

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

SELECTED POEMS III

TRANSLATED & PRESENTED BY

PRITHWINDRA MUKHERJEE

51. SURRENDER

O bend my head up to the dust of Your feet,

Wash out all my vanity with mine own tears.

Seeking ever to glorify my self

I keep on merely humiliating myself,

Ceaselessly winding around myself

I roam about from moment to moment

Wash out all my vanity with mine own tears.

Let me no more vaunt myself in mine occupation,

Accomplish Your own will throughout my life.

I long for the absolute peace from You,

Inside my being Your effulgence,

Protect me by standing on the lotus of my heart,

Wash out all my vanity with mine own tears.

[*Gitanjali*, "Song Offering" No.1, 1906]¹

52. KNOWING YOU

Countless are the persons You made me know,

Sheltered me in countless homes,

You turned the distant into an intimate, O Friend,

And the foreigner into a brother.

Each time I have to leave an old dwelling

My mind gets worried not to know what is up

Forgetting that You remain the familiar

¹ The serial numbers in the Bengali collection *Gitanjali* are distinct from those utilised by Tagore in the homonymous anthology of his poems in English

In the midst of the new,
You turned the distant into an intimate, O Friend,
And the foreigner into a brother.

In life or in death, in the totality of this globe,
Wherever you choose to carry me,
O my life-long acquaintance,
Whatever You will reveal to me.

Others cease to be strangers once You are known,
Taboos vanish and vanishes all fear;
You remain wakeful by uniting everybody
May I always realise it,

You turned the distant into an intimate, O Friend,
And the foreigner into a brother.

[*Gitanjali*, "Song Offering" No.3, 1906]

53. REFT FROM LOVE

If You cared not to fill the heart with love
Why did You permeate the morning sky
With abundant songs ?
Why weave wreaths with the stars ?
Why the flowery beds ?
Why does the west-wind murmur
A secret message in our ears ?

If You cared not to fill the heart with love,
Why keeps the sky staring at us

Intently ?
Why does my heart frequently
Become enraged
Embarking the raft on an ocean
Where the shore remains unknown ?

[*Gitimalya*, "Garland of Songs" No.42, 1913]

54. Conviction

Gratifying all my thorns,
The flower shall bloom,
And all my suffering
Shall redden into a rose.
In my life-long craving for the sky
Zephyr shall rush to blow,
Maddening my heart it will
Plunder all fragrant treasures.

I shall feel no more amiss
Once I have treasures to share,
Once my intimate worship blossoms
In beauteous forms.
When by the end of night
My Beloved shall caress them,
All the petals unto the last
Will bedeck His feet.

[*Gitimalya*, "Garland of Songs" No.49, 1913]

55. EXPECTATION

You remain ever present

Beyond my songs,

My melodies reach Your feet

Though I cannot attain You.

The wind bids imploring :

"Do not keep mooring the raft !"

Steering across, come up

To the centre of my heart.

The game of my songs with You

Is a game with the remoteness,

The aching notes of the flute

Throughout all day.

Seizing my flute, when shall You

Come over and blow into it,

In the dense obscurity

Of a joyous and mute night ?

[*Gitimalya*, "Garland of Songs" No.70, 1913]

56. THIS FLAME OF MELODY

This flame of melody that You have set inside my heart,

That flame has pervaded all through-and-through.

Dances that flame while keeping the beats

From branch to branch upon worn out trees :

Whom does it invoke in the sky

With the elated hands ?
The stars stare dumb-founded in the dark,
Maddened a wind rises from nowhere
Immaculate, at the dead of the night,
Blossoms this golden lotus :
None can fathom the spell of that flame.

[*Gitimalya*, "Garland of Songs" No.89, 1913]

57. REGRETS

Why did I not strew the dry dust with my tears ?
Who could guess that You would appear like an uninvited ?
You have waded through the desert sand
Without any shadowy tree,
I imposed on You this dire wayfaring,
Curse on me!

Whereas I had been whiling away my idle days
In the shade of my home,
I ignored all that you suffered
At every step.
That suffering, however, inside my being
Had resounded with a secret smart,
Stigmatising my heart with a profound wound.

[*Gitimalya*, "Garland of Songs" No.91, 1913]

58. GRATIFICATION

The moment when tears flooded mine eyes in a monsoon of sorrow,
Before the threshold of my heart stopped the chariot of my friend.

By handing over to Him the chalice of union that was brimming
With separation and pain, I have no more regrets, regrets none.

Gathering secretly in my mind, a hope, neglected for years...
That thirst for a touch was quenched in a twinkling of eye.

I knew at last for whom I shed all my tears :
Blessed be this awakening, blessed these tears, blessed all.

[*Gitali*, "Songs", No.1, 1914]

59. THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE

O touch my heart with the flame of a philosopher's stone,
Sanctify this life by consuming with Your fire.

O lift up this body of mine to transform it
Into a lamp of Your tabernacle,

Set all songs flaming night and day.

O touch my heart with the flame of a philosopher's stone.

Let Your caress in the dark from limb to limb

Set blossoming stars throughout the night.

All shadow shall vanish from the glimpses and mine eyes

Will contemplate but light wherever they turn.

Upwards, all my suffering will blaze.

O touch my heart with the flame of a philosopher's stone.

[*Gitali*, "Songs", No.18, 1914]

60. THE HERO

Holding the sword on one hand

And the necklace on the other,

He has forced your door :

He has not come to beg alms,

He has come to fight

And win over your heart.

Out of the path of Death

He emerges into Life,

Attired like a hero :

He will not return with a partial booty,

He will take possession at a time

Of whatever he finds.

He has forced your door.

[*Gitali*, "Songs", No.20, 1914]

61. LONGING

You remained asleep, O my mind,

When the man of my mind was at the door.

You woke up on hearing

The sound of His leaving,

You woke up in the dark.

My garment outspread on the floor

I spend my solitary night,

In the dark I listen to His flute,

Without any glimpse of Him.

Can ever the eyes see Him -
The One whom you left in the lurch -
Can you catch Him up,
The One whom you have driven away ?

[*Gitali*, "Songs", No.27, 1914]

62. FORGIVE, O LORD

Forgive, O Lord, my weariness
And if I lag behind on the path.
This quiver in the heart,
This shivering, all this pain,
Forgive, forgive O Lord.

Forgive, O Lord, my miserableness
And if I keep on looking backward.
Garlands wither on the trough
In heat of a scorching sun,
Forgive that pallor, O Lord.

[*Gitali*, "Songs", No.59, 1914]

63. VICTORY

The doors have been flung open, You have appeared, O Resplendent,
Victory to You.
Scatter all darkness with Your generous emergence,
Victory to You.
O Hero, O Conqueror, in the dawn of a new life
You hold the spear of a novel hope,

Mercilessly cut asunder all worn out obsession...

Let the bonds fall off.

Victory to You.

Welcome, O Intolerable, come O Merciless,

Victory to You.

Welcome, O Immaculate, come O Dauntless,

Victory to You.

O morning Sun, you have risen like a warrior,

Your horn resounds on the painful path,

Kindle the flame of dawn in our mind,

Abolish Death.

Victory to You.

[*Gitali*, "Songs", No.101, 1914]

64. SHAH-JEHAN

You knew pretty well, Ruler of India, O Shah-Jehan,

That surges of Time takes away all life and youth and riches and honours.

The unique wish of the Emperor was

To perpetuate only your innermost sorrow.

Adamant, even the monarch's power

Wilt while dozing like the reddening of a twilight,

Solely a prolonged sigh

Might sadden the sky by heaving constantly,

That is all you hoped.

Let vanish, vanish if it must,

The splendour of diamonds and pearls and jewels -

Even as a wizard's rainbow glow on the horizon's void -

Let there be

Merely a drop of tears,

On the cheek of Time, dazzling and white,

This Tajmahal.

Alas, O human heart !

There is no time

No time at all

To keep on looking backward

At anyone whosoever.

You drift on

Amidst the strong currents of life

From bank to bank of this world...

Embarking on one market

You disembark on another one.

The moment the sacred rustling of the west wind

Inside your bower

Fills with mellifluous blossoms²

The agitated scarf of the trellis,

The dusk of farewell approaches,

Strewing the dust with bruised petals.

There is no time !

Therefore by dewy nights

You bedeck the espalier with *kunda*³ freshly blooming

As ornaments on autumn's joyous tearful wreath.

² *madhavi*, a particularly sweet-scented variety of jasmine, recalling Madhava, one of Krishna's names.

³ all-white fragrant flowers

Alas, O heart,
Whatever you gain
Has to be abandoned on the wayside
At the day's end, at the night's end.
There is no time, no time at all.
Therefore, Emperor, your anxious heart
Sought to entice the heart of Time
With Beauty's seduction.
Adorning His neck with a garland
Greeting formless Death
Clad in a wondrous deathless attire.
Throughout the twelve months
There is no scope
Of lamenting,
Thus under a shroud of eternal silence
You firmly buried
Your whimper without solace.
By moonlit nights within the secret chapel
The name with which you softly called
Your beloved,
You left that cooing on this spot,
For the ear of Infinity.
The sad tenderness of love
Knew how to blossom
In abundant flowers of Beauty in this serene stone.
Emperor, O Poet,
This is the picture of your heart,

A new *Meghaduta*⁴ of yours,
Unprecedented, marvelous
In its rhythm and melody
It soars ever towards the Unseen
Where your beloved, solitude-stricken,
Waits mingled
In the glow of the rising sun,
In the sighing melancholy at the horizon of a weary eve
The bodiless and voluptuous grace of *chameli*⁵ by a full-moon night,
On a shore beyond the pale of words
Where the begging eyes roam on from door to door.
The emissaries of your Beauty from age to age
Shunning the sentinels of Time
Pass by with this speechless message :
"I have not forgotten, I have not forgotten, I have not forgotten, O my Love !"

You are gone today,
O great King,
Your empire has fainted like a dream,
Your throne has been shattered;
Carried by the wind
The memory of your regiments -
Trembled the earth under whose strides -
Is now blowing along the dust of Delhi's streets.
The prisoners sing no more;
No music from your pavilion seeks to be tuned

⁴ Famous "Cloud Messenger" by Kalidasa.

⁵ another variety of jasmine

With the murmur of the Yamuna;
Dying with the crickets' chirping
In a remote corner of the broken palace
The ankle-bells of your courtesans
Set the night-sky to weep.
Yet, immaculate, your messenger -
Tireless, relentless,
Indifferent to the rise and fall of kingdoms,
Indifferent to the ups and downs of life and death,
From age to age -
Proclaim in one voice
The message of the solitary longing :
"I have not forgotten, I have not forgotten, I have not forgotten, O my Love !"

A sheer lie : can anyone assure
That you have not forgotten, you have not opened ajar
The trap door of memory's cage ?
That the obscurity of the past setting sun
Has still been binding your heart ?
Has it not yet flown away
By the loop-hole of oblivion ?
A mausoleum
Remains immobile forever,
Clinging to the mortal dust
Carefully it conceals Death
Beneath the shroud of memory.
Who can hold back life ?

Every star in the sky is crying up to it,
Its invitation comes from sphere to sphere
From ever new eastern horizons with an ever new light.
Breaking open memory's knot,
It shoots forth unhampered
Along the cosmic path.
O great King, no great kingdom could
Hold you back,
O Vast, even the ocean-breasted earth
Could not fill you up.
Therefore, once the feast of life is over,
With joint-feet you kick off the earth
Like a clay-pot.
You are nobler than your deeds,
Hence the chariot of your life,
Again and again,
Leaves your deeds behind.
Hence
Your traces are manifest, you are not here.
Love that knows not
To drive or to rush forward,
Love that installed its throne in the middle of the road,
Its discourse on pleasure
Clings to your feet like the dust on the path,
Which you have returned to dust.
Upon that dust of your feet behind you
All on a sudden

With a gust of wind from your mind
Had sown here a seed fallen astray from the garland of life.
You are gone far away :
That seed with its immortal sprout
Seeks to reach heaven,
It sings in a profound voice :
"As far as I can gaze,
He is not there, not there, that wayfarer.
His beloved could not hold him back,
 the kingdom yielded,
Oceans and mountains failed to stop him.
His chariot today
Moves on, urged by the night,
Accompanied by songs of constellations
Towards the triumphal archway of Dawn.
Hence
I lie here under the weight of memory;
Emancipated, he is no more here."

[*Balaka*, "Flight of Swans", No.7, 1914]

65. PIONEERS

Could you not be patient a little more ?

Winter is not yet over.

What flair very close to the trail

Drives you to sing in choir?

Oh distraught Champakas and intoxicated Bakuls,

Whom do you rush to welcome, all maddened in glee ?

Trackers of death, you are the first flock,

You didn't heed for the Moment to come,

From branch to branch your rumours ring

Enlivening and perfuming the undergrowths.

Jostling and laughing aloud before all others,

You blossomed in bounty, you fell in heaps.

The spring that was expected in April,

That would come afloat on the zephyr's high tide,

You no more waited for its hour,

You set piping your flute before term.

How could you reach the goal before the night-fall ?

You scattered all your treasures with your laughter and tears.

Forgetful of calculations, O my crazy souls,

On listening to His footfalls from far,

To cover the dust and bedeck His path

You laid down your own death.

Before you could see or hear Him, your chalices set you free,

You could no more wait for contemplating His face.

[*Balaka*, "Flight of Swans, No.21, 1916]

66. A FLIGHT OF SWANS

Glistening under the twilight rays
The bend of the Jhelum gets dim
In the dark, looking like a dagger in its sheath;
Following the ebb tide of the day
The nocturnal high tide appears
With star-flowers floating on its sombre waters.
Below the obscure mountain plateau
A range of *deodar*⁶ trees :
As though the entire Creation has grown eloquent in its dream,
Unable to articulate,
It whimpers in the dark, emitting masses of ineffable sounds.

And then, all of a sudden I hear,
Across the evening sky
A lightning of words in the field of the void
Leap up at once from a distance towards somewhere ever far away.
O flight of swans,
In piles of a boisterous laughter of joy, your wings -
Drunk with the wine of tempest -
Fly on in the firmament rippling with a rousing wonder.
The vibration of those wings -
A celestial dancing maid⁷-become-sound -
Passes by breaking the meditation of tranquility.
Start up the mountain-chains wrapped up in the dark,
Start up the *deodar* woods.

⁶ "trees of the Gods" < *deva* ('god')+ *daru* ('tree') : upright conifer trees

⁷ *apsara*

It seems the message of these wings

In the innermost core of a delighted immobility

Brings forth for a split second

The motion of velocity.

The mountains long to get transformed into clouds of May;

The ranges of trees aspire by unfolding their wings

And transcending the clutch of the earth

Lose all notion of direction

by pursuing the trail of that sound,

To discover the brim of the sky.

Rending this evening's dreams come surging

billows of nostalgia

For the distant,

O wings of detachment !

In the heart of the universe resounds a cry of distress :

"Not here, not here, somewhere else !"

O flight of swans !

Before me, you have undone the lid of silence tonight.

Beneath this muteness I hear

In the void, in water and on land

A similar fluttering of impetuous and agitated wings.

Vegetations

Are bustling wings below their earthen sky,

Below the earthen obscurity, indifferent to destination,

Unfurl wings of sprouts,

A flight of thousands of seeds.

Today I witness
This chain of mountains,
This forest, rush all... wings deployed...
From island to island, from unknown to farther unknown.
The rustling of the wings of constellations
Takes aback darkness with the weeping of night.
I perceive messages of men by flocks
Keep on flying on unseen paths
Right from a dim past
 up to half emerging and distant epoch's end.
I hear within my being
In the company of myriad birds,
Day in, day out,
This nestless bird speeds across light and obscurity
From one shore to another shore.
The Void is vibrant with this song of the cosmic wings :
"Not here, elsewhere, elsewhere, somewhere else !"

[*Balaka*, "Flight of Swans", No.36, 1914]

67. FLOWER FROM ANOTHER LAND

O Flower from another land, when I asked :

"What is your name ?"

Nodding, you smiled and I then understood

The name does not matter.

Nothing else matters, except

The smile that is your identity.

O Flower of another land, holding you close to my heart

I prayed : "Do let me know

where you live,"

Nodding, you smiled, replying : "I don't know it, I don't know."

Then I understood that it matters little

to know the land where you live.

Your home is the heart

Of whosoever lovingly understands you,

Nowhere else.

O Flower of another land, I whispered again in your ears :

"What language do you speak ?"

Nodding only you smiled

While rustled leaves all around.

I told myself : "I know it well,

The message of fragrance

In silence conveys your hope.

The language of your breath has filled my breath up to the brim."

O Flower of another land, when I first came, it was dawn,

"Do you know me ?", I asked you :

Smiling, you nodded and I thought

nobody regrets it a jot.

I urged : "Can't you understand that in your contact

My heart is filled with passion.

There are others who know me a shade better,

O Flower from another land."

O Flower of another land, when I enquired, "Let me know :

Will you forget me ?"

Smiling you nod; I know, well I know

You will remember me from time to time.

A couple of days later

Once I shall leave for another land,

Drawn by the distance,

in your dreams I shall look familiar...

You will not forget me.⁸

[*Puravi* ("From the East"), 1924]

⁸ Written in Buenos Aires, on 12 November, 1924, where Tagore was to spend a couple of months as the guest of Victoria Ocampo, whom he was to call Vijaya ; he was to dedicate to her the collection of his poems, *Puravi* ("From the East", name of an evening raga known for its melancholy).

68. DAUNTLESS

We two together shall not build upon earth
A heavenly toy,
With admiring and delicate songs all sloppy in tears.
With honeyed suffering from the Five Arrows⁹,
O my Love, we shall not compose our nuptial bed;
Let us not - feeble in heart -
 Beg favours from Fate.

Fearless, we know it for certain :
You are, and I am.

We shall hold high the banner of Love
Across the difficult path
In a dizzy speed, on most audacious missions.
What if the harsh days make us suffer ?
We want no truce, we shall want no consolation.
If our oars break at all while crossing the river ,
If the cords of our sails are torn,
Standing face to face with Death, we shall know :
You are, and I am.

With both our eyes we have seen the world,
We have seen one another;
We both have endured the scorching desert path,
We have run after no seductive mirage,
We have not deceived our mind by falsifying Truth :
With this pride we shall cover the globe
As long as we both live.
Let these words be magnanimous, O Beloved :
You are, and I am.

[*Mahua*,¹⁰ 1928]

⁹ A name of Madana, Lord of Eros

¹⁰ *Bassia latifolia* Roxb: tall trees with soft, white flowers known for their sweetness (*madhuka*, well-known in Sanskrit treatises on traditional medicine); utilised for a variety of country rhum

70. THE PILGRIMAGE

1

How old is the night ?

Nobody replied.

Since, blind Time groped amidst the labyrinth of ages,
the way was unknown,

No one had any notion of where ended the path.

At the foothills obscurity resembled the orbits of a deceased ogre;

Piles of clouds were clinging to the breast of the sky;

Heaps of darkness stuck to the cavernous holes

Looking like chopped limbs of the dead of night;

An igneous intensity

Lit up and died from moment to moment :

Could that be the menace of an unknown and ominous planet ?

Could that be the blazing and greedy tongue of hunger without beginning ?

The scattered objects all looked like a monologue in delirium,

The dusty left-over of an unfinished biological play;

They were merely broken arches of arrogant and intemperate might,

Attached to oblivion, a worn out bridge over a forlorn river,

An altar studded with vipers' den inside a temple without deity,

A broken flight of unfinished steps leading to void.

A sudden vehement din seething and revolving in the sky...

Could it be an imprisoned flood raging to rush out of its cavern ?

Could it be a demented ascetic's whirling utterance of wrathful syllables ?

Could it be a suicidal thunder-cry of a great forest invaded by fire ?

Below this tumultuous and terrible uproar an indistinct serpentine stream of sound :

As if - gushing out of a volcano - a bubbling flow of lava

Wherein mingled angry whispers against other people's fortune,
and ugly rumours,

Coarse laughter of contempt.

There men moved about

Errant, like torn pages from history...

In the light and the shadow of the torches their faces

Tattooed with chimeras.

At times out of a baseless suspicion a crazy man

Pounced on his neighbour.

In no time a quarrel without justice unfurled on all sides.

A certain woman started lamenting in a distressed tone,

Crying : "Alas, our wayward child has become a wreck."

Some fille de joie nude in their intoxicating youth burst out laughing,

Exclaiming : "Nothing ever begets of nothing."

2

On the hill-top sat the devotee, enveloped in a snow-white calm;

His sleepless eyes scanned the sky for a signal of light.

When the clouds got dense, when a night-bird flew past hooting,

Assuring : "Fear not brothers, consider that man is great."

No one believed it, claiming brute force to be the Divine Force,

claiming the animal as perennial.

They jeered at saintliness as a camouflage to deceive oneself.

Once hurt, they called out in sorrow : "Brother, where are you ?"

And heard the answer : "I am by your side."

Unable to perceive in the dark, they argued : "This message

is an illusion created by the panick-stricken,

A deluded self-consolation."

They professed : "Man has to struggle eternally

For his right over mirages

In the midst of an endless desert littered with hatred-thorns."

3

The clouds had dispersed.

On the eastern horizon rose the morning star,

The breast of the earth heaved a sigh of comfort,

Undulated rustling of twigs along the paths in the woods,

Birds sang from branch to branch.

The devotee called out : "It is time."

Time for what ?

For setting out.

The others sat on thinking.

Understood it not, each creating a meaning

convenient for each one's mind.

Up to the depth of the soil sank the caress of dawn,

The restlessness of life shook the roots of the cosmic being.

Who knows from where a voice extremely subtle

Whispered in everybody's ears :

"Come along to the pilgrimage of accomplishment."

From voice to voice, in the crowd, this message

Acquired velocity in a noble inspiration.

Men lifted up their gaze,

Women joined their hands to touch their forehead.

Children started laughing and clapping.

The first ray of the dawn besmeared the devotee's head
with a golden paste of sandalwood.

Everybody cried : "Brother, we bow to you."

4

The pilgrims set out on all sides,
Across oceans, climbing mountains, treading pathless grounds...

Some from the land of the Nile and some
from the banks of the Ganges,

From the snow-decked plateau of Tibet,
Marching through the royal gates of walls protecting cities,
Making their way through a tangle of creepers in a forest.

Some on their feet, some on camels, or horses or elephants,
Some flowing their banner of Chinese silk.

Priests of various faiths came burning incense
and chanting hymns.

Came kings, the spearheads of their sentinels blazing in the sun,
War-drums pealing like thunder-bolts.

Came monks in tattered loin-clothes
And counsellors of princes
clad in gorgeous and golden brocades.

Young students nimble in their gait
Advanced, jostling professors slow-paced under the weight
of their wisdom and their age.

Livening up with laughter, women went :
some mothers, some spinsters, and some wives,

Carrying on their salvers white sandalwood paste

and perfumes in their water-cans.

Came also prostitutes with shrill voice

And gaudy in their make-up.

Invalids came, came lame and blind and sick men,

And religion-mongers dressed like saints,

Those, whose commerce is to sell God from mart to mart.

Fulfilment !

Stating nothing distinctly they keep on explaining the term

Attaching a noble name and a great price to their covetousness

And create a false paradise with their infinite impunity in stealing

And their tireless hankering for clay-sullied human flesh.

5

The merciless difficult path is strewn with pebbles.

The devotee marched on, behind him the stout and the lean,

The young and the senility-stricken,

those who govern the earth

And those who - in exchange of half-starving - till the soil.

Some were exhausted, with bruised feet,

some angry, some suspicious in their heart,

They counted every step and enquired : "How far is it ?"

In reply, the devotee went on singing.

On listening to it they frowned though they could not turn back,

The pressure of the moving mass of people

and the goading of a hope not so very pronounced

Pushed them onward.

They started sleeping less, they shortened their siesta,

Eager in the contest of surpassing each other
They feared of being losers with their delay.
Day after day went on.
Horizon after horizon appeared,
The call of the unknown incited with invisible gestures.
Their face grew increasingly hard
And their censure vehement ever more.

6

It was night.
The wayfarers unfolded their mats beneath the banian and sat.
The lamp was blown out by a gust of wind, dense darkness...
As though sleep prevailed in the midst of a swoon.
Suddenly someone stood up among the crowd
And shouted, the index pointed at the leader :
"Liar, you have deceived us."
The reproving gained momentum from voice to voice.
The women's hostility grew violent, virulent the vociferation of men.
All of a sudden, someone audacious stood up
and thrashed him in a terrible rage.
In the dark his face could not be seen.
One after the other they stood and thrust on him blows after blows.
His lifeless body tumbled on the ground.
Silent night.
At a distance a faint gurgling of a fountain was heard.
A soft scent of jasmine in the air.

7

The pilgrims' hearts were benumbed by worry.

The women were weeping; irritated men

enjoined them to keep quiet.

Barking, the dogs moaned, whipped to remain silent.

The night seemed unending.

Shrill in a crescendo, women and men accused each other of crimes.

All shouted and roared

Till when they were unsheathing their daggers and darkness wilted :

Pervading the summits the morning light filled the sky.

Suddenly a calm reigned.

One ray of the sun like an index touched

The peaceful forehead of the blood-smeared corpse.

It drove women lamenting and men hid their faces in their hands.

Some wanting discreetly to flee, could not :

They were tied to their victim with the chain of their crime.

They ask each other : "Who is going to show us the path ?"

The old man from the East replied :

"He whom we have killed will do it."

All were dumbfounded, crestfallen.

The old man continued : "We have denied him out of mistrust,

We have killed him out of anger,

We shall now accept him out of love

Since through death he has been resuscitated to our lives,

That great conqueror of death."

Standing up, all set out to sing in unison :

"Victory, O victory to the conqueror of death."

The young ones rallied : "Let us set out

for the pilgrimage of love, for the pilgrimage of strength."

A cascade of thousands of voices roared :

"We shall conquer this world and the world beyond."

The object was not clear to everyone,

though they stood together in their zeal.

The impetus of their collective and driving will

taught them to defy danger and death.

They no more asked the way to take, they

their mind no more had doubt,

Their feet no more knew fatigue.

The soul of their deceased leader lived

within and without them :

He had indeed transcended death and gone

beyond the reach of life.

They walked through that field where seeds were sown,

They marched past that granary where the harvest was stored

And upon that barren land where

Skeleton-like bodies squat, hungry of life.

They roamed through streets of cities crowded with men,

Wandered through a crowdless void

Where dumb past remains mum with shattered glory on its lap.

They went along the dwellings of denizens unknown to fortune

Where the shelter mocked at the sheltered.

The travelled through path to path long hours of sun-burnt May.

When the light grew dim in the dusk

they enquired with the knower-of-Time :

"Is that, yonder, the steeple of our ultimate hope ?"

He replied : "Alas, no : it is but the fading glow of the setting sun

on the top of the evening sky."

The young ones urged : "Don't halt, O friends,

across the blind and tenebrous night

We must attain the deathless realm of light."

They marched on in the dark.

The way seemed to know its own significance,

Even the dust below the feet by its mute touch

seemed to indicate the path.

In silence, heaven-bound flights of constellations seemed to sing :

"Companions, march forward."

The celestial voice of the leader reached their ears : "Little time is left."

The first rays of early dawn

Glittered from dew-laden leaves of the forest.

Wanted to augur the signals from the constellations,

the astrologer declared : "Friends, here we are."

On both sides of the way up to the horizon

Ripe ears of cereals swayed in the serene breeze :

Message of joy from the earth

in response of the golden scroll from the sky.

From the foothill villages up to the villages on the river banks

The daily routine of the people peacefully :

The potter's wheel turned and hummed,

The lumberjack brought to the market his stere,

The cowherd led his cattle to the field,

Housewives carried their pitchers from the river

along the shadowy alleys.

But no sign of a royal fortress, nor a gold mine,

nor even a palm-leaf manuscript on occult rites ?

The astrologer confirmed : "Intimation from the planets is infallible :

They indicate that the journey ends here."

Then on bending the head in devotion

he went and stood near a wayside source.

Out of that source gushed water as though liquefied light,

As though the morning overflowed

with currents of songs mingling laughter and tear.

Nearby, a hut stood beneath a palm bower

Immersed in an ineffable quiet.

Before the door sang a poet from an unknown shore :

"Mother, open the door."

10

A ray of the morning sun lay oblique below the condemned door.

People in the assembly seemed to hear their veins resound

That first and ultimate message of the creation : "Mother, open the door."

The door opened ajar.

The mother sat on the grass-bed, the baby on her lap,

As if the morning star on the lap of dawn.

The patient ray of the sun from the doorway

caressed the baby's head.

The poet struck on the cords of his lute, his song reached the sky :

"Victory to Man, to that New-born, to that eternally living."

Everybody knelt down - kings and beggars,

saints and sinners, wise men and stupid;

They proclaimed loudly : "Victory to Man,

To that New-born, to that eternally living."

[*Punashcha*, "Post Scrpitum", 1931]

71. The Bride

In man's history, an endeavour - foaming and ardent - keeps on roaring;
Arising from the obscure womb of the past a stallion-like wave
Surges in the void; it heralds a great future.
On the shore of Time present, a mountain with its matrix of fire
Waves in its new-born splendour a shining scarf
Welcoming the rising sun. Unforeseen, an unforethought
Human horoscope being composed in an unknown script
Assuming a radiant stature, I saw; in its voice
I heard the message of creation in throbbing fiery notes
Conquering death.

In the upheaval of this epoch's end I see you, my Child,
In the garment of a bride, a dancing waterfall, all of a sudden
Merging into a lake, all jocund and restless plays
Steering for the depth; confident, staking the world
You are unveiling the mystery of creation in a new life.
The magic of the author of history in cosmic weal and woe
That spreads in a great fun a wonder from land to land
From age to age, in the firmament of the hearts of men and women,
Is also this drama of creation in the luminous history of the world.

[*parishesh*, "Epilogue", 1932]

72. ABOUT MUSIC¹¹

You have asked me to speak on music;
Though I feel diffident, yet I shall do it.
Man's knowledge has created its adequate language.
Man's awareness is non-receptive and mute,
As mute as the universe.
That great mute reveals itself through gestures,
Without explanation.
That mute universe has its posture, its rhythm,
its dance from sky to sky.

Each of the infinite atoms and nuclei has created
its own circle for dance,
and dances within its bounds,
constructing endless forms.
A dauntless awareness of fiery impetus lies at its core.
That awareness is seeking its own expression,
Right from the flowers of grass up to
the stars in the sky.

Whenever man's awareness overlooks its limits
and seeks to be conveyed by words,

¹¹ To Dhurjatiprasad Mukhopadhyaya

His words become mute at once,
those words grope for gestures and signals,
grobe for dance and melody,
inverts its own signification,
by twisting rules.

Men compose messages of the mute in their poetry.

Whenever men's awareness chooses melody as vehicle

Much like kinetic masses of atoms
They assemble tones within limits,
Furnish them with gestures,
Make them dance in varied revolutions.

That dance imprisoned in limits
Receive a form made of songs.

Troupes of those mute forms reunite
In the sanctuary of creation,
All the ballerinas of the forms
Keep their paces with others
In the nuptial *dol*¹² with agitated ankle-bells.

I know it, however,

¹² The youthful feast of Radha and Krishna on the full-moon night of May

The man who intimates this

Through phrases or melodies or lines

Is an erudite no doubt :

He whose heart can declare

"Sure, I enjoy, I suffer, I contemplate forms",

Does deserve songs.

Even if he ignores doctrines,

Melody flows through his veins.

If you happen to see Narad¹³,

Ask what he thinks of this,

Not for starting disputes¹⁴

But to find the shore of principles beyond all definition.

[*Shesh saptak*, "The Last Septet", No. 17, 1935]

¹³ The celestial bard who is reputed to have created music

¹⁴ A popular image of Narad qualifies him as expert in setting people to quarrelling

73. Alter Ego

Since the beginning he has been accompanying me,

That old man of a considerable age,

Identified with my self.

Today I inform him :

We must separate.

He has come down the flow of blood

Of millions of ancestors :

His thirst, his hunger are age-old,

All his longings since a remote and uninterrupted past

Have perturbed ever so many days and nights.

With that privilege he came and took possession

Of this receptacle indwelling a new-born life,

That ancient one, that beggar.

A celestial message prevailing from above

Gets polluted by his turmoil;

Whenever with offerings I adorn my plate for worship

He tends his hand to usurp them.

The burning of his desire

Wears him out day by day, at every instant,

He envelopes me with his decrepitude,

I who cannot be worn out.

He has won my sympathy from moment to moment,

The reason for which when death clutches him,

I feel worried,

I who am deathless.

I shall now keep apart.

Let him be outside my door,

That old and famished man.

Let him beg and let him enjoy,

Let him pass his days

Mending his torn wrapper;

Let him peck the scattered grains

From the parcel of land that divides

Death and birth.

Sitting near my window I shall observe

That traveler of such a long way,

Who has been coming since such a long time,

Following the meandering path of so many bodies and minds,

Steering on so many barks of death.

Sitting upstairs I shall see him

Inventing several antics

In the heaving of hope and despair

in the light and shade of happiness and woe.

I shall watch him as it were a puppet show,

I shall laugh at him aside.

Free I am, I am transparent, I am master of myself,

I am the light for time eternal,

I am the flow of joy at the source of creation,

I am a midget,

I do not possess anything

Immured in vanity.

[*Shesh saptak*, "The Last Septet", No. 22, 1935]

74. Gift returned

In your temple the poet's composition

Lights the incense of rhythm

Out of that magic vapour

Emerged the form of your spirit.

You thus received, Woman, a body beyond the body

Which is like a rainbow beyond all reach

Colourful in its rays,

You received the trickle of the deathless message

From the broken nectar-chalice.

Desire drives you away far beyond

The limits of desire,

Creating your seat far away

It deceives only itself.

With dream-lines it etches the image of trance

And hides it behind an exquisite veil,

Making it unfamiliar,

It refuses to denude her

Lest the dream gets shattered.

Bedecked as that statue is

With gifts of an admiring heart,

It is filled with the very life-beat

From the warmth of my life-breath.

I wonder what a power prevailed in between

To appear with the heat of a mystic fire

And found the philosopher's stone,

I wonder how in her eyes reverberate

Echoes of a magic speech.

She returned to the poet a greater gift

That the gift she had received,

In secret she played the melancholic melody

On the deep strings of the *veena*.

Wear the flower-garland from the beloved hand,

Cover the neck of your lover once more

With the garland you received from him,

You surrender yourself worthy

Of the worth of your lord.

[*Bithika*, "Avenue", 1933]

75. The Tribal Girl

Comes and goes the tribal girl
Along the pebbled pathway below the blazing *shimul*.¹⁵
A coarse sari tightly winds around her dark slim limbs.
Probably some absent-minded artisan of God
Desiring to mold a certain black bird
And chancing on right elements
in the clouds and the lightning flashes of July
Fashioned that woman.
Both her wings
Remain concealed and unseen within,
Walking and flying have mingled in her lilting gait.
A few lac-covered bangles motley and white
Around her two plump wrists,
Carrying a basketful of clay on her head,
She comes and goes again and again.
Swaying the red border of her sari's fold
She caresses the sky with the spell of *palash*.¹⁶

December is almost over,
The north wind brings a slight hint from the south.
On the branches of the *himjhuri*¹⁷
Young restless leaves keep on glistening
In winter sun.
The kites drift away on the pale blue sky.

¹⁵ Tall thorny trees with red flowers (*Salmalia malabarica*, Dc, Schott. & Endl.)

¹⁶ Another red flower, symbol of Spring (*Butea frondosa* Koenig-ex, Roxb.)

¹⁷ "icicle", white long-stemmed flowers hanging from tall trees (*Millingtonia hortensis*)

Under the *amlaki*¹⁸ trees the ground is strewn with fruits,

Where gather boys in flocks.

Light and shade get entwined across the labyrinthine forest path,

Dead leaves come whirling all of a sudden,

At the mercy of a startled wind.

Behind the shrub

The swollen-neck lizard sits still on the grass.

Carrying her basket, the tribal girl comes and goes again and again.

My earth-made hut -

Being just constructed - keep busy labourers of all kind :

With their back in the sun

Slowly they consolidate the foundation.

Now and then

The distant whistle of a train is heard;

Hours pass and the day declines,

Ding dong rings a bell pervading the horizon's air.

While I watch,

With a touch of shame I wonder :

How could I purchase the service as a menial worker

Of this adolescent girl who has blossomed

In her body and mind

The innate energy of a woman

For a rural household,

Rich in self-giving

And serene like nectar tending others ?

¹⁸ *Phyllanthus emblica* Linn : its fruits are known for their medicinal properties, one of the three basic ingredients of *ayurveda*

Against an insulting salary, like a burglar I have stolen with my money

That very energy.

The tribal girl comes carrying her basket full of clay.

[*Bithika*, "Avenue", 1933]

76. Africa¹⁹

In those perplexed primitive times

Fed up with himself when the Creator

Had been undoing the new creation over and over again,

In those days of his impatient nodding

The terrible hands of the ocean

Snatched you away from the bosom

Of the Oriental world, O Africa,

Confining you to the intimate vigil of the tall forest trees,

In the sanctum niggardly in light.

Within that secret recess

You had been collecting the mystery of the impenetrable

In an apprenticeship of the unintelligible auguries

behind water and earth and sky,

A magic escaping Nature's glance

Had been resounding the sacred syllable in your superconscient mind.

Disguised in adversity

You had been laughing at the redoubtable,

Desiring to tame your diffidence

Transforming yourself into the intense and scorching grandeur

¹⁹ Two other versions of the same poem appear in the bibliographical note at the end of Vol. X of the Collected Works in Bengali by Rabindranath : (a) 74 lines of unrhymed free verse, published in *Visvabharati Patrika*, No. 2, 1351 Bengali Year (1944); (2) 53 lines of unrhymed free verse from *Kavita*, October 1937

Of a nightmare

Accompanied by the war-drums of an apocalyptic dance.

O shadowed woman !

Behind your dark veil loomed

Unknown the silhouette of your humanity

Facing the vicious gaze of indifference.

With nails far sharper than those of your packs of wolf

They approached you with their handcuffs of steel,

Appeared hunters of men

Far more blinded by their conceit

than your sunless forests.

The civilised, out of their savage appetite

Stripped naked their shameless barbarity.

The woodlands shrouded in the vapour of your wordless whimper

Turned the dust into mud with your blood and tears;

Crushed by the spiked shoes of the robber-feet

Lumps of hideous clay

Marked with indelible scars

the history of your humiliation.

Right at that moment, across the ocean, from district to district

Inside the temples rang the bells for worship

Every morning and evening

to celebrate the Merciful God,

Whereas children played on their mothers' lap,

The poets' songs were heard in Beauty's praise.

Today when on the Western horizon
Evening grows suffocating under a tempest
When from their hidden den the beasts emerge
To announce in ominous sounds that the day is done,
Arise, O Poet of the epoch's end,
Under the last waning ray of the dusk
Stand on the doorway of that Woman ripped of her honour
And pray : "Forgive us !"
In the midst of a fierce delirium
Let that be the final pious message of your civilisation.

[*Patraput*, "Leaf-made cask", No. 16, 1937]

77. War-mongers²⁰

The bass drum of war started pealing.
Their necks turned downward, reddening their eyes,
They started chattering their teeth
And set out in gangs to complete the feast of Death
With the raw flesh of men.
First of all they marched towards the temple of Buddha,
the compassionate
For invoking his blessings.
Roared the war-drums with volleys of their horns,
Trembled the earth.
The incense burnt, rang the bells and prayers echoed in the sky :

²⁰ In a note, Rabindranath mentioned that a Japanese warrior had been to a Temple dedicated to Buddha, to pray for his success in the war : "they are piercing China with their arrows of power and Buddha with their arrows of devotion." (cf: Complete Works in Bengali, Vol. 10, p.668, 1997 edition).

"Mercy on us, fulfill our desire !"

Since they were about to induce heart-rending cries

Piercing the air,

Tear in the dwellings all ties of love,

Hoist their banner on forgotten villages brought down to ashes,

Lower up to dust all homes of knowledge,

Shatter the seats where beauty is adored.

Therefore they march on to receive the blessings of Buddha the All Mercy.

Roared the war-drums with volleys of their horns,

Trembled the earth.

They will keep an account of the number of persons killed

And of those who got maimed,

Beating the rhythm, after every thousand

They will mark on their tympani in triumph.

They will arouse the guffawing of fiends

By scattering the tattered limbs of women and children.

They merely implore to fill people's ears

With the message of falsehood,

To intoxicate people's breath with venom.

Led by that hope they march towards the temple

of Buddha the Merciful

To receive the blessings of his serene face.

The war-drums are roaring with volleys of their horns,

The earth is trembling.

[*Patraput*, "Leaf-made cask", No. 17, 1937]

78. Self

Borrowing the colour of my consciousness emerald is green,

Ruby became red.

I gazed at the sky and

There was light

In the East, in the West.

Turning to the rose I said : "Beautiful",

Beautiful it became.

You may well object : All these are principles,

Far from the utterance of a poet.

I shall reply : Being truth,

Poetry this is.

I take pride in it,

Pride on behalf of all men.

On the very foil of human pride

Lies the cosmic Artisan's²¹ cosmic art.

The knower of Principles counts the beads

and controls his breath :

"No! No! No!

Neither emerald, nor ruby, neither light, nor rose,

Neither I, nor you."

Whereas, He who is infinite

has performed his asceticism

Within the reach of men,

He whom we call Self.

In the depth of that Self, light had intercourse with shade,

²¹ Vishvakarma, Indian variant of Vulcan

Giving birth to forms and

permeating all with relish.

Who knows what magic words transformed "No" into "Yes"

And lines and colours and pleasure and pain.

Call this not Principle :

My heart has rejoiced

By holding in my hand a brush and colour in a pot

In the assembly where composes the World-Self.

The savant retorts :

"The old moon with his cruel and cunning smile

Approaches stealthily near the ribs of the earth

Like a messenger from death,

Planning to wrest ultimately

her oceans and her mountains;

Among the mortals on the new register of ageless Time

A page will be filled with a zero,

Eating up the accounts of nights and days;

Human achievement will lose its feigned immortality,

Man's history shall be smudged

With the ink of infinite night.

The eyes of man's departure day

Shall wipe off all colours from the universe,

The mind of man's departure day

Shall suck dry all relish.

The tremor of Power reigning from sky to sky,

There shall be no light.

The musicians' fingers shall dance on

in a concert deprived of *veena*²²,

No melody shall be heard.

On that very day the Dispenser without poetry will be sovereign

sitting alone

In the blue-less sky

With the principles of existential mathematics, bereft of all personality.

And then throughout the vast universe,

At a distance and yet farther

in an infinite innumerable succession of worlds,

Nowhere shall resound this message :

"You are beautiful.."

"I love you..."

Shall the Dispenser resume again his asceticism

For ages to come ?

On dusks of deluge shall He keep on repeating :

"Speak, O speak!"

Shall He insist : "Tell, you are beautiful" ?

Shall He insist : "Tell, I love you."

[*Shyamali*, "The Dark lady", 1936]

²² a lute.

80. The Last Call

Female vipers all around blow their poisonous breath,
A vain farce will be to utter the delicate message of Peace -
Therefore before parting
I keep on rallying
Those who get prepared from house to house
For fighting with demons.

[Prantik, "The Border Land", No. 18, 1937]

81. Awaiting

In the endless sky, the great ascetic,
The Great Time remains awake
He whom nobody has known as yet,
He who has nowhere manifested himself,
For that unconceivable advent
beyond imagination
The Great Time remains awake.
The novel song that never before on earth
Has been heard anywhere,
Its praise is being repeated in the realm of Mystery
Through unhurt vibrations.²⁵
The barrage will overflow in the heavenly City,
Ever new melodies will come surging,
The old rampart of the deaf epoch
Will be carried away.
He whose identity is remembered by none,

²⁵ anahata rava [dhvani]

He whose name has never been heard,
Unknowing Him, the entire world
 Awaits on the path to glimpse Him.
In the untasted before liquor of his Truth
The heart shall start with an unaccustomed caress,
Dead and dank all material sheath
 Will vanish instantly,
 With that hope, down the ages
The Great Time remains awake.

[*Senjuti*, "Lamp for the Evening rites", 1936]

82. Traffic

Those are men on the path, you are on wayside,
They are rushing to their work, work does not concern you.
Age has given you plentifully, and has robbed you, as well,
Much more has been lost than whatever you could save.
Scars appear, other scars cover them,
No scar remains distinct at the end.
Places where familiar faces had a nest
Grew easily into an unknown crowd.
You smile serenely whereas they expect
To spend their day unruffled, indeed.

[*Senjuti*, "Lamp for the Evening rites", 1936]

83. Parting Word

The games are over in this room,
Time now to close the door.
By this arrhythmic end of day
You who had existed unseen
In the innermost core of life,
Now come back and stand.
For a moment's intense flash
I glimpse with awakened eyes,
I identify as the very last vestige of this play
Whatever you have left behind, whatever
you have reserved as the ultimate gain.
An intimate meeting has not satiated mine eyes,
Hence I think at the back of my mind :
In the episode of a separation at a distant horizon
Plenitude will reveal itself through the rays of the setting sun.
I wonder whether I shall be able to understand
following the contours of the Annihilation
In their light and shade
The reason for this coming and going,
The reason of acquiring all this for the sake of losing.
I ignore whether you, poet and artist, by chance
Will paint with fresh colours the smudged picture of this day.

[*navajatak*, "The New-born", 1940]

84. Passing by

Love had come
with such silent steps
That I had taken her to be a dream
and I offered her no seat.
When she went away, on hearing the door
opening,
I ran to bring her back.
By that time she was a dream without body
Mingling with the night,
Her distant flame
was a mirage all red.

[*shantai*, "The Oboe", 1940]

85. Adieu

Springtide passes with a smile, while parting
Leaves the caress of the last flowers on the forest's brow.
Likewise, you will have to leave, I know,
Your smile will flash
Blossoms of *ashoka*²⁶ will fall from your tresses
marking the beats of a dance.

The raft for the parting game will keep on drifting
While I shall be staring on the lonely bank.

Whereas the setting sun will pour

²⁶ Red flowers signifying "Absence of grief"

Coloured rays upon your sail
 Behind the veil of my night
Darkness lingers.

[*shanai*, "The Oboe", 1940]

86. Dream-Companion

 She who had been wandering in my dreams
I had not recognised her as yet,
 Having whiled my days away.
 You called me at an auspicious moment
 Relieved me of my shame,
I came to know who you are.

I can no more fight
 Against this ceaseless doubt
To know who will turn me back
 out of disgrace,
Who will greet me ever,
 Who will attach some value to me
In the agony of her love.
 Once when truly I understood only you.

[*shanai*, "The Oboe", 1940]

87. Consolation

I have no trust in my deeds.
I know the ocean of Time
With persistent waves slashing
Will erode it day by day.
I trust only myself.
Every day and every night
Filling that chalice
I have drunk the perennial nectar
Of the universe :
The love of every moment
Gathered at its bottom.
Its burden of suffering crushed none,
In its art
No dust has been soiled.
I know, when I leave
The theatre of existence,
The flowery woodlands from season to season
Will testify that I loved.
I loved this universe.
Gift of this birth,
This very love is true.
At the moment of my departure,
Untarnished, this truth shall disown death.

[*rogshajyay*, "From the Sick-bed", No.26, 1940]

88. Credo

The touch of joy I sense at the core of light,
I know it for certain that my soul is not distinct from it.
From the same original luminous source
With the holy current of consciousness
I have been baptised,
Victory has anointed my forehead,
Intimating my heritage of immortality;
I have the right to be identified
With the supreme Self
In a marvelous world,
I have access to the way of Joy.

[*arogya*, "Convalescence", No. 32, 1940]

89. Intimation

That was my birthday.
With my morning obeisance
I gazed at the horizon of the east
And contemplated freshly bathed Dawn
Anointing with sandalwood of light
The snow-white and tender
forehead of the snowy Summit.
I discovered on the throne of the Lord of Mountains
The very image
Of the great span at the heart of the universe.
From age to age in its supreme awe
The shadowy unknown it has been nurturing

The dream of an imminent separation
darkens my spirit.

I know this birthday
Is going to turn into a less marvelous day,
Mingling in an unruffled span of Time.
The shadow of no flowery avenues
can enhance its nostalgia,
The smart of no memory can hum
at the depth of the forest,
A merciless joy will pipe the flute of this feast
Shoving away on the path the sorrow of separation.

[*janmadine*, "On my Birthday", No. 4, 1941]

91. Humility

How much do I know about this immense earth ?
The host of cities and capitals from land to land,
Glorious deeds of men, rivers, mountains, seas and deserts,
Unknown animals, ever new trees,
All that I ignore. Out of the pageant of this vast universe
My mind remains satiated with a corner too mean.
Out of that regret and with imperishable zeal
I devour travelogues, I keep collecting
Whatever picturesque description I find.
I compensate the paucity of knowledge in my mind
With all treasure I receive as alms.

[*janmadine*, "On my Birthday", No. 10, fragment 1941]

²⁸ a raga celebrating the season of spring : the heptatonic scale utilises the altered degrees Db, F# and Ab

92. Kalimpong

In the blue of the hills and the blue of the horizon

A mystic hymn with rhyme and rhythm

is being composed in the void and upon the earth.

The gold of the autumn sun bathes the forest.

Violet bees seek honey in the yellow of the flower-bunch.

I am at the centre, therefore

The sky from four sides keeps clapping silently.

Flooded by my joy, today, mingle colours with song,

Does it at all know Kalimpong ?²⁹

The mountain summit has been storing

Endless ages after ages.

One of my days could deck it with a wedding garland :

Desirous to intimate this

In the far and farther firmament of the morning

With unstruck³⁰ vibrations

The golden bell goes on ringing ding dong,

Can it be heard by Kalimpong ?

[*janmadine*, "On my Birthday", No. 14, 1941]

²⁹ Ville principale de colline appartenant à Darjeeling, en Bengale-occidentale

³⁰ anaahata, the philosophical conception of Sound

93. Blessings

Let the fortune of leading this existence
like ceaseless blessings
Caress your forehead
Like a gift of the light without beginning :
In ever new awakenings from dawn to dawn
Within the mortal span of this life.
Let the thick veil of obscurity
At the gateway of immortal sphere
Drop like a sleep-wrapped night.
O Savitur³¹, reveal now
The most benevolent of your faces,
Let me - in that advent divine -
Contemplate mine own soul far beyond death.

[*janmadine*, "On my Birthday", No. 23, 1941]

94. An Example

From the flower vase fell, one by one,
Petals from a short-lived rose.
In the realm of flowers
I see no decrepitude from death.
Ugliness is unable to scoff ultimately at life.
No flower profanes with its hatred
The soil to which it is indebted,
It pays back the faint remnants
of its forms and perfumes.

³¹ The Sun-god worshipped by the sages, as known in the Gayatri-hymn

It has a melancholic touch of bidding farewell,

Exempt from blames.

I seem to find in the union

When birth-day and death-day meet face to face

An exchange of look of the exhausted day

At the horizons where rises and sets the sun :

A humble and beautiful end

of a resplendent glory.

[*janmadine*, "On my Birthday", No. 26, 1941]

95. Apotheosis

You all whom I know, yet you are so far away.

All your environment, your coming and going,

waves surging on all sides,

All belong to a familiar world, yet its hesitation to invite -

I am distant from all, yet the language of your veins

Wells from mine own heart, I feel sullen and astonished

To consider at each contact, with a confused identity,

It seems to offer the pale and meagre relationship of an exile.

I have something to give, otherwise how can lives

Find any resemblance, I cannot come with assured feet

In fear that the empty cup and the very savour of the drink

Have lost their previous appeal, perhaps the bartering

Will prove disgraceful. Therefore maintaining this distance,

From the bottom of this merciless solitude I am calling you :

The Lakshmi³² of life who has clothed me with ever new dresses

³² Goddess of beauty, harmony and riches

With her on the day of separation, by blowing off festive lamps
Will cause no humiliation out of an insulting misery,
Stripping the ornaments, will cover one by one
With colourless and artless slashes, on the forehead
Will paint an insignia with a white contour;
You, too, shall come and join with the full pitcher of life
In that final rite, probably you will hear at a distance
The well-wishing notes of a conch from beyond the horizon.

[*janmadine*, "On my Birthday", No. 29, 1941]

96. Departure

The ocean of peace ahead :
Set out the raft, O Helmsman.
You will be the eternal companion,
Accept, o accept on Your lap,
On the path towards infinity shall burn
The light of the Pole-star.

O deliverer, Your mercy, Your compassion
Will be our eternal capital
for the eternal voyage.

Let the mortal bondage wear out,
And the vast universe clasp us close,
Receive inside the heart the fearless identity
Of the great Unknown.

[*shesh lekha*, "Last Writing", No.1, 1939]

97. Ultimate Gift

I am lost on this day of my birth,
All I want is : in the contact of the hands
Of those who are friends
With the ultimate liquor of tenderness or some
Carry off the final blessings of men.
My sack today is empty,
Having poured out whatsoever
I had to give.
In exchange if I receive anything -
Some affection or some forgiveness -
I shall take it with me
When I shall depart on the raft to get ashore,
In the ultimate speechless feast.

[*shesh lekha*, "Last Writing", No.10, 1941]

98. Realisation

On the bank of the Rupa-narayana³³
I woke up,
I knew that this world
Is not a dream.
I read my own name
In letters of blood,
I recognised myself
Blow after blow,
With pain after pain;
Truth is stern,

³³ A river with a significant name : Rupa ("Form" or "Beauty") + Narayana (another name of Vishnu, the Lord of Love)

I loved the stern
Which never deceives.
This life until death
is an ascetic quest of sorrow,
To earn the terrible price of Truth
Pay off all debt while dying.

[*shesh lekha*, "Last Writing", No.11, 1941]

99. Dialogue

The sun of the first day
Had asked
At the new advent of the Being :
Who are you ?
No answer came.

Year after year passed.
The last sun of the day
Uttered the last question on the shore
of the Western sea,
By a mute evening :
Who are you ?
Received no answer.

[*shesh lekha*, "Last Writing", No.13, 1941]

Nothing can deceive him,
Carrying his final trophy
He returns to his store-house.
He who has effortlessly suffered all deceit
Acquires from Your hand
The right to Peace everlastingly.

[*shesh lekha*, "Last Writing", No.16, 1941]