At the heart of time, love of one for another.  
We have played along side millions of lovers, shared in the same  
Shy sweetness of meeting, the same distressful tears of farewell-  
Old love but in shapes that renew and renew forever.

Today it is heaped at your feet, it has found its end in you  
The love of all man's days both past and forever:  
Universal joy, universal sorrow, universal life.  
The memories of all loves merging with this one love of ours –  
And the songs of every poet past and forever.

Rabindranath Tagore

# Ungrateful Sorrow

At dawn they departed  
My mind tried to console me -  
' Everything is Maya'.  
Angrily I replied:  
'Here's this sewing box on the table,  
that flower-pot on the terrace,  
this monogrammed hand-fan on the bed- -  
all these are real.'

My mind said: 'Yet, think again.'  
I rejoined: ' You better stop.  
Look at this storybook,  
the hairpin halfway amongst its leaves,  
signaling the rest is unread;  
if all these things are 'Maya',  
then why should 'they' be more unreal? '

My mind becomes silent.  
A friend arrived and says:  
'That which is good is real  
it is never non-existent;  
entire world preserves and cherishes it its chest  
like a precious jewel in a necklace.'

I replied in anger: 'How do you know?  
Is a body not good? Where did that body go? '

Like a small boy in a rage hitting his mother,  
I began to strike at everything in this world  
that gave me shelter.  
And I screamed: ' The world is treacherous.'

Suddenly, I was startled.  
It seemed like someone admonished me: ' You- ungrateful! '

I looked at the crescent moon  
hidden behind the tamarisk tree outside my window.  
As if the dear departed one is smiling  
and playing hide-and-seek with me.

From the depth of darkness punctuated by scattered stars  
came a rebuke: 'when I let you grasp me you call it an deception,  
and yet when I remain concealed,  
why do you hold on to your faith in me with such conviction? '

Rabindranath Tagore

# Untimely Leave

No more noisy, loud words from me---such is my master's will.  
Henceforth I deal in whispers.  
The speech of my heart will be carried on in murmurings of a song.

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

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

Full many an hour have I spent in the strife of the good and the evil,  
but now it is the pleasure of my playmate of the empty days to draw my heart on  
to him;  
and I know not why is this sudden call to what useless inconsequence!

Rabindranath Tagore

# Unyielding

When I called you in your garden  
Mango blooms were rich in fragrance -  
Why did you remain so distant,  
Keep your doors so tightly fastened?  
Blossoms grew to ripe fruit-clusters -  
Your rejected my cupped handfuls,  
Closed your eyes to perfectness.

In the fierce harsh storms of Baisakh,  
Golden ripened fruit fell tumbling.  
'Dust, I said, 'defiles such offerings:  
Let your hands be heaven to them.'  
Still you showed no friendliness.

Lampless were your doors at evening,  
Pitch-black as I played my vina.  
How the starlight twanged my heartstrings!  
How I set my vina dancing!  
You showed no responsiveness.

Sad birds twittered sleeplessly,  
Calling, calling lost companions.  
Gone the right time for our union -  
Low the moon while still you brooded,  
Sunk in lonely pensiveness.

Who can understand another!  
Heart cannot restrain its passion.  
I had hoped that some remaining  
Tear-soaked memories would sway you,  
Stir your feet to lightness.

Moon fell at the feet of morning,  
Loosened from the night's fading necklace.  
While you slept, O did my Vina  
Lull you with its heartache? Did you  
Dream at least of happiness?





# Vocation

When the gong sounds ten in the morning and I walk to school by our lane.

Every day I meet the hawker crying, "Bangles, crystal bangles!"

There is nothing to hurry him on, there is no road he must take, no place he must go to, no time when he must come home.

I wish I were a hawker, spending my day in the road, crying, "Bangles, crystal bangles!"

When at four in the afternoon I come back from the school,  
I can see through the gate of that house the gardener digging the ground.

He does what he likes with his spade, he soils his clothes with dust, nobody takes him to task if he gets baked in the sun or gets wet.

I wish I were a gardener digging away at the garden with nobody to stop me from digging.

Just as it gets dark in the evening and my mother sends me to bed,

I can see through my open window the watchman walking up and down.

The lane is dark and lonely, and the street-lamp stands like a giant with one red eye in its head.

The watchman swings his lantern and walks with his shadow at his side, and never once goes to bed in his life.

I wish I were a watchman walking the streets all night, chasing the shadows with my lantern.

Rabindranath Tagore

# Waiting

The song I came to sing  
remains unsung to this day.  
I have spent my days in stringing  
and in unstringing my instrument.

The time has not come true,  
the words have not been rightly set;  
only there is the agony  
of wishing in my heart.....

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

But the lamp has not been lit  
and I cannot ask him into my house;  
I live in the hope of meeting with him;  
but this meeting is not yet.

Rabindranath Tagore

# We Are To Play The Game Of Death

WE are to play the game of death to-night, my bride and I.

The night is black, the clouds in the sky are capricious, and the waves are raving at sea.

We have left our bed of dreams, flung open the door and come out, my bride and I.

We sit upon a swing, and the storm winds give us a wild push from behind.

My bride starts up with fear and delight, she trembles and clings to my breast.

Long have I served her tenderly.

I made for her a bed of flowers and I closed the doors to shut out the rude light from her eyes.

I kissed her gently on her lips and whispered softly in her ears till she half swooned in languor.

She was lost in the endless mist of vague sweetness.

She answered not to my touch, my songs failed to arouse her.

To-night has come to us the call of the storm from the wild.

My bride has shivered and stood up, she has clasped my hand and come out.

Her hair is flying in the wind, her veil is fluttering, her garland rustles over her breast.

The push of death has swung her into life.

We are face to face and heart to heart, my bride and I.

Rabindranath Tagore

## When And Why

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# When Day Is Done

If the day is done,  
if birds sing no more,  
if the wind has flagged tired,  
then draw the veil of darkness thick upon me,  
even as thou hast wrapt the earth with the coverlet of sleep  
and tenderly closed the petals of the drooping lotus at dusk.

From the traveler,  
whose sack of provisions is empty before the voyage is ended,  
whose garment is torn and dust-laden,  
whose strength is exhausted,  
remove shame and poverty,  
and renew his life like a flower under the cover of thy kindly night.

Rabindranath Tagore

## When I Go Alone At Night

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

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

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

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# When The Two Sisters Go To Fetch Water

WHEN the two sisters go to fetch water, they come to this spot and they smile. They must be aware of somebody who stands behind the trees whenever they go to fetch water.

The two sisters whisper to each other when they pass this spot. They must have guessed the secret of that somebody who stands behind the trees whenever they go to fetch water.

Their pitchers lurch suddenly, and water spills when they reach this spot. They must have found out that somebody's heart is beating who stands behind the trees whenever they go to fetch water.

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore



# Where Shadow Chases Light

This is my delight,  
thus to wait and watch at the wayside  
where shadow chases light  
and the rain comes in the wake of the summer.

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

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

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Where The Mind Is Without Fear

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

Rabindranath Tagore

# Who Is This

I came out alone on my way to my tryst.  
But who is this that follows me in the silent dark?

I move aside to avoid his presence but I escape him not.

He makes the dust rise from the earth with his swagger;  
he adds his loud voice to every word that I utter.

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

Rabindranath Tagore