

THE AUGUSTAN BOOKS OF  
*MODERN POETRY*

RABINDRANATH  
TAGORE

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*The Augustan Books of Poetry*  
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## RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Rabindranath Tagore, born 1861. In 1889, took over the management of the family estates; in 1900, founded his school at Santiniketan ("Home of Peace"), Bengal. In 1912, while visiting England, published "*Gitanjali*," which met with world-wide success. In 1914, was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature; knighted, 1915; resigned his knighthood, as a protest against the measures of suppression of the Panjab disorders, 1919; founded Viswabharati University, 1921. Poet, novelist, educationist, social reformer, preacher; author of over a hundred and fifty books—poems, verse and prose dramas, children's plays, novels, short stories, school books, criticism, political tracts, sermons and ethical treatises, anthologies, autobiography, studies in history and economics.

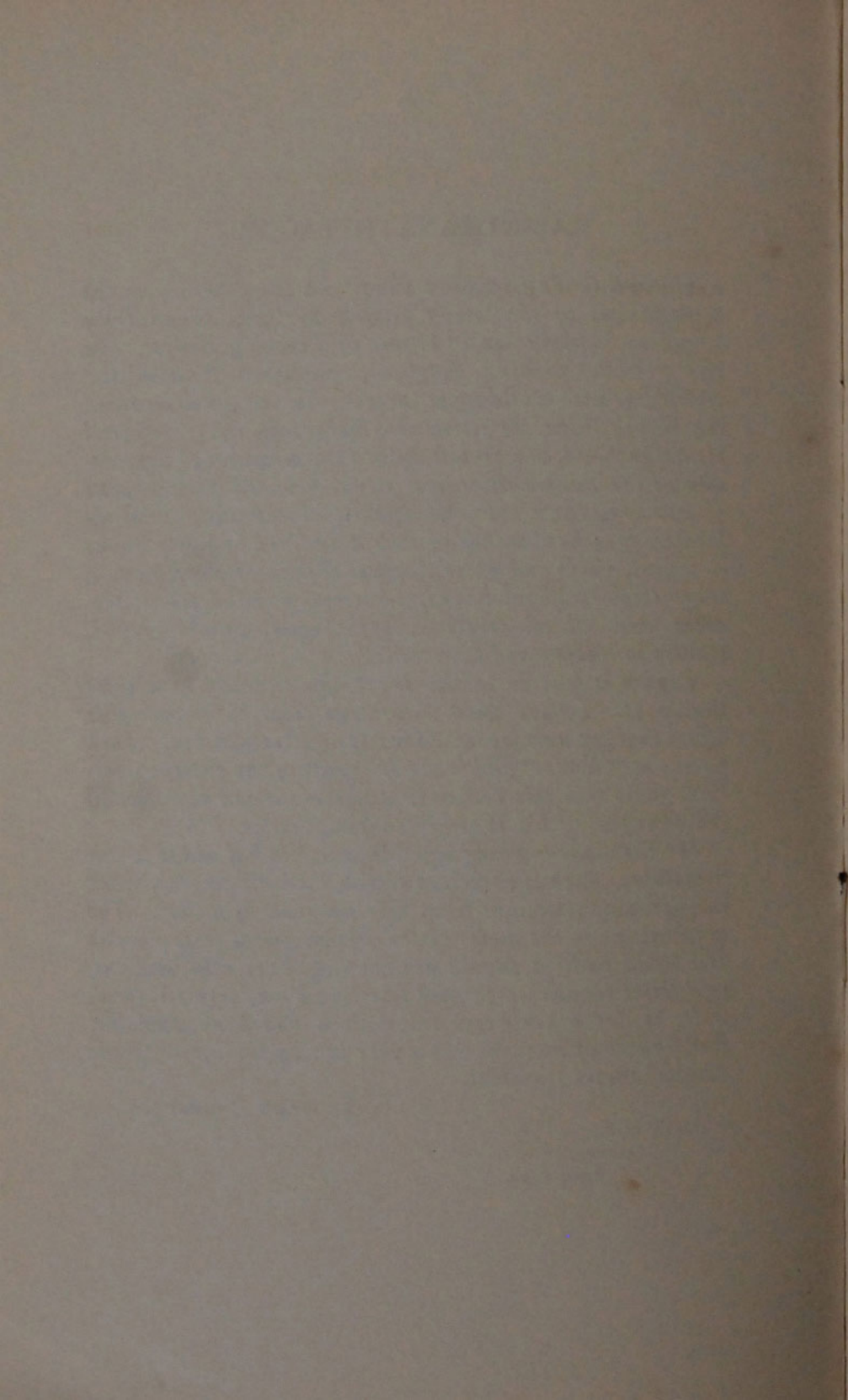
Tagore is known to the *West* almost solely as a mystical poet. I have tried to present sides of his versatile effort that are unrepresented in his own translations. Such poems as "*Noon*" and "*Sea-Waves*," in the present selection, show that this Indian is as observant and objective as the youngest of his *Western* contemporaries.

He has made our language his own, and has added to our literature, which is sufficient reason for including his work in a series of selections from English poets of to-day. The versions are in the metre of the original, or as close a metre as I could find. I should not have used my own versions, in a series for whose general selection I am largely responsible, if any other verse translations had been available. But I know of none, except a very few by foreigners whose English metre stumbles.

EDWARD THOMPSON.

BOAR'S HILL,  
OXFORD.

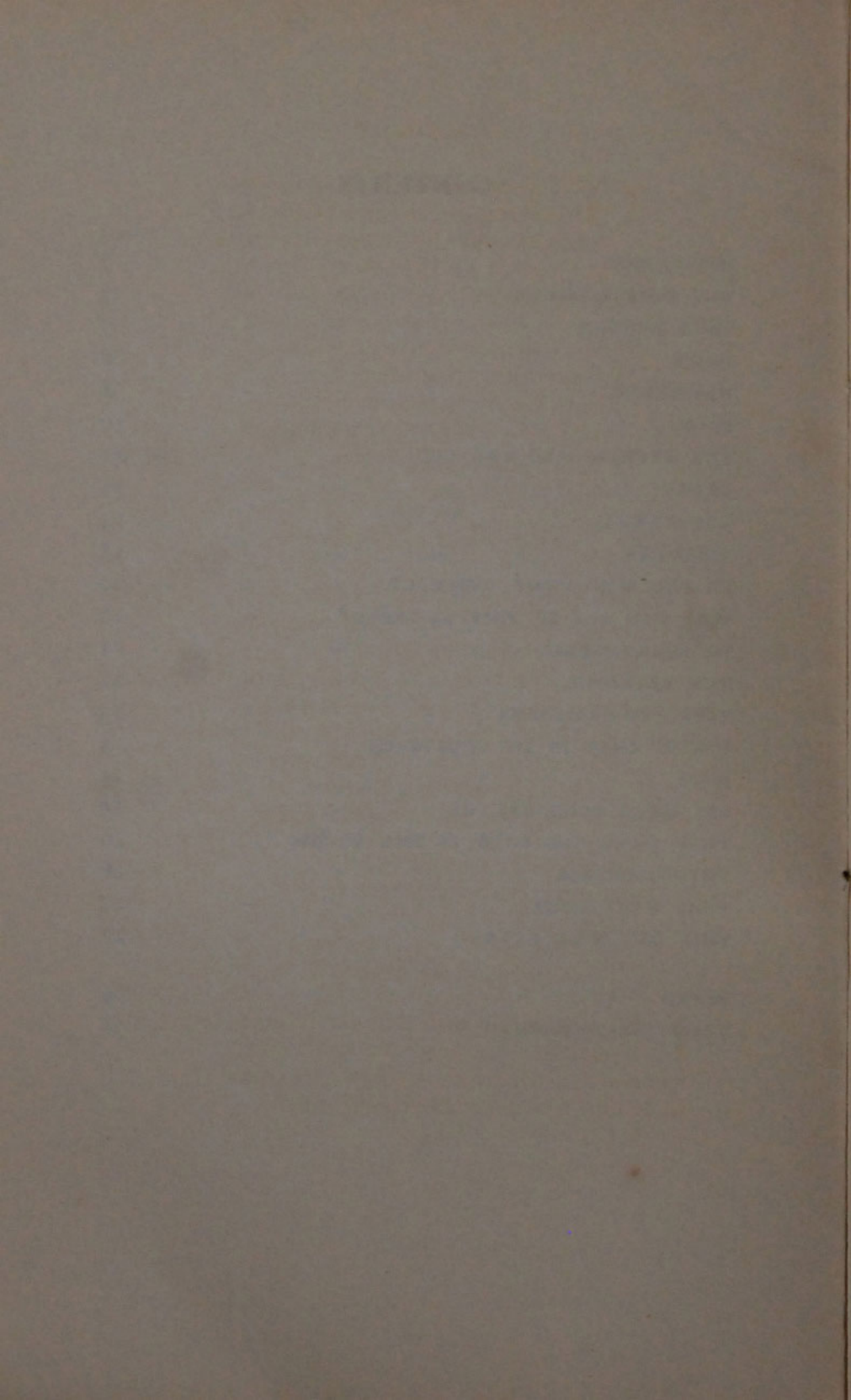
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## *Dedication*

ONCE my life, in pomp of spring,  
Flowered within her myriad ring.  
A hundred-petalled bloom, she threw  
Largesse of a leaf or two,  
Having handfuls left to fling.

Now a fruit, she strews no more  
Petals on the orchard-floor.  
Now her days are at their fall,  
And she gives herself, her all,  
Heavy with her juicy store.

## *The Poet's Dream<sup>1</sup>*

MOTHER, my sun had set. "Come, child," you said;  
You drew me to your heart and on my head  
With kisses set an everlasting light.  
About my breast, of thorns and blossoms plight,  
A garland hung, Song's guerdon—in my heart  
Its pangs burnt deep; your own hand plucked apart  
The barbs and cleansed of dust and did bedeck  
With that rekindled loveliness my neck:  
You welcomed me, your son to endless years.

Rising, I lift my heavy eyes of tears;  
I wake, I see—and all a dream appears.

## *True Wisdom<sup>2</sup>*

LET whoso will, with shut and brooding eyes,  
If earth be real or mere dream surmise!  
Meanwhile let me with thirsty vision drink  
Its beauty ere my sun of life shall sink!

## *Dawn*

**D**AWN clear and fresh; along the placid river  
A chill wind blows, setting its face ashiver;  
The geese have come not to the water-side;  
No boats have launched, with snowy sails spread wide;  
No village-wives have come, their pots to fill;<sup>3</sup>  
The fields of man and ox are empty still.  
Alone, before my open window, I  
Sit, with hot brows bared to that mighty sky;  
The wind with loving touch my hair caresses;  
The gracious sunlight wraps me round and blesses.  
The birds have poured around their songs of glee,  
Rocking the blue heavens on a nectared sea!  
Blessed am I, who see the sky's fair light!  
Blessed am I, who love an earth so bright!

## *Happiness*

**T**O-DAY is free from clouds; the happy skies  
Laugh like a friend; on breast and face and eyes  
A gracious breeze blows soft, as if there fell  
On these our bodies the invisible  
Skirts of the sleeping Heavenly Bride;<sup>4</sup> my boat,  
On the calm Padma's<sup>5</sup> peaceful breast afloat,  
Sways in the liquid plash; in distance gleam  
Half-sunken sands, like creatures of the stream  
Sprawling at bask; high, crumbled bluffs; and trees  
Dark with deep shade, and hidden cottages.  
A narrow, winding path its streak has worn  
From some far hamlet through the fields of corn,  
And dips to the water like a tongue athirst.  
The village women, to the throat immersed,  
Shrill gossip hold, their garments drifted round;  
Their high, sweet laughter makes one rippling sound



(Reaching my ears) with the light waves that run;  
With bent head and with back stooped to the sun,  
Sits an old fisher, weaving, while his boy  
Round the moored boat splashes in naked joy,  
Shouting and leaping, laughing in delight;  
The buffets of his loving hands that smite  
And cuff her, as his playful anger breaks,  
The Padma with a mother's patience takes.  
Before my boat both banks are plain in view :  
A spreading crystal clearness tinged with blue;  
On stream and land and groves, flooded with blaze  
Of noon, a streak of varied colour plays;  
In the hot breeze comes scent of mango-flowers  
Or tired call of birds amid the bowers  
O' the shore.

To-day in peaceful current flows  
The river of my life; my mind now knows  
Happiness as a very simple thing,  
As simple as the opened buds of Spring,  
Or as the laughter of an infant's face,—  
Widespread and generous, filling every place.  
Its eager lips their kiss of nectar thrust  
Into each face, with childhood's silent trust,  
Each day, each night! Its strains like music rise  
From the World-Harp, flooding the tranquil skies.  
Ah, in what rhythmic pattern shall I weave  
That music? How, that others may receive?  
And in what laughing language make it bloom,  
And cause it what fair shape and face assume,  
A gift for those most dear? With what love make  
It spread through life? This easy joy how take,  
How bring into the homes of men with ease  
A boon so soft, so gracious? If we seize  
With eager zeal, it breaks within our hands!  
We see it run! We chase through distant lands,  
But nevermore have word of it.

To-day  
Out of full soul with steadfast gaze each way  
I look and look with charmed, delighted eyes,  
Reflecting, as I watch the firm, blue skies  
And peaceful, placid stream unquivering,  
Happiness is a very simple thing!

### Noon

THE mid-day dream!  
Snared with fat weeds, the shrunk, penurious stream  
Is stagnant; sits upon a half-sunk barge  
A kingfisher; two cows beside the marge  
Browse in a fallow field; an empty boat,  
Tied to the landing, idly sags at float;  
Moist muzzle tilted to the burning skies,  
And all its soul at rest in its soft eyes,  
Soaks, plunged in peace, a wallowing buffalo;  
On the deserted *ghat* a sun-drowsed crow  
Bathes, flapping; dances on the margent green  
A wagtail; insects flaunt their various sheen,  
And float aloft, or sink at intervals  
To the damp moss; with strident, honking calls  
(Strayed from that hamlet hard at hand), a goose  
Prunes with wet beak his snowy plumes profuse;  
A hot wind rushes, bearing of burnt grass  
The fragrance—far afield its fierce gusts pass;  
On the still air the yapping quarrels sound  
Of village dogs; or Peace a voice profound  
Finds in the bellowing kine; at whiles arise  
Screechings of mynas, pipal's wearied sighs;  
Shrill keen of kites; or the tormented scream  
Of the wrenched boat at sudden tug i' the stream.



## *The Ascetic and the God*

SAID an ascetic, at the dead of night :  
"I leave my home, to find my God aright.  
Ah, who with shows of sense has chained me here?"  
"I," said his God—idly, to that dull ear.  
His wife his sleep-sunk babe clasped to her breast,  
Drugged by excess of happiness to rest—  
"But who are you, Illusion's cheats?" he cried.  
"I," rose that Voice unheeded at his side.  
Going, he called, "Where art thou, Lord?" His lord  
Made answer, "Here"—vain voice, and wasted word!  
His dreaming child cried out, and clutched his mother—  
"Return," the God commanded. But that other  
Was passed from call.  
"There goes my worshipper,"  
The God sighed, "wandering from me, none knows where!"

## *Urvasi*<sup>6</sup>

THOU art not Mother, art not Daughter, art not Bride!  
Thou beautiful, comely One,  
O Dweller in Paradise, Urvasi!  
When Evening descends on the pastures, drawing about  
her tired body her golden cloth,  
Thou lightest the evening lamp within no home.  
With hesitant, wavering steps, with throbbing breast and  
downcast look,  
Thou dost not go, smiling, fearful, to any beloved's bed,  
In the hushed midnight.  
Like the rising Dawn, thou art unveiled,  
Unshrinking One!



Like some stemless flower, blooming in thyself,  
    When didst thou blossom, Urvasi?  
That primal Spring, thou didst arise from the churning of  
    Ocean,<sup>7</sup>  
In thy right hand nectar, venom in thy left.  
The swelling, mighty Sea, like a serpent tamed with spells,  
Drooping his thousand, towering hoods,  
    Fell at thy feet!  
White as the *kunda*<sup>8</sup> blossom, a naked beauty, adored by  
    the King of Gods,  
    Thou flawless One!

Wast thou never bud, never maiden of tender years,  
    O eternally youthful Urvasi?  
Sitting alone, under whose dark roof  
Didst thou know childhood's play, toying with gems and  
    pearls?  
At whose side, in some chamber lit with the flashing of  
    gems,  
Lulled by the chant of the sea-waves, didst thou sleep, in  
    coral bed,  
    A smile on thy pure face?  
That moment when thou awakedst into the universe, thou  
    wast framed of youth,  
    In full-blown beauty!

From age to age thou hast been the world's beloved,  
    O unsurpassed in loveliness, Urvasi!  
Breaking their meditation, sages lay at thy feet the fruits of  
    their penance;  
Smitten with thy glance, the three worlds<sup>9</sup> grow restless  
    with youth;  
The blinded winds blow thine intoxicating fragrance  
    around;  
Like the black bee, honey-drunken, the infatuated poet  
    wanders, with greedy heart.

Lifting chants of wild jubilation!  
While thou . . . thou goest, with jingling anklets and  
waving skirts,  
Restless as lightning!

In the assembly of Gods, when thou dancest in ecstasy of  
joy,

O swaying Wave, Urvasi!  
The companies of billows in mid-ocean swell and dance,  
beat on beat;

In the crests of the corn the skirts of Earth tremble;  
From thy necklace stars fall off in the sky;  
Suddenly in the breast of man the heart forgets itself,  
The blood dances!

Suddenly in the horizon thy zone bursts,  
Ah, wild in abandon!

On the Sunrise Mount of Heaven thou art the embodied  
Dawn,

O world-enchancing Urvasi!  
The slimness of thy form is washed with the tears of the  
universe;

The ruddy hue of thy feet is painted with the heart's blood  
of the three worlds;

Thy tresses disrobed from their braid, thou hast placed thy  
light feet,

Thy lotus-feet, on the lotus of the blossomed  
Desires of the universe!

Endless are thy masques in the mind's heaven,  
O Comrade of dreams!

Ah, hear what crying and weeping everywhere rises for thee,  
O cruel, deaf Urvasi!

Ah, will that Ancient Prime ever revisit this earth?  
From the shoreless, unfathomed deep wilt thou ever rise  
again, with wet locks?

First in the First Dawn that Form will show!



In the startled gaze of the universe all thy limbs will weep,  
The waters flowing from them!  
Suddenly the vast Sea, in songs never heard before,  
Will thunder with its waves!

She will not return, she will not return! That Moon of  
Glory has set,

She has made her home on the Mount of  
Setting,<sup>10</sup> has Urvasi!

Therefor to-day, on earth, with the joyous breath of Spring  
Mingles the long-drawn sigh of some eternal separation!

On the night of full moon, when the world brims with  
laughter,

Memory, from somewhere far away, pipes a flute that  
brings unrest,

The tears gush out!

Yet in that weeping of the spirit Hope wakes and lives;

Ah, Unfettered One!

### *Sea-Waves*<sup>11</sup>

**D**ESTRUCTION swings and rocks on the lap of the  
shoreless sea,  
In dreadful festival!

Clanging its hundred wings, the indomitable Wind  
Rages and runs!

Sky and Sea revel in mighty union,  
Veiling the world's eyelash in blackness!

The lightning starts and trembles, the waves foam in  
laughter—

The sharp, white, dreadful mirth of brute Nature!  
Eyeless, earless, homeless, loveless,

The drunken forces of Evil  
Have shattered all bonds and are rushing wildly to ruin!



Mingling all horizons, the darkened Sea  
With tumult, with crying,  
With anger, with terror, with heaving, with shouting and  
laughter,  
With mad bellows,  
Swells and seethes and crumbles,  
Struggling to find its own shores.  
It is as if, the earth flung aside, Vasuki<sup>12</sup> is playing,  
Spreading his thousand hoods, swingeing his tail!  
As if the Night has melted and shakes the ten directions  
together,  
A moving mass!  
It tears to tatters the net of its own sleep.

There is no tune, no rhythm! It is the dance of brute  
Nature,  
Meaningless, joyless!  
Can it be that vast Death, taking to himself a thousand  
lives,  
Is dancing there?  
Water, vapour, thunder, wind have found blind life,  
Are exerting aimlessly the nerves of new being.  
They know no direction, heed no stay or hindrance,  
In terror of self they rush to their ruin!  
See, in their midst are eight hundred men and women,  
Clinging to each other,  
Life clasping life! They stare before them.

Gripping the boat the Storm, an Ogress, shakes it, shouting,  
"Give! give! give!"  
Seething and foaming, the Sea lifts countless hands and  
cries,  
"Give! give! give!"  
Foaming and hissing, wroth with check and delay,  
The azure Death whitens with mighty anger!  
The frail bark can endure its weight no longer,  
Its iron ribs burst;

Above and Beneath are one, taking their plaything  
They revel and sport.  
The helmsman stands at the bows.

Men and women, shuddering, cry "God!  
God! O God!  
Have pity! have pity!"—a trembling call goes up—  
"Save us!  
Where are the familiar sun, the moon, the stars?  
Where the lap of Earth, that guards her own?  
Where are our homes, and the love that has kept through  
life?  
This is the murderous clamour of a Demon-stepmother!  
Wherever we gaze there is nothing known,  
Nothing our own!  
Only a thousand dreadful faces, and dreadful forms!"

Thou art not, O God! Pity is not! Life is not!  
There is only the sport of Nature!  
Seeing the terror, the infant is frightened, and screams and  
wails;  
The piteous cry is stilled in a moment.  
In the twinkling of an eye it ended! None could see  
When life was, and when life finished!  
It was as if in one blast a hundred lamps  
Went out in unison!  
In a thousand homes happiness was suddenly quenched.

This brute Madness knows not others' anguish;  
It knows not itself.  
Why in its midst was the mind of man placed,  
So loving, so quick to suffer?  
Why is the mother here, and the infant looking into her  
face?  
Why does brother clasp brother, and fall on his breast?  
In the sun's dear rays, ah! in how much affection



Did they play so long, sharing so much of joy and  
sorrow!  
Why do tears tremble in their eyes?  
O piteous hope!  
Terrified love shakes like the flame of a lamp!

Dandled in such a lap of storm, how can the world of men  
Rock fearless?  
Why has not the Demon Death all happiness,  
All hope devoured?  
Lo, the mother leaps into destruction! Why to her breast  
Does she clasp her child?  
She runs to the face of Death! Even there she will not  
surrender it!  
Convulsively she clutches her heart's wealth.  
On the one side stand sky and sea,  
On the other stands a woman!  
Who shall snatch her helpless infant from her?

Whence gained she such strength? See how the child of  
her breast  
She clasps to her!  
In the cruel stream of dead Nature, into the heart of man  
Whence came such love?  
Such mother-love, that never knows despair, that will not  
acknowledge peril,  
Eternally renewed with draughts of the nectar of life—  
He who but for a moment has known it, in any corner of  
the universe,  
Can he be motherless?<sup>13</sup>  
Into the heart of this storm, in a mother's weak being,  
Love has come that conquers Death!  
What Love has wakened this Love?

Jostling together, in one place, are mercy and mercilessness,  
A poisoning doubt.  
Mighty distrust, mighty hope, are comrades,



Have built their nests together.  
Which is the true, which the false, this questioning night  
and day man's heart  
Agitates, now exalting, now dashing down.  
The strength of the storm-devils strikes it, yet it ignores  
anguish;  
Love comes, and draws to the breast, banishing all fear.  
Of two Gods is this the eternal double play,  
Which breaks and builds?  
Ever an endless victory and defeat?

## *Epigrams*

### *Labour and Rest*

**L**ABOUR and Rest are bound by closest ties,  
For rest falls lidlike upon labour's eyes.

### *Kindness and Gratitude*

"Who art thou, silent one?" Eyes tear-bedewed  
Give Kindness answer, "I am Gratitude."

### *The Game of Life*

The game of life both birth and death comprises;  
To walk, our footstep falls no less than rises.

### *Self-Conceit*

Swelling with pride, the moss cries, "I to you—  
Tank, note it down—have given a drop of dew!"

### *Passing Away*

Wails the *sephali*: "O Star, I fail! I die!"  
Answers the star: "My work is finished quite!  
Flowers of the forest and stars of the sky,  
We filled the Basket of Farewell for Night."<sup>14</sup>

### *The Vanity of Lamenting*

If the night mourned the vanished sun, return  
He would not . . . but the stars would cease to burn.

### *The Inalienable*

Says Death: "I take your son;" the Thief: "Your gold;"

Says Fate: "I seize on all you have and hold;"  
"And I," the Slanderer says, "your name destroy."  
"But who," the Poet asks, "can take my joy?"

### *Love and Renunciation*

Love says: "Renunciation, your creed is one of lies!"  
"You are the chief illusion, Love," Austerity replies;  
"To those who seek salvation I say, Your own good  
shun."

Love answers: "After all, then, you and I are one!"

### *Private and Public*

The Moon says: "Freely abroad my light is strown;  
But flaw and fault scar my own face alone."

### *The Carefulness of Mediocrity*

Careless may Good beside Most Vile be seen;  
But Mediocre keeps a space between.

### *The Difference*

Condescension grumbles: "I give, yet nothing gain."  
Compassion says: "I give, still give, of nothing fain."

### *Aristocracies*

#### I

To Earthen Lamp said "Hurricane"<sup>15</sup>: "Just you dare  
Say *Brother*, and your throat in strips I'll tear!"

Just then the Moon rose o'er the heaven's rim—  
"O Elder Brother!" "Hurricane" bawled to him.



Blossomed a flower in cranny of a wall,  
 Mean, nameless, lineageless, and very small.  
 "Fie! fie!" the garden-flowers' reproaches fell;  
 The rising sun asked, "Brother, art thou well?"

*To One who Came Untimely*

GIVE up your vain attempt! Let now be heard  
 But perfect stillness, building its own word!  
 Here all was meditation late—but now  
 This heart of mine's a hermitage whose vow  
 Of brooding peace is broken with sudden fear.  
 Why come at such a time thus vainly, Dear,  
 Wearing the flowery garlands of the Spring?  
 Ah, why in bud-brimmed skirt Youth's memories bring?  
 No song is in the quiet groves to-day—  
 Along the un murmuring woodpaths only play  
 Your anklets. Why, oh! why untimely come,  
 When singing throats of yesterday are dumb?  
 The stars at sight of you all restless grow!  
 And all the buds untimely long to blow!

*Who Can Say if This be Well?*

WHO can say if this be well?  
 There were sun and stars in my radiant skies;  
 To-day you alone are the light of my eyes!  
 Who can say if this be well?  
 Beauty, its myriad shapes assuming,  
 Varying bliss, fair, shining faces,



Ever-new flowers at my door were blooming!  
My mind had a home in a hundred places,  
In tiny hopes and loves abiding!  
Sky and earth enclosed me round!  
Where are they now? They are nowhere found.  
All that I had in you is hiding!  
Who can say if this be well?

This trembling heart by your side would keep.  
Day and night I wake, and fugitive sleep  
No longer visits these vigilant eyes.  
My songs, my life, I have given away  
To you, my all in the world to-day.  
Yet, if getting all, you go from me,  
Unsatisfied still, then this earth, your throne,  
In a trice will blank and empty be—  
Death's black frame will remain alone!  
Who can say if this be well?

### *To Shakespeare*

WHEN you arose beyond the distant sea,  
And England drew you to her breast, then she,  
O Universal Poet, for her own  
Believed you—held you hers, and hers alone!  
A space she kept you, kissing your bright brows,  
Hid in the tangles of her forest-boughs,  
Screened with her skirts of fog, within that court  
Whither the elvish tribes for play resort,  
With dewy grass and full-blown wildwood flowers  
Made bright!

Not yet the island's silvan bowers  
Had wakened to your praise, O Poet-Sun!  
Now, while the ages in calm sequence run,

You, at the signal of Eternity  
Leaving the horizon's lap, by slow degree  
Have mounted to the noon's bright-blazing height,  
Have taken, filling the world's heart with light,  
Your seat i' the centre! At the ages' end,  
Lo! how beside the Indian sea ascend,  
Where fronded coco-palms sway to the breeze,  
Your praises, crowning the full centuries!

### *The Betrayal*<sup>16</sup>

WHEN the moon with its gaze drank the lotus's love,  
Seeing the poet, it laughed: "He knows not the  
language of eyes!"

When the water-lilies their soul to the wood outpoured,  
They thought: "He cannot tell what meaning in frag-  
rance lies!"

The lightning, kissing the cloud, thought, as it flashed on  
its way:

"How should this madman guess what hides in the fury  
of fire?"

Trembling upon its bough, the *malati*-creeper mused:

"I know, and the tree, we two, the language of whis-  
pered desire!"

\* \* \* \* \*

Loudly the poet sang: "O men and women, hear  
Through all these years what secret doings were hid from  
sight!

Who would have dreamed of it even? The moon stares  
down on the pale

Brows of the water-lily, sleepless aloft all night!  
On the Mount of Rising the sun stands, and the lotus  
wakes—



All these years they have wrapt their secret in cunning  
guise!  
His incantations the bee has hummed in the *malati's* ears,  
Has hummed, their meaning unguessed by your *pandits*,  
though never so wise!"

Hearing, the sun dropped down, and reddened the sky with  
shame;

The moon behind the forest's curtain slipped his head;  
Hearing, the lotus hurriedly closed her eyes on the lake;  
"Whew! we are all found out!" the south wind told her  
and fled.

"Shame! Oh, shame!" moaned the boughs; the creeper  
trembled and shook.

They wondered: "What mischief next will by this bab-  
bler be uttered?"

"This fellow who seemed to be dumb can open his mouth  
wide enough

In slander of other folk!"—to the jasmines the black bee  
muttered.

### *Siva and Kamadeva*<sup>17</sup>

**A** SCETIC,<sup>18</sup> what hast thou done, burning the Five-  
arrowed<sup>19</sup> One?

Thou hast scattered him through the world!  
His pain more troublous sighs in the wind and restlessly  
flies;

His tears roll down the heavens.  
The universe thrills to the keen of the Love-God's an-  
guished Queen;

The world's four corners wail;  
In *Phalgun*<sup>20</sup> suddenly, at sign from a god none see,  
Earth shivers and swoons.

\* \* \* \* \*

Whose robe do I see adrift, in the moonlight-flooded lift?  
Whose eyes in the still, blue sky?  
Whose is the face with gaze veiled in the shining rays?  
Whose feet on the grassy couch?  
Whose touch, when the flowers' sweet scent brims the mind  
with ravishment,  
Like a creeper entwines the heart?  
Burning the Five-arrowed One, Ascetic, what hast thou  
done?  
Thou hast scattered him through the world!

### *Spring that in My Courtyard*

SPRING that in my courtyard used to make  
Such riot once, and buzzing laughter lift,  
With heaped drift—  
Pomegranate-flowers,  
*Kanchan, parul*, rain of *palas*-showers;  
Spring whose new twigs stirred the woods awake,  
With rosy kisses maddening all the sky,<sup>21</sup>  
Seeks me out to-day with soundless feet,  
Where I sit alone. Her steadfast gaze  
Goes out to where the fields and heavens meet;  
Beside my silent cottage, silently  
She looks and sees the greenness swoon and die  
Into the azure haze.

### *Lost*

MY little maid,  
Hearing the call of her companions, went  
Timidly in the darkness down the stair;  
With outspread skirt, each step of the descent,  
Shielding her lamp, warily and afraid.



I was upon the roof, in a star-filled night  
Of *Chaitra*.<sup>22</sup> Suddenly  
I heard the wailing of her voice, and so  
Ran down to see. And there,  
The wind had doused her light,  
In midway of the stair.  
"Why, what has happened, Bami?" I asked. Then she,  
Weeping, "I am lost," sobbed answer from below.

So, on a star-filled night of *Chaitra*, oft  
I from my roof aloft  
Gaze; and I think that, like my little maid,  
A Maid walks there, in azure robes arrayed.  
Alone she walks, shielding her lamp with care. . . .  
Ah, if that light went out, if there should rise  
A cry, "I am lost!" If, in her wandering, there  
Wailing she stood, while weeping filled the skies!

### *Oft Thou Touchest Me*

OFt thou touchest me at dawn,  
Swiftly, laughingly withdrawn!  
Came what messenger of late,  
Pushing past sleep's closed gate?  
Waking to the search, I find  
That my eyes with tears are blind.

Then . . . as if the blue sky had  
Whispered heavenly things,  
Every leaping limb is glad,  
Till my body sings.  
Now my heart her dew-drenched eyes  
Opes like buds of sacrifice;  
Onward to her boundless rest  
Runs my life, with brimming breast.

## *They Have All Gone to the Woods*

THEY have all gone to the woods in this moonlit night,  
In the south wind drunken with Spring's delight.  
But I will not go, will not go;  
I will stay in the house, and so  
Wait in my lonely corner—this night  
I will not go in this south wind drunk with delight.

Rather, this room with care  
I must scour and cleanse and prepare;  
For . . . if He remembers me, then  
He will come, though I know not when;  
They must wake me swiftly. I will not fare  
Out where the drunk wind reels through the air.

## *The Conqueror*

IN his one hand are pearls;  
A sword is in the other—  
He that now thy door has broken.

He came not to beg,  
But out of strife and conquest  
Thy soul to bear away—  
He that now thy door has broken.

Along the road of Death,  
Into thy life He came—  
He that now thy door has broken.

Never will He go with half!  
Of all thou art He will  
Be absolute, sole Lord!—  
He that now thy door has broken.



## *Thou Hast Come*

**I**N my evenings Thou hast come, in beautiful raiment;  
I salute Thee.  
In the heart of my darkness Thou hast laughed;  
I salute Thee.  
In this downcast, still, deep, placid sky  
I salute Thee.  
In this gentle, peaceful, drowsy wind  
I salute Thee.  
On the grassy couch of this tired earth  
I salute Thee.  
In this silent incantation of the steadfast stars  
I salute Thee.  
In the lonely resthouse, at work's end,  
I salute Thee.  
In the flowery garland of the fragrant evening sky  
I salute Thee.

## *This Day Will Pass*

**I** KNOW this day will pass,  
This day will pass<sup>23</sup>—  
That one day, some day,  
The dim sun with tender smiling  
Will look in my face,  
Looking his last farewell.  
Beside the way the flute will sound,  
The kine will graze on the river-bank,  
The children will play in the courtyards,  
The birds will sing on.  
Yet this day will pass,  
This day will pass.

This is my prayer,  
My prayer to Thee :  
That ere I go I may learn  
Why the green Earth,  
Lifting her eyes to the sky,  
Called me to her;  
Why the silence of the Night  
Told me of the stars,  
Why the Day's glory  
Raised waves in my soul.  
This is my prayer to Thee.

When Earth's revolutions  
For me are ended,  
In the finishing of my song  
Let me pause a moment,  
That I may fill my basket  
With the flowers and fruits of the Six  
Seasons;<sup>24</sup>  
That in the light of this life  
I may see Thee in going,  
That I may garland Thee in going  
With the garland from my own throat—  
When Earth's revolutions for me are ended.



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The Bengali title is "Hope" (*i.e.*, The Poet's Hope). Most of the titles in this selection are the translator's.

<sup>2</sup> A typical protest, one out of many, against the turn which Indian metaphysics has often taken—of contempt for earth and its beauty.

<sup>3</sup> A great deal of poetry and sentiment has gathered about this morning and evening meeting of Indian village women at the riverside to draw water. It is a time of friendly gossip and rest.

<sup>4</sup> The Ten Directions—*i.e.*, the eight points of the compass, with the zenith and nadir—are represented in Hindu mythology as ten deities and their consorts. Here they are all visualised as one unseen, sleeping Sky-Beauty.

<sup>5</sup> "The Lotus"—the Ganges before its junction with the Brahma-putra.

<sup>6</sup> Urvasi, in older (*i.e.*, Sanskrit) mythology, is a famous courtesan and dancing-girl at the court of Indra, King of the Gods. Her adventures were many; she was often sent to lure sages aside from their devotions, lest they obtained super-divine powers and threatened the dominion of the Gods (see stanza 4). But in Tagore's poem she is very much more than her legendary character. The poem is a tangle—Indian mythology, modern science, European romance. She is the cosmic spirit of life, in the mazes of its eternal dance; she is Beauty dissociated from all human relationships, she is that world-enchancing Love which (though not in Dante's sense) "moves the sun and other stars," is Lucretius's *hominum divumque voluptas*, *Alma Venus*, is Swinburne's "perilous goddess," sea-foam-born.

I have adopted a quasi-metrical form which I hope will indicate the general outline of the stanza in which this magnificent ode is written.

<sup>7</sup> When the Gods churned the Ocean, to recover the lost nectar of immortality, Urvasi first appeared, one of many good and bad things that came to light. With the nectar came out poison, which threatened the life of all creatures, till Siva drank it to save the worlds. Tagore has invented Urvasi's responsibility for the nectar and poison being brought forth; at any rate, I know of no other authority for line 4 of this stanza.

<sup>8</sup> A jasmine.

<sup>9</sup> In Sanskrit mythology, heaven, the atmosphere, and earth; in later mythology, generally heaven, earth, and the underworld.

<sup>10</sup> In Indian mythology, there are Mounts of Sunrise and Sunseting.

<sup>11</sup> This poem commemorates the loss of a pilgrim-ship off Puri, in 1887.

<sup>12</sup> The serpent who upholds the earth.

<sup>13</sup> *I.e.*, since almost everyone has experienced mother-love here, can there be none in the universe? Christ taught the fatherhood of God; Hindu thought turns rather to the motherhood.

<sup>14</sup> A shrub with delightfully scented flowers, which drop off during the night. There is a famous *sephali*-grove at Santiniketan, the poet's school and home, where I remember watching a band of girls one dawn, gathering into baskets the fragrant *sephali* flowers, to thread them into garlands.

<sup>15</sup> A "hurricane" lantern, a luxury in India.

<sup>16</sup> Space has prevented more than a scrap being included from this charming piece of foolery. The poet is represented as giving away the flirtation in which all creation had indulged from the beginning; the poem's finish tells us that creation has grown careful since, and now the poet is allowed to see nothing.

<sup>17</sup> Kama, the God of Love, is the "bodiless" God. He once struck the Great God, Siva, with an arrow, and was burned to ashes by a glance from his victim's central eye (Siva is three-eyed). Tagore points out how much more pervading and troublous the bodiless God is than the older embodied one. I have given two stanzas only from this delightful poem.

<sup>18</sup> Siva, whose locks are matted and his form smeared with ashes, is the great Ascetic, seated in agelong meditation and haunting the tombs and burning-places.

<sup>19</sup> Kama is the "Five-arrowed"—his arrows are tipped with five different kinds of flowers.

<sup>20</sup> February-March, the spring month. Tagore generally translates it as April.

<sup>21</sup> The new leaves are red, *are* the rosy kisses. Also, *palas* and pomegranate both have red blossoms.

<sup>22</sup> March-April.

<sup>23</sup> This poem deliberately takes off from the loveliest of all Bengali popular songs, Ramprasad's "This day will surely pass, this day will pass" (see *Bengali Religious Lyrics*, Thompson and Spencer, Oxford University Press).

<sup>24</sup> India has six seasons to our four.



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