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THE GARDENER



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RABINDRA NATH TAGORE

AGE 16

By Gaganendra Nath Tagore,
after a drawing by Jyotirindra Nath Tagore.

THE GARDENER

BY

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

TRANSLATED BY THE AUTHOR FROM
THE ORIGINAL BENGALI

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
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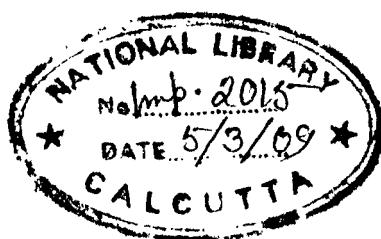
1914

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TO
W. B. YEATS

PREFACE

MOST of the lyrics of love and life, the translations of which from B'engali are published in this book, were written much earlier than the series of religious poems contained in the book named *Gitanjali*. The translations are not always literal—the originals being sometimes abridged and sometimes paraphrased.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE.

1

Servant

HAVE mercy upon your servant, my queen !

Queen

The assembly is over and my servants are all gone. Why do you come at this late hour ?

Servant

When you have finished with others, that is my time.

I come to ask what remains for your last servant to do.

Queen

What can you expect when it is too late ?

E

1

B

Servant

Make me the gardener of your flower garden.

Queen

What folly is this ?

Servant

I will give up my other work.

I throw my swords and lances down in the dust. Do not send me to distant courts ; do not bid me undertake new conquests. But make me the gardener of your flower garden.

Queen

What will your duties be ?

Servant

The service of your idle days.

I will keep fresh the grassy path where you walk in the morning, where your feet will be greeted with praise at every step by the flowers eager for death.

I will swing you in a swing among the branches of the *saptaparna*, where the early evening moon will struggle to kiss your skirt through the leaves.

I will replenish with scented oil the lamp that burns by your bedside, and decorate your footstool with sandal and saffron paste in wondrous designs.

Queen

What will you have for your reward ?

Servant

To be allowed to hold your little fists like tender lotus-buds and slip flower chains over your wrists ; to tinge the soles of your feet with the red juice of *ashoka* petals and kiss away the speck of dust that may chance to linger there.

Queen

. Your prayers are granted, my servant, you will be the gardener of my flower garden.

2

“ Ah, poet, the evening draws near ;
your hair is turning grey.

“ Do you in your lonely musing hear
the message of the hereafter ? ”

“ It is evening,” the poet said, “ and
I am listening because some one may
call from the village, late though it be.

“ I watch if young straying hearts
meet together, and two pairs of eager
eyes beg for music to break their
silence and speak for them.

“ Who is there to weave their
passionate songs, if I sit on the shore
of life and contemplate death and
the beyond ?

“ The early evening star disappears,

“ The glow of a funeral pyre slowly
dies by the silent river.

“Jackals cry in chorus from the courtyard of the deserted house in the light of the worn-out moon.

“If some wanderer, leaving home, come here to watch the night and with bowed head listen to the murmur of the darkness, who is there to whisper the secrets of life into his ears if I, shutting my doors, should try to free myself from mortal bonds ?

“It is a trifle that my hair is turning grey.

“I am ever as young or as old as the youngest and the oldest of this village.

“Some have smiles, sweet and simple, and some a sly twinkle in their eyes.

“Some have tears that well up in the daylight, and others tears that are hidden in the gloom.

6 THE GARDENER

“ They all have need for me, and I have no time to brood over the after-life.

“ I am of an age with each, what matter if my hair turns grey ? ”

3

IN the morning I cast my net into the sea.

I dragged up from the dark abyss things of strange aspect and strange beauty—some shone like a smile, some glistened like tears, and some were flushed like the cheeks of a bride.

When with the day's burden I went home, my love was sitting in the garden idly tearing the leaves of a flower.

I hesitated for a moment, and then placed at her feet all that I had dragged up, and stood silent.

She glanced at them and said, "What strange things are these? I know not of what use they are!"

I bowed my head in shame and thought, "I have not fought for

8 THE GARDENER

these, I did not buy them in the market; they are not fit gifts for her."

Then the whole night through I flung them one by one into the street.

In the morning travellers came; they picked them up and carried them into far countries.

4

Ah me, why did they build my house by the road to the market town ?

They moor their laden boats near my trees.

They come and go and wander at their will.

I sit and watch them ; my time wears on.

Turn them away I cannot. And thus my days pass by.

Night and day their steps sound by my door.

Vainly I cry, " I do not know you."

Some of them are known to my fingers, some to my nostrils, the blood in my veins seems to know

10 THE GARDENER

them, and some are known to my dreams.

Turn them away I cannot. I call them and say, "Come to my house whoever chooses. Yes, come."

.In the morning the bell rings in the temple.

They come with their baskets in their hands.

Their feet are rosy red. The early light of dawn is on their faces.

Turn them away I cannot. I call them and I say, "Come to my garden to gather flowers. Come hither."

In the mid-day the gong sounds at the palace gate.

I know not why they leave their work and linger near my hedge.

The flowers in their hair are pale and faded; the notes are languid in their flutes.'

THE GARDENER 11

Turn them away I cannot. I call
them and say, "The shade is cool
under my trees. Come, friends."

At night the crickets chirp in the
woods.

Who is it that comes slowly to my
door and gently knocks ?

I vaguely see the face, not a word
is spoken, the stillness of the sky is
all around.

Turn away my silent guest I cannot.
I look at the face through the
dark, and hours of dreams pass by.

5

I AM restless. I am athirst for far-away things.

My soul goes out in a longing to touch the skirt of the dim distance.

O Great Beyond, O the keen call of thy flute !

I forget, I ever forget, that I have no wings to fly, that I am bound in this spot evermore.

I am eager and wakeful, I am a stranger in a strange land.

Thy breath comes to me whispering an impossible hope.

Thy tongue is known to my heart as its very own.

O Far-to-seek, O the keen call of thy flute !

I forget, I ever forget, that I know

THE GARDENER 13

not the way, that I have not the
winged horse.

I am listless, I am a wanderer in my
heart.

In the sunny haze of the languid
hours, what vast vision of thine takes
shape in the blue of the sky !

O Farthest end, O the keen call
of thy flute !

I forget, I ever forget, that the gates
are shut everywhere in the house
where I dwell alone !

6

THE tame bird was in a cage, the free bird was in the forest.

They met when the time came, it was a decree of fate.

The free bird cries, "O my love, let us fly to wood."

The cage bird whispers, "Come hither, let us both live in the cage."

Says the free bird, "Among bars, where is there room to spread one's wings?"

"Alas," cries the cage bird, "I should not know where to sit perched in the sky."

The free bird cries, "My darling, sing the songs of the woodlands."

The cage bird says, "Sit by my side,

THE GARDENER 15

I'll teach you the speech of the learned."

The forest bird cries, "No, ah no! songs can never be taught."

The cage bird says, "Alas for me, I know not the songs of the woodlands."

Their love is intense with longing, but they never can fly wing to wing.

Through the bars of the cage they look, and vain is their wish to know each other.

They flutter their wings in yearning, and sing, "Come closer, my love!"

The free bird cries, "It cannot be, I fear the closed doors of the cage."

The cage bird whispers, "Alas, my wings are powerless and dead."

7

O MOTHER, the young Prince is to pass by our door,—how can I attend to my work this morning ?

Show me how to braid up my hair; tell me what garment to put on.

Why do you look at me amazed, mother ?

I know well he will not glance up once at my window; I know he will pass out of my sight in the twinkling of an eye; only the vanishing strain of the flute will come sobbing to me from afar.

But the young Prince will pass by our door, and I will put on my best for the moment.

O mother, the young Prince did pass by our door, and the morning sun flashed from 'his chariot.

I swept aside the veil from my face,
I tore the ruby chain from my neck
and flung it in his path.

Why do you look at me amazed,
mother ?

I know well he did not pick up my
chain ; I know it was crushed under his
wheels leaving a red stain upon the
dust, and no one knows what my gift
was nor to whom.

But the young Prince did pass by our
door, and I flung the jewel from my
breast before his path.

8

WHEN the lamp went out by my bed
I woke up with the early birds.

I sat at my open window with a
fresh wreath on my loose hair.

The young traveller came along the
road in the rosy mist of the morning.

A pearl chain was on his neck, and
the sun's rays fell on his crown.
He stopped before my door and asked
me with an eager cry, "Where is
she?"

For very shame I could not say,
"She is I, young traveller, she is I."

It was dusk and the lamp was not
lit.

I was listlessly braiding my hair.

The young traveller came on his
chariot in the glow of the setting sun.

THE GARDENER 19

His horses were foaming at the mouth, and there was dust on his garment.

He alighted at my door and asked in a tired voice, "Where is she?"

For very shame I could not say, "She is I, weary traveller, she is I."

It is an April night. The lamp is burning in my room.

The breeze of the south comes gently. The noisy parrot sleeps in its cage.

My bodice is of the colour of the peacock's throat, and my mantle is green as young grass.

I sit upon the floor at the window watching the deserted street.

Through the dark night I keep humming, "She is I, despairing traveller, she is I."

9

WHEN I go alone at night to my love-tryst, birds do not sing, the wind does not stir, the houses on both sides of the street stand silent.

It is my own anklets that grow loud at every step and I am ashamed.

When I sit on my balcony and listen for his footsteps, leaves do not rustle on the trees, and the water is still in the river like the sword on the knees of a sentry fallen asleep.

It is my own heart that beats wildly—I do not know how to quiet it.

When my love comes and sits by my side, when my body trembles and my eyelids droop, the night darkens,

THE GARDENER 21

the wind blows out the lamp, and the
clouds draw veils over the stars.

It is the jewel at my own breast
that shines and gives light. I do not
know how to hide it.

10

LET your work be, bride. Listen, the guest has come.

Do you hear, he is gently shaking the chain which fastens the door ?

See that your anklets make no loud noise, and that your step is not over-hurried at meeting him.

Let your work be, bride, the guest has come in the evening.

No, it is not the ghostly wind, bride, do not be frightened.

It is the full moon on a night of April; shadows are pale in the courtyard; the sky overhead is bright.

Draw your veil over your face if you must, carry the lamp to the door if you fear.

No, it is not the ghostly wind, bride, do not be frightened.

THE GARDENER 23

Have no word with him if you are shy ; stand aside by the door when you meet him.

If he asks you questions, and if you wish to, you can lower your eyes in silence.

Do not let your bracelets jingle when, lamp in hand, you lead him in.

Have no word with him if you are shy.

Have you not finished your work yet, bride ? Listen, the guest has come.

Have you not lit the lamp in the cowshed ?

Have you not got ready the offering basket for the evening service ?

Have you not put the red lucky mark at the parting of your hair, and done your toilet for the night ?

O bride, do you hear, the guest has come ?

Let your work be !

11

COME as you are ; do not loiter over
your toilet.

If your braided hair has loosened, if
the parting of your hair be not straight,
if the ribbons of your bodice be not
fastened, do not mind.

Come as you are ; do not loiter over
your toilet.

Come, with quick steps over the
grass.

If the raddle come from your feet
because of the dew, if the rings of bells
upon your feet slacken, if pearls drop
out of your chain, do not mind.

Come, with quick steps over the
grass.

Do you see the clouds wrapping the
sky ?

THE GARDENER 25

Flocks of cranes fly up from the further river-bank and fitful gusts of wind rush over the heath.

The anxious cattle run to their stalls in the village.

Do you see the clouds wrapping the sky ?

In vain you light your toilet lamp—it flickers and goes out in the wind.

Who can know that your eyelids have not been touched with lamp-black ? For your eyes are darker than rain-clouds.

In vain you light your toilet lamp—it goes out.

Come as you are ; do not loiter over your toilet.

If the wreath is not woven, who cares ; if the wrist-chain has not been linked, let it be.

26 THE GARDENER

The sky is overcast with clouds—it
is late.

Come as you are ; do not loiter over
your toilet.

12

If you would be busy and fill your pitcher, come, O come to my lake.

The water will cling round your feet and babble its secret.

The shadow of the coming rain is on the sands, and the clouds hang low upon the blue lines of the trees like the heavy hair above your eyebrows.

I know well the rhythm of your steps, they are beating in my heart.

Come, O come to my lake, if you must fill your pitcher.

If you would be idle and sit listless and let your pitcher float on the water, come, O come to my lake.

The grassy slope is green, and the wild flowers beyond number.

Your thoughts will stray out of

your dark eyes like birds from their nests.

Your veil will drop to your feet.

Come, O come to my lake if you must sit idle.

If you would leave off your play and dive in the water, come, O come to my lake.

Let your blue mantle lie on the shore; the blue water will cover you and hide you.

The waves will stand a-tiptoe to kiss your neck and whisper in your ears.

Come, O come to my lake, if you would dive in the water.

If you must be mad and leap to your death, come, O come to my lake.

It is cool and fathomlessly deep.

It is dark like a sleep that is dreamless.

THE GARDENER 29

There in its depths nights and days
are one, and songs are silence.

Come, O come to my lake, if you
would plunge to your death.

13

I ASKED nothing, only stood at the edge of the wood behind the tree.

Languor was still upon the eyes of the dawn, and the dew in the air.

The lazy smell of the damp grass hung in the thin mist above the earth.

Under the banyan tree you were milking the cow with your hands, tender and fresh as butter.

And I was standing still.

I did not say a word. It was the bird that sang unseen from the thicket.

The mango tree was shedding its flowers upon the village road, and the bees came humming one by one.

On the side of the pond the gate of *Shiva's* temple was opened and the worshipper had begun his chants.

THE GARDENER 81

With the vessel on your lap you
were milking the cow.

I stood with my empty can.

I did not come near you.

The sky woke with the sound of
the gong at the temple.

The dust was raised in the road
from the hoofs of the driven cattle.

With the gurgling pitchers at their
hips, women came from the river.

Your bracelets were jingling, and
foam brimming over the jar.

The morning wore on and I did not
come near you.

14

I WAS walking by the road, I do not know why, when the noonday was past and bamboo branches rustled in the wind.

The prone shadows with their outstretched arms clung to the feet of the hurrying light.

The *koels* were weary of their songs.

I was walking by the road, I do not know why.

The hut by the side of the water is shaded by an overhanging tree.

Some one was busy with her work, and her bangles made music in the corner.

I stood before this hut, I know not why.

THE GARDENER 83

The narrow winding road crosses many a mustard field, and many a mango forest.

It passes by the temple of the village and the market at the river landing-place.

I stopped by this hut, I do not know why.

Years ago it was a day of breezy March when the murmur of the spring was languorous, and mango blossoms were dropping on the dust.

The rippling water leapt and licked the brass vessel that stood on the landing-step.

I think of that day of breezy March, I do not know why.

Shadows are deepening and cattle returning to their folds.

The light is grey upon the lonely

meadows, and the villagers are waiting for the ferry at the bank.

I slowly return upon my steps, I do not know why.

15

I RUN as a musk-deer runs in the shadow of the forest mad with his own perfume.

The night is the night of mid-May, the breeze is the breeze of the south.

I lose my way and I wander, I seek what I cannot get, I get what I do not seek.

From my heart comes out and dances the image of my own desire.

The gleaming vision flits on.

I try to clasp it firmly, it eludes me and leads me astray.

I seek what I cannot get, I get what I do not seek.

16

HANDS cling to hands and eyes linger on eyes : thus begins the record of our hearts.

It is the moonlit night of March ; the sweet smell of *henna* is in the air ; my flute lies on the earth neglected and your garland of flowers is unfinished.

This love between you and me is simple as a song.

Your veil of the saffron colour makes my eyes drunk.

The jasmine wreath that you wove me thrills to my heart like praise.

It is a game of giving and withholding, revealing and screening again ; some smiles and some little shyness, and some sweet useless struggles.

THE GARDENER 37

This love between you and me is
simple as a song.

No mystery beyond the present ;
no striving for the impossible ; no
shadow behind the charm ; no groping
in the depth of the dark.

This love between you and me is
simple as a song.

We do not stray out of all words
into the ever silent ; we do not raise
our hands to the void for things
beyond hope.

It is enough what we give and we
get. •

We have not crushed the joy to
the utmost to wring from it the wine
of pain.

This love between you and me is
simple as a song.

17

THE yellow bird sings in their tree
and makes my heart dance with
gladness.

We both live in the same village,
and that is our one piece of joy.

Her pair of pet lambs come to graze
in the shade of our garden trees.

If they stray into our barley field,
I take them up in my arms.

The name of our village is Khan-
janā, and Anjanā they call our
river.

My name is known to all the village,
and her name is Ranjanā.

Only one field lies between us.

Bees that have hived in our grove
go to seek honey in theirs.

Flowers launched from their land-

THE GARDENER 39

ing-stairs come floating by the stream
where we bathe.

Baskets of dried *kusm* flowers come
from their fields to our market.

The name of our village is Khan-
janā, and Anjanā they call our river.

My name is known to all the village,
and her name is Ranjanā.

The lane that winds to their house
is fragrant in the spring with mango
flowers.

When their linseed is ripe for harvest
the hemp is in bloom in our field.

The stars that smile on their cottage
send us the same twinkling look.

The rain that floods their tank
makes glad our *kadam* forest.

The name of our village is Khan-
janā, and Anjanā they call our river.

My name is known to all the village,
and her name is Ranjanā.

18

WHEN the two sisters go to fetch water, they come to this spot and they smile.

They must be aware of somebody who stands behind the trees whenever they go to fetch water.

The two sisters whisper to each other when they pass this spot.

They must have guessed the secret of that somebody who stands behind the trees whenever they go to fetch water.

Their pitchers lurch suddenly, and water spills when they reach this spot.

They must have found out that somebody's heart is beating who

stands behind the trees whenever they go to fetch water.

The two sisters glance at each other when they come to this spot, and they smile.

There is a laughter in their swift-stepping feet, which makes confusion in somebody's mind who stands behind the trees whenever they go to fetch water.

19

You walked by the riverside path
with the full pitcher upon your hip.

Why did you swiftly turn your face
and peep at me through your fluttering
veil ?

That gleaming look from the dark
came upon me like a breeze that sends
a shiver through the rippling water
and sweeps away to the shadowy
shore.

It came to me like the bird of the
evening that hurriedly flies across the
lampless room from the one open
window to the other, and disappears
in the night.

You are hidden as a star behind the
hills, and I am a passer-by upon the
road.

But why did you stop for a moment

THE GARDENER **43**

and glance at my face through your
veil while you walked by the river-
side path with the full pitcher upon
your hip ?

20

DAY after day he comes and goes away.

Go, and give him a flower from my hair, my friend.

If he asks who was it that sent it, I entreat you do not tell him my name—for he only comes and goes away.

He sits on the dust under the tree.

Spread there a seat with flowers and leaves, my friend.

His eyes are sad, and they bring sadness to my heart.

He does not speak what he has in mind ; he only comes and goes away.

21

WHY did he choose to come to my door, the wandering youth, when the day dawned ?

As I come in and out I pass by him every time, and my eyes are caught by his face.

I know not if I should speak to him or keep silent. Why did he choose to come to my door ?

The cloudy nights in July are dark ; the sky is soft blue in the autumn ; the spring days are restless with the south wind.

He weaves his songs with fresh tunes every time.

I turn from my work and my eyes fill with the mist. Why did he choose to come to my door ?

✓
22

WHEN she passed by me with quick steps, the end of her skirt touched me.

From the unknown island of a heart came a sudden warm breath of spring.

A flutter of a flitting touch brushed me and vanished in a moment, like a torn flower petal blown in the breeze.

It fell upon my heart like a sigh of her body and whisper of her heart.

23

WHY do you sit there and jingle your
bracelets in mere idle sport ?

Fill your pitcher. It is time for
you to come home.

Why do you stir the water with
your hands and fitfully glance at the
road for some one in mere idle sport ?

Fill your pitcher and come home.

The morning hours pass by—the
dark water flows on.

The waves are laughing and whisper-
ing to each other in mere idle sport.

The wandering clouds have gathered
at the edge of the sky on yonder rise
of the land.

They linger and look at your face
and smile in mere idle sport.

Fill your pitcher and come home.

24

Do not keep to yourself the secret of
your heart, my friend !

Say it to me, only to me, in secret.

You who smile so gently, softly
whisper, my heart will hear it, not my
ears.

The night is deep, the house is
silent, the birds' nests are shrouded
with sleep.

Speak to me through hesitating
tears, through faltering smiles, through
sweet shame and pain, the secret of
your heart !



25

“COME to us, youth, tell us truly why there is madness in your eyes ? ”

“ I know not what wine of wild poppy I have drunk, that there is this madness in my eyes.”

“ Ah, shame ! ”

“ Well, some are wise and some foolish, some are watchful and some careless. There are eyes that smile and eyes that weep—and madness is in my eyes.”

“ Youth, why do you stand so still under the shadow of the tree ? ”

“ My feet are languid with the burden of my heart, and I stand still in the shadow.”

“ Ah, shame ! ”

“ Well, some march on their way and some linger, some are free and some are fettered—and my feet are languid with the burden of my heart.”

✓
26

“WHAT comes from your willing hands I take. I beg for nothing more.”

“Yes, yes, I know you, modest mendicant, you ask for all that one has.”

“If there be a stray flower for me I will wear it in my heart.”

“But if there be thorns ? ”

“I will endure them.”

“Yes, yes, I know you, modest mendicant, you ask for all that one has.”

“If but once you should raise your loving eyes to my face it would make my life sweet beyond death.”

“But if there be only cruel glances ? ”

52 THE GARDENER

“I will keep them piercing my heart.”

“Yes, yes, I know you, modest mendicant, you ask for all that one has.”

27

“TRUST love even if it brings sorrow.
Do not close up your heart.”

“Ah no, my friend, your words are
dark, I cannot understand them.”

“The heart is only for giving away
with a tear and a song, my love.”

“Ah no, my friend, your words are
dark, I cannot understand them.”

“Pleasure is frail like a dewdrop,
while it laughs it dies. But sorrow is
strong and abiding. Let sorrowful
love wake in your eyes.”

“Ah no, my friend, your words are
dark, I cannot understand them.”

“The lotus blooms in the sight of
the sun, and loses all that it has. It

54 . THE GARDENER

would not remain in bud in the eternal winter mist.”

“ Ah no, my friend, your words are dark, I cannot understand them.”

28

YOUR questioning eyes are sad. They seek to know my meaning as the moon would fathom the sea.

I have bared my life before your eyes from end to end, with nothing hidden or held back. That is why you know me not.

If it were only a gem, I could break it into a hundred pieces and string them into a chain to put on your neck.

If it were only a flower, round and small and sweet, I could pluck it from its stem to set it in your hair.

But it is a heart, my beloved. Where are its shores and its bottom ?

You know not the limits of this kingdom, still you are its queen.

If it were only a moment of pleasure it would flower in an easy smile, and

56 THE GARDENER

you could see it and read it in a moment.

If it were merely a pain it would melt in limpid tears, reflecting its inmost secret without a word.

But it is love, my beloved.

Its pleasure and pain are boundless, and endless its wants and wealth.

It is as near to you as your life, but you can never wholly know it.

✓ 29

SPEAK to me, my love! Tell me in words what you sang.

The night is dark. The stars are lost in clouds. The wind is sighing through the leaves.

I will let loose my hair. My blue cloak will cling round me like night. I will clasp your head to my bosom; and there in the sweet loneliness murmur on your heart. I will shut my eyes and listen. I will not look in your face.

When your words are ended, we will sit still and silent. Only the trees will whisper in the dark.

The night will pale. The day will dawn. We shall look at each other's eyes and go on our different paths.

Speak to me, my love! Tell me in words what you sang.

30

You are the evening cloud floating in
the sky of my dreams.

I paint you and fashion you ever
with my love longings.

You are my own, my own, Dweller
in my endless dreams !

Your feet are rosy-red with the glow
of my heart's desire, Gleaner of my
sunset songs !

Your lips are bitter-sweet with the
taste of my wine of pain.

You are my own, my own, Dweller
in my lonesome dreams !

With the shadow of my passion
have I darkened your eyes, Haunter
of the depth of my gaze !

THE GARDENER 59

I have caught you and wrapt you,
my love, in the net of my music.

You are my own, my own, Dweller
in my deathless dreams !

31

My heart, the bird of the wilderness,
has found its sky in your eyes.

They are the cradle of the morning,
they are the kingdom of the stars.

My songs are lost in their depths.

Let me but soar in that sky, in its
lonely immensity.

Let me but cleave its clouds and
spread wings in its sunshine.

32

TELL me if this be all true, my lover,
tell me if this be true.

When these eyes flash their lightning
the dark clouds in your breast
make stormy answer.

Is it true that my lips are sweet like
the opening bud of the first conscious
love ?

Do the memories of vanished months
of May linger in my limbs ?

Does the earth, like a harp, shiver
into songs with the touch of my feet ?

Is it then true that the dewdrops
fall from the eyes of night when I am
seen, and the morning light is glad
when it wraps my body round ?

Is it true, is it true, that your
love travelled alone through ages and
worlds in search of me ?

That when you found me at last,
your age-long desire found utter peace
in my gentle speech and my eyes and
lips and flowing hair ?

Is it then true that the mystery of
the Infinite is written on this little
forehead of mine ?

Tell me, my lover, if all this be true.

✓ 33

I LOVE you, beloved. Forgive me my love.

Like a bird losing its way I am caught.

When my heart was shaken it lost its veil and was naked. Cover it with pity, beloved, and forgive me my love.

If you cannot love me, beloved, forgive me my pain.

Do not look askance at me from afar.

I will steal back to my corner and sit in the dark.

With both hands I will cover my naked shame.

Turn your face from me, beloved, and forgive me my pain.

If you love me, beloved, forgive me my joy.

When my heart is borne away by
the flood of happiness, do not smile at
my perilous abandonment.

When I sit on my throne and rule
you with my tyranny of love, when
like a goddess I grant you my favour,
bear with my pride, beloved, and
forgive me my joy.

34

Do not go, my love, without asking
my leave.

I have watched all night, and now
my eyes are heavy with sleep.

I fear lest I lose you when I am
sleeping.

Do not go, my love, without asking
my leave.

I start up and stretch my hands to
touch you. I ask myself, "Is it a
dream?"

Could I but entangle your feet with
my heart and hold them fast to my
breast!

Do not go, my love, without asking
my leave.

35

LEST I should know you too easily,
you play with me.

You blind me with flashes of
laughter to hide your tears.

I know, I know your art,
You never say the word you would.

Lest I should not prize you, you
elude me in a thousand ways.

Lest I should confuse you with the
crowd, you stand aside.

I know, I know your art,
You never walk the path you would.

Your claim is more than that of
others, that is why you are silent.

With playful carelessness you avoid
my gifts.

I know, I know your art,
You never will take what you would.

36

HE whispered, "My love, raise your eyes."

I sharply chid him, and said "Go!"; but he did not stir.

He stood before me and held both my hands. I said, "Leave me!"; but he did not go.

He brought his face near my ear. I glanced at him and said, "What a shame!"; but he did not move.

His lips touched my cheek. I trembled and said, "You dare too much"; but he had no shame.

He put a flower in my hair. I said, "It is useless!"; but he stood unmoved.

He took the garland from my neck and went away. I weep and ask my heart, "Why does he not come back?"

37

WOULD you put your wreath of fresh flowers on my neck, fair one ?

But you must know that the one wreath that I had woven is for the many, for those who are seen in glimpses, or dwell in lands unexplored, or live in poets' songs.

It is too late to ask my heart in return for yours.

There was a time when my life was like a bud, all its perfume was stored in its core.

Now it is squandered far and wide.

Who knows the enchantment that can gather and shut it up again ?

My heart is not mine to give to one only, it is given to the many.

38

My love, once upon a time your poet
launched a great epic in his mind.

Alas, I was not careful, and it struck
your ringing anklets and came to
grief.

It broke up into scraps of songs and
lay scattered at your feet.

All my cargo of the stories of old
wars was tossed by the laughing waves
and soaked in tears and sank.

You must make this loss good to me,
my love.

If my claims to immortal fame after
death are shattered, make me im-
mortal while I live.

And I will not mourn for my loss nor
blame you.

39

I TRY to weave a wreath all the morning, but the flowers slip and they drop out.

You sit there watching me in secret through the corner of your prying eyes.

Ask those eyes, darkly planning mischief, whose fault it was.

I try to sing a song, but in vain.

A hidden smile trembles on your lips; ask of it the reason of my failure.

Let your smiling lips say on oath how my voice lost itself in silence like a drunken bee in the lotus.

It is evening, and the time for the flowers to close their petals.

Give me leave to sit by your side, and bid my lips to do the work that can be done in silence and in the dim light of stars.

40

AN unbelieving smile flits on your eyes when I come to you to take my leave.

I have done it so often that you think I will soon return.

To tell you the truth I have the same doubt in my mind.

For the spring days come again time after time ; the full moon takes leave and comes on another visit, the flowers come again and blush upon their branches year after year, and it is likely that I take my leave only to come to you again.

But keep the illusion awhile ; do not send it away with ungentle haste.

When I say I leave you for all time, accept it as true, and let a

72 THE GARDENER

mist of tears for one moment deepen
the dark rim of your eyes.

Then smile as archly as you like
when I come again.

41

I LONG to speak the deepest words
I have to say to you ; but I dare not,
for fear you should laugh.

That is why I laugh at myself and
shatter my secret in jest.

I make light of my pain, afraid you
should do so.

I long to tell you the truest words
I have to say to you ; but I dare not,
being afraid that you would not
believe them.

That is why I disguise them in
untruth, saying the contrary of what
I mean.

I make my pain appear absurd,
afraid that you should do so.

I long to use the most precious

74 THE GARDENER

words I have for you ; but I dare not, fearing I should not be paid with like value.

That is why I give you hard names and boast of my callous strength.

I hurt you, for fear you should never know any pain.

I long to sit silent by you ; but I dare not lest my heart come out at my lips.

That is why I prattle and chatter lightly and hide my heart behind words.

I rudely handle my pain, for fear you should do so.

I long to go away from your side ; but I dare not, for fear my cowardice should become known to you.

That is why I hold my head high and carelessly come into your presence.

Constant thrusts from your eyes keep my pain fresh for ever.

42

O MAD, superbly drunk ;

If you kick open your doors and
play the fool in public ;

If you empty your bag in a night,
and snap your fingers at prudence ;

If you walk in curious paths and
play with useless things ;

Reck not rhyme or reason ;

If unfurling your sails before the
storm you snap the rudder in two,

Then I will follow you, comrade,
and be drunken and go to the dogs.

I have wasted my days and nights
in the company of steady wise neigh-
bours.

Much knowing has turned my hair
grey, and much watching has made
my sight dim.

For years I have gathered and
heaped up scraps and fragments of
things :

Crush them and dance upon them,
and scatter them all to the winds.

For I know 'tis the height of wisdom
to be drunken and go to the dogs.

Let all crooked scruples vanish,
let me hopelessly lose my way.

Let a gust of wild giddiness come
and sweep me away from my anchors.

The world is peopled with worthies,
and workers, useful and clever.

There are men who are easily first,
and men who come decently after.

Let them be happy and prosper,
and let me be foolishly futile.

For I know 'tis the end of all works
to be drunken and go to the dogs.

I swear to surrender this moment
all claims to the ranks of the decent.

I let go my pride of learning and
judgment of right and of wrong.

I'll shatter memory's vessel, scatter-
ing the last drop of tears.

With the foam of the berry-red
wine I will bathe and brighten my
laughter.

The badge of the civil and staid
I'll tear into shreds for the nonce.

I'll take the holy vow to be worth-
less, to be drunken and go to the
dogs.

43

No, my friends, I shall never be an ascetic, whatever you may say.

I shall never be an ascetic if she does not take the vow with me.

It is my firm resolve that if I cannot find a shady shelter and a companion for my penance, I shall never turn ascetic.

No, my friends, I shall never leave my hearth and home, and retire into the forest solitude, if rings no merry laughter in its echoing shade and if the end of no saffron mantle flutters in the wind; if its silence is not deepened by soft whispers.

I shall never be an ascetic.

44

REVEREND sir, forgive this pair of sinners. Spring winds to-day are blowing in wild eddies, driving dust and dead leaves away, and with them your lessons are all lost.

Do not say, father, that life is a vanity.

For we have made truce with death for once, and only for a few fragrant hours we two have been made immortal.

Even if the king's army came and fiercely fell upon us we should sadly shake our heads and say, Brothers, you are disturbing us. If you must have this noisy game, go and clatter your arms elsewhere. Since only for

a few fleeting moments we have been made immortal.

If friendly people came and flocked around us, we should humbly bow to them and say, This extravagant good fortune is an embarrassment to us. Room is scarce in the infinite sky where we dwell. For in the spring-time flowers come in crowds, and the busy wings of bees jostle each other. Our little heaven, where dwell only we two immortals, is too absurdly narrow.

45

To the guests that must go bid
God's speed and brush away all traces
of their steps.

Take to your bosom with a smile
what is easy and simple and near.

To-day is the festival of phantoms
that know not when they die.

Let your laughter be but a meaning-
less mirth like twinkles of light on
the ripples.

Let your life lightly dance on the
edges of Time like dew on the tip of
a leaf.

Strike in chords from your harp
fitful momentary rhythms.

46

You left me and went on your way.

I thought I should mourn for you
and set your solitary image in my
heart wrought in a golden song.

But ah, my evil fortune, time is
short.

Youth wanes year after year ; the
spring days are fugitive ; the frail
flowers die for nothing, and the wise
man warns me that life is but a
dewdrop on the lotus leaf.

Should I neglect all this to gaze after
one who has turned her back on me ?

That would be rude and foolish,
for time is short.

Then, come, my rainy nights with
pattering feet ; smile, my golden

autumn ; come, careless April, scattering your kisses abroad.

You come, and you, and you also !

My loves, you know we are mortals.
Is it wise to break one's heart for the
one who takes her heart away ? For
time is short.

It is sweet to sit in a corner to muse
and write in rhymes that you are all
my world.

It is heroic to hug one's sorrow and
determine not to be consoled.

But a fresh face peeps across my
door and raises its eyes to my eyes.

I cannot but wipe away my tears
and change the tune of my song.

For time is short.

47

IF you would have it so, I will end
my singing.

If it sets your heart aflutter, I will
take away my eyes from your face.

If it suddenly startles you in your
walk, I will step aside and take another
path.

If it confuses you in your flower-
weaving, I will shun your lonely
garden.

If it makes the water wanton and
wild, I will not row my boat by your
bank.

48

FREE me from the bonds of your
sweetness, my love ! No more of this
wine of kisses.

This mist of heavy incense stifles
my heart.

Open the doors, make room for the
morning light.

I am lost in you, wrapped in the
folds of your caresses.

Free me from your spells, and give
me back the manhood to offer you my
freed heart.

49

I HOLD her hands and press her to my breast:

I try to fill my arms with her loveliness, to plunder her sweet smile with kisses, to drink her dark glances with my eyes.

Ah, but, where is it? Who can strain the blue from the sky?

I try to grasp the beauty; it eludes me, leaving only the body in my hands.

Baffled and weary I come back.

How can the body touch the flower which only the spirit may touch?

✓ 50

LOVE, my heart longs day and night for the meeting with you—for the meeting that is like all-devouring death.

Sweep me away like a storm ; take everything I have ; break open my sleep and plunder my dreams. Rob me of my world.

In that devastation, in the utter nakedness of spirit, let us become one in beauty.

Alas for my vain desire ! Where is this hope for union except in thee, my God ?

✓ 51

THEN finish the last song and let us leave.

Forget this night when the night is no more.

Whom do I try to clasp in my arms? Dreams can never be made captive.

My eager hands press emptiness to my heart and it bruises my breast.

52

WHY did the lamp go out ?

I shaded it with my cloak to save it
from the wind, that is why the lamp
went out.

Why did the flower fade ?

I pressed it to my heart with anxious
love, that is why the flower faded.

Why did the stream dry up ?

I put a dam across it to have it for
my use, that is why the stream dried
up.

Why did the harp-string break ?

I tried to force a note that was
beyond its power, that is why the harp-
string is broken.

53

WHY do you put me to shame with
a look ?

I have not come as a beggar.

Only for a passing hour I stood at
the end of your courtyard outside the
garden hedge.

Why do you put me to shame with
a look ?

Not a rose did I gather from your
garden, not a fruit did I pluck.

I humbly took my shelter under the
wayside shade where every strange
traveller may stand.

Not a rose did I pluck.

Yes, my feet were tired, and the
shower of rain came down.

The winds cried out among the
swaying bamboo branches.

THE GARDENER 91

The clouds ran across the sky as
though in the flight from defeat.

My feet were tired.

I know not what you thought of me
or for whom you were waiting at your
door.

Flashes of lightning dazzled your
watching eyes.

How could I know that you could
see me where I stood in the dark ?

I know not what you thought of me.

The day is ended, and the rain has
ceased for a moment.

I leave the shadow of the tree at
the end of your garden and this seat
on the grass.

It has darkened; shut your door;
I go my way.

The day is ended.

54

WHERE do you hurry with your basket this late evening when the marketing is over ?

They all have come home with their burdens ; the moon peeps from above the village trees.

The echoes of the voices calling for the ferry run across the dark water to the distant swamp where wild ducks sleep.

Where do you hurry with your basket when the marketing is over ?

Sleep has laid her fingers upon the eyes of the earth.

The nests of the crows have become silent, and the murmurs of the bamboo leaves are silent.

The labourers home from their

THE GARDENER 93

fields spread their mats in the courtyards.

Where do you hurry with your basket when the marketing is over ?

55

It was mid-day when you went away.

The sun was strong in the sky.

I had done my work and sat alone on my balcony when you went away.

Fitful gusts came winnowing through the smells of many distant fields.

The doves cooed tireless in the shade, and a bee strayed in my room humming the news of many distant fields.

The village slept in the noonday heat. The road lay deserted.

In sudden fits the rustling of the leaves rose and died.

I gazed at the sky and wove in the blue the letters of a name I had known,

THE GARDENER 95

while the village slept in the noonday heat.

I had forgotten to braid my hair.
The languid breeze played with it upon
my cheek.

The river ran unruffled under the
shady bank.

The lazy white clouds did not move.
I had forgotten to braid my hair.

It was mid-day when you went
away.

The dust of the road was hot and
the fields panting.

The doves cooed among the dense
leaves.

I was alone in my balcony when you
went away.

56

I WAS one among many women busy with the obscure daily tasks of the household.

Why did you single me out and bring me away from the cool shelter of our common life ?

Love unexpressed is sacred. It shines like gems in the gloom of the hidden heart. In the light of the curious day it looks pitifully dark.

'Ah, you broke through the cover of my heart and dragged my trembling love into the open place, destroying for ever the shady corner where it hid its nest.

The other women are the same as ever.

No one has peeped into their inmost being, and they themselves know not their own secret.

Lightly they smile, and weep, chatter, and work. Daily they go to the temple, light their lamps, and fetch water from the river.

I hoped my love would be saved from the shivering shame of the shelterless, but you turn your face away.

Yes, your path lies open before you, but you have cut off my return, and left me stripped naked before the world with its lidless eyes staring night and day.

✓57

I PLUCKED your flower, O world !

I pressed it to my heart and the
thorn pricked.

When the day waned and it
darkened, I found that the flower had
faded, but the pain remained.

More flowers will come to you with
perfume and pride, O world !

But my time for flower-gathering
is over, and through the dark night
I have not my rose, only the pain
remains.

✓ 58

ONE morning in the flower garden a blind girl came to offer me a flower chain in the cover of a lotus leaf.

I put it round my neck, and tears came to my eyes.

I kissed her and said, "You are blind even as the flowers are.

"You yourself know not how beautiful is your gift."

59

O WOMAN, you are not merely the handiwork of God, but also of men ; these are ever endowing you with beauty from their hearts.

Poets are weaving for you a web with threads of golden imagery ; painters are giving your form ever new immortality.

The sea gives its pearls, the mines their gold, the summer gardens their flowers to deck you, to cover you, to make you more precious.

The desire of men's hearts has shed its glory over your youth.

You are one half woman and one half dream.

✓ 60

AMIDST the rush and roar of life,
O Beauty, carved in stone, you stand
mute and still, alone and aloof.

Great Time sits enamoured at your
feet and murmurs :

“ Speak, speak to me, my love ;
speak, my bride ! ”

But your speech is shut up in stone,
O Immovable Beauty !

61

PEACE, my heart, let the time for
the parting be sweet.

Let it not be a death but complete-
ness.

Let love melt into memory and pain
into songs.

Let the flight through the sky end
in the folding of the wings over the
nest.

Let the last touch of your hands be
gentle like the flower of the night.

Stand still, O Beautiful End, for a
moment, and say your last words in
silence.

I bow to you and hold up my lamp
to light you on your way.

62

IN the dusky path of a dream I
went to seek the love who was mine
in a former life.

Her house stood at the end of a
desolate street.

In the evening breeze her pet pea-
cock sat drowsing on its perch, and
the pigeons were silent in their corner.

She set her lamp down by the
portal and stood before me.

She raised her large eyes to my face
and mutely asked, "Are you well,
my friend?"

I tried to answer, but our language
had been lost and forgotten.

I thought and thought; our names
would not come to my mind.

104 THE GARDENER

Tears shone in her eyes. She held up her right hand to me. I took it and stood silent.

Our lamp had flickered in the evening breeze and died.

63

TRAVELLER, must you go ?

The night is still and the darkness
swoons upon the forest.

The lamps are bright in our balcony,
the flowers all fresh, and the youthful
eyes still awake.

Is the time for your parting come ?
Traveller, must you go ?

We have not bound your feet with
our entreating arms.

Your doors are open. Your horse
stands saddled at the gate.

If we have tried to bar your
passage it was but with our songs.

Did we ever try to hold you back
it was but with our eyes.

Traveller, we are helpless to keep
you. We have only our tears.

106 THE GARDENER

What quenchless fire glows in your eyes ?

What restless fever runs in your blood ?

What call from the dark urges you ?

What awful incantation have you read among the stars in the sky, that with a sealed secret message the night entered your heart, silent and strange ?

If you do not care for merry meetings, if you must have peace, weary heart, we shall put our lamps out and silence our harps.

We shall sit still in the dark in the rustle of leaves, and the tired moon will shed pale rays on your window.

O traveller, what sleepless spirit has touched you from the heart of the midnight ?

64

I SPENT my day on the scorching hot dust of the road.

Now, in the cool of the evening, I knock at the door of the inn. It is deserted and in ruins.

A grim *ashath* tree spreads its hungry clutching roots through the gaping fissures of the walls.

Days have been when wayfarers came here to wash their weary feet.

They spread their mats in the courtyard in the dim light of the early moon, and sat and talked of strange lands.

They woke refreshed in the morning when birds made them glad, and friendly flowers nodded their heads at them from the wayside.

108 THE GARDENER

But no lighted lamp awaited me
when I came here.

The black smudges of smoke left by
many a forgotten evening lamp stare,
like blind eyes, from the wall.

Fireflies flit in the bush near the
dried-up pond, and bamboo branches
fling their shadows on the grass-
grown path.

I am the guest of no one at the end
of my day.

The long night is before me, and I
am tired.

65

Is that your call again ?

The evening has come. Weariness
clings round me like the arms of
entreating love.

Do you call me ?

I had given all my day to you,
cruel mistress, must you also rob me
of my night ?

Somewhere there is an end to
everything, and the liveness of the
dark is one's own.

Must your voice cut through it
and smite me ?

Has the evening no music of sleep
at your gate ?

Do the silent-winged stars never
climb the sky above your pitiless
tower ?

110 THE GARDENER

Do the flowers never drop on the
dust in soft death in your garden ?

Must you call me, you unquiet
one ?

Then let the sad eyes of love vainly
watch and weep.

Let the lamp burn in the lonely
house.

Let the ferry-boat take the weary
labourers to their home.

I leave behind my dreams and I
hasten to your call.

66

A WANDERING madman was seeking the touchstone, with matted locks, tawny and dust-laden, and body worn to a shadow, his lips tight-pressed, like the shut-up doors of his heart, his burning eyes like the lamp of a glow-worm seeking its mate.

Before him the endless ocean roared.

The garrulous waves ceaselessly talked of hidden treasures, mocking the ignorance that knew not their meaning.

Maybe he now had no hope remaining, yet he would not rest, for the search had become his life,—

Just as the ocean for ever lifts its arms to the sky for the unattainable—

112 THE GARDENER

Just as the stars go in circles, yet seeking a goal that can never be reached—

Even so on the lonely shore the madman with dusty tawny locks still roamed in search of the touchstone.

One day a village boy came up and asked, "Tell me, where did you come at this golden chain about your waist?"

The madman started—the chain that once was iron was verily gold; it was not a dream, but he did not know when it had changed.

He struck his forehead wildly—where, O where had he without knowing it achieved success?

It had grown into a habit, to pick up pebbles and touch the chain, and to throw them away without looking to see if a change had come; thus the madman found and lost the touchstone.

THE GARDENER 118

The sun was sinking low in the west,
the sky was of gold.

The madman returned on his foot-
steps to seek anew the lost treasure,
with his strength gone, his body bent,
and his heart in the dust, like a tree
uprooted.

67

THOUGH the evening comes with
slow steps and has signalled for all
songs to cease ;

Though your companions have gone
to their rest and you are tired ;

Though fear broods in the dark and
the face of the sky is veiled ;

Yet, bird, O my bird, listen to me,
do not close your wings.

That is not the gloom of the leaves
of the forest, that is the sea swelling
like a dark black snake.

That is not the dance of the flower-
ing jasmine, that is flashing foam.

Ah, where is the sunny green shore,
where is your nest ?

Bird, O my bird, listen to me, do
not close your wings.

THE GARDENER 115

The lone night lies along your path,
the dawn sleeps behind the shadowy
hills.

The stars hold their breath counting
the hours, the feeble moon swims the
deep night.

Bird, O my bird, listen to me, do
not close your wings.

There is no hope, no fear for you.

There is no word, no whisper, no
cry.

There is no home, no bed of rest.

There is only your own pair of wings
and the pathless sky.

Bird, O my bird, listen to me, do
not close your wings.

68

NONE lives for ever, brother, and nothing lasts for long. Keep that in mind and rejoice.

Our life is not the one old burden, our path is not the one long journey.

One sole poet has not to sing one aged song.

The flower fades and dies ; but he who wears the flower has not to mourn for it for ever.

Brother, keep that in mind and rejoice.

There must come a full pause to weave perfection into music.

Life droops toward its sunset to be drowned in the golden shadows.

Love must be called from its play

THE GARDENER 117

to drink sorrow and be borne to the
heaven of tears.

Brother, keep that in mind and
rejoice.

We hasten to gather our flowers lest
they are plundered by the passing
winds.

It quickens our blood and brightens
our eyes to snatch kisses that would
vanish if we delayed.

Our life is eager, our desires are keen,
for time tolls the bell of parting.

Brother, keep that in mind and
rejoice.

There is not time for us to clasp a
thing and crush it and fling it away to
the dust.

The hours trip rapidly away, hiding
their dreams in their skirts.

Our life is short ; it yields but a
few days for love.

118 THE GARDENER

Were it for work and drudgery it
would be endlessly long.

Brother, keep that in mind and
rejoice.

Beauty is sweet to us, because she
dances to the same fleeting tune with
our lives.

Knowledge is precious to us, be-
cause we shall never have time to
complete it.

All is done and finished in the eternal
Heaven.

But earth's flowers of illusion are
kept eternally fresh by death.

Brother, keep that in mind and
rejoice.

69

I HUNT for the golden stag.

You may smile, my friends, but I pursue the vision that eludes me.

I run across hills and dales, I wander through nameless lands, because I am hunting for the golden stag.

You come and buy in the market and go back to your homes laden with goods, but the spell of the homeless winds has touched me I know not when and where.

I have no care in my heart ; all my belongings I have left far behind me.

I run across hills and dales, I wander through nameless lands—because I am hunting for the golden stag.

70

I REMEMBER a day in my childhood
I floated a paper boat in the ditch.

It was a wet day of July ; I was
alone and happy over my play.

I floated my paper boat in the ditch.

Suddenly the storm clouds thick-
ened, winds came in gusts, and rain
poured in torrents.

Rills of muddy water rushed and
swelled the stream and sunk my boat.

Bitterly I thought in my mind that
the storm came on purpose to spoil
my happiness ; all its malice was
against me.

The cloudy day of July is long to-
day, and I have been musing over all
those games in life wherein I was
loser.

THE GARDENER 121

I was blaming my fate for the many tricks it played on me, when suddenly I remembered the paper boat that sank in the ditch.

71

THE day is not yet done, the fair is not over, the fair on the river-bank.

I had feared that my time had been squandered and my last penny lost.

But no, my brother, I have still something left. My fate has not cheated me of everything.

The selling and buying are over.

All the dues on both sides have been gathered in, and it is time for me to go home.

But, gatekeeper, do you ask for your toll ?

Do not fear, I have still something left. My fate has not cheated me of everything.

The lull in the wind threatens storm,

and the lowering clouds in the west
bode no good.

The hushed water waits for the
wind.

I hurry to cross the river before the
night overtakes me.

O ferryman, you want your fee !

Yes, brother, I have still something
left. My fate has not cheated me of
everything.

In the wayside under the tree sits
the beggar. Alas, he looks at my face
with a timid hope !

He thinks I am rich with the day's
profit.

Yes, brother, I have still something
left. • My fate has not cheated me of
everything.

The night grows dark and the road
lonely. Fireflies gleam among the
leaves.

124 THE GARDENER

Who are you that follow me with
stealthy silent steps ?

Ah, I know, it is your desire to rob
me of all my gains. I will not dis-
appoint you !

For I still have something left,
and my fate has not cheated me of
everything.

At midnight I reach home. My
hands are empty.

You are waiting with anxious eyes
at my door, sleepless and silent.

Like a timorous bird you fly to my
breast with eager love.

Ay, ay, my God, much remains
still. My fate has not cheated me
of everything.

72

WITH days of hard travail I raised a temple. It had no doors or windows, its walls were thickly built with massive stones.

I forgot all else, I shunned all the world, I gazed in rapt contemplation at the image I had set upon the altar.

It was always night inside, and lit by the lamps of perfumed oil.

The ceaseless smoke of incense wound my heart in its heavy coils.

Sleepless, I carved on the walls fantastic figures in mazy bewildering lines — winged horses, flowers with human faces, women with limbs like serpents.

No passage was left anywhere through which could enter the song

of birds, the murmur of leaves, or hum of the busy village.

The only sound that echoed in its dark dome was that of incantations which I chanted.

My mind became keen and still like a pointed flame, my senses swooned in ecstasy.

I knew not how time passed till the thunderstone had struck the temple, and a pain stung me through the heart.

The lamp looked pale and ashamed ; the carvings on the walls, like chained dreams, stared meaningless in the light as they would fain hide themselves.

I looked at the image on the altar. I saw it smiling and alive with the living touch of God. The night I had imprisoned had spread its wings and vanished.

73

INFINITE wealth is not yours, my
patient and dusky mother dust !

You toil to fill the mouths of your
children, but food is scarce.

The gift of gladness that you have
for us is never perfect.

The toys that you make for your
children are fragile.

You cannot satisfy all our hungry
hopes, but should I desert you for
that ?

Your smile which is shadowed with
pain is sweet to my eyes.

Your love which knows not fulfil-
ment is dear to my heart.

From your breast you have fed us
with life but not immortality, that is
why your eyes are ever wakeful.

For ages you are working with

128 THE GARDENER

colour and song, yet your heaven
is not built, but only its sad sug-
gestion.

Over your creations of beauty there
is the mist of tears.

I will pour my songs into your
mute heart, and my love into your
love.

I will worship you with labour.

I have seen your tender face and
I love your mournful dust, Mother
Earth.

74

IN the world's audience hall, the simple blade of grass sits on the same carpet with the sunbeam and the stars of midnight.

Thus my songs share their seats in the heart of the world with the music of the clouds and forests.

But, you man of riches, your wealth has no part in the simple grandeur of the sun's glad gold and the mellow gleam of the musing moon.

The blessing of the all-embracing sky is not shed upon it.

And when death appears, it pales and withers and crumbles into dust.

✓✓
75

At midnight the would-be ascetic announced :

“ This is the time to give up my home and seek for God. Ah, who has held me so long in delusion here ? ”

God whispered, “ I,” but the ears of the man were stopped.

With a baby asleep at her breast lay his wife, peacefully sleeping on one side of the bed.

The man said, “ Who are ye that have fooled me so long ? ”

The voice said again, “ They are God,” but he heard it not.

The baby cried out in its dream, nestling close to its mother.

God commanded, “ Stop, fool, leave not thy home,” but still he heard not.

THE GARDENER 181

God sighed and complained, “ Why
does my servant wander to seek me,
forsaking me ? ”

76

THE fair was on before the temple. It had rained from the early morning and the day came to its end.

Brighter than all the gladness of the crowd was the bright smile of a girl who bought for a farthing a whistle of palm leaf.

The shrill joy of that whistle floated above all laughter and noise.

An endless throng of people came and jostled together. The road was muddy, the river in flood, the field under water in ceaseless rain.

Greater than all the troubles of the crowd was a little boy's trouble—he had not a farthing to buy a painted stick.

His wistful eyes gazing at the shop made this whole meeting of men so pitiful.

77

THE workman and his wife from the west country are busy digging to make bricks for the kiln.

Their little daughter goes to the landing-place by the river; there she has no end of scouring and scrubbing of pots and pans.

Her little brother, with shaven head and brown, naked, mud-covered limbs, follows after her and waits patiently on the high bank at her bidding.

She goes back home with the full pitcher poised on her head, the shining brass pot in her left hand, holding the child with her right—she the tiny servant of her mother, grave with the weight of the household cares.

134 THE GARDENER

One day I saw this naked boy sitting with legs outstretched.

In the water his sister sat rubbing a drinking-pot with a handful of earth, turning it round and round.

Near by a soft-haired lamb stood grazing along the bank.

It came close to where the boy sat and suddenly bleated aloud, and the child started up and screamed.

His sister left off cleaning her pot and ran up.

She took up her brother in one arm and the lamb in the other, and dividing her caresses between them bound in one bond of affection the offspring of beast and man.

78

It was in May. The sultry noon seemed endlessly long. The dry earth gaped with thirst in the heat.

When I heard from the riverside a voice calling, "Come, my darling!"

I shut my book and opened the window to look out.

I saw a big buffalo with mud-stained hide standing near the river with placid, patient eyes; and a youth, knee-deep in water, calling it to its bath.

I smiled amused and felt a touch of sweetness in my heart.

79

I OFTEN wonder where lie hidden the boundaries of recognition between man and the beast whose heart knows no spoken language.

Through what primal paradise in a remote morning of creation ran the simple path by which their hearts visited each other.

Those marks of their constant tread have not been effaced though their kinship has been long forgotten.

Yet suddenly in some wordless music the dim memory wakes up and the beast gazes into the man's face with a tender trust, and 'the man looks down into its eyes with amused affection.

It seems that the two friends meet masked, and vaguely know each other through the disguise.

80

WITH a glance of your eyes you
could plunder all the wealth of songs
struck from poets' harps, fair woman !

But for their praises you have no
ear, therefore I come to praise you.

You could humble at your feet the
proudest heads in the world.

But it is your loved ones, unknown
to fame, whom you choose to worship,
therefore I worship you.

The perfection of your arms would
add glory to kingly splendour with
their touch.

But you use them to sweep away
the dust, and to make clean your
humble home, therefore I am filled
with awe.

✓81

WHY do you whisper so faintly in
my ears, O Death, my Death ?

When the flowers droop in the
evening and cattle come back to their
stalls, you stealthily come to my side
and speak words that I do not
understand.

Is this how you must woo and win
me with the opiate of drowsy murmur
and cold kisses, O Death, my Death ?

Will there be no proud ceremony
for our wedding ?

Will you not tie up with a wreath
your tawny coiled locks ?

Is there none to carry your banner
before you, and will not the night be
on fire with your red torch-lights,
O Death, my Death ?

THE GARDENER 139

Come with your conch-shells sounding, come in the sleepless night.

Dress me with a crimson mantle, grasp my hand and take me.

Let your chariot be ready at my door with your horses neighing impatiently.

Raise my veil and look at my face proudly, O Death, my Death !

✓
82

WE are to play the game of death
to-night, my bride and I.

The night is black, the clouds in the
sky are capricious, and the waves are
raving at sea.

We have left our bed of dreams,
flung open the door and come out, my
bride and I.

We sit upon a swing, and the
storm winds give us a wild push from
behind.

My bride starts up with fear and
delight, she trembles and clings to my
breast.

Long have I served her tenderly.

I made for her a bed of flowers and
I closed the doors to shut out the rude
light from her eyes.

I kissed her gently on her lips and

whispered softly in her ears till she half swooned in languor.

She was lost in the endless mist of vague sweetness.

She answered not to my touch, my songs failed to arouse her.

To-night has come to us the call of the storm from the wild.

My bride has shivered and stood up, she has clasped my hand and come out.

Her hair is flying in the wind, her veil is fluttering, her garland rustles over her breast.

The push of death has swung her into life.

We are face to face and heart to heart, my bride and I.

83

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

One evening the stranger came down from the cloud-hidden peak ; his locks were tangled like drowsy snakes. We asked in wonder, " Who are you ? " He answered not but sat by the garrulous stream and silently gazed at the hut where she dwelt. Our hearts quaked in fear and we came back home when it was night.

Next morning when the women

came to fetch water at the spring by the *deodar* trees, they found the doors open in her hut, but her voice was gone and where was her smiling face ? The empty jar lay on the floor and her lamp had burnt itself out in the corner. No one knew where she had fled to before it was morning—and the stranger had gone.

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

It was a summer night ; the breeze blew from the south ; and I sat in her deserted room where the lamp stood still unlit. When suddenly from

144 THE GARDENER

before my eyes the hills vanished like curtains drawn aside. "Ah, it is she who comes. How are you, my child? Are you happy? But where can you shelter under this open sky? And, alas! our spring is not here to allay your thirst."

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

84

OVER the green and yellow rice-fields
sweep the shadows of the autumn
clouds followed by the swift-chasing
sun.

The bees forget to sip their honey ;
drunken with light they foolishly hover
and hum.

The ducks in the islands of the river
clamour in joy for mere nothing.

Let none go back home, brothers,
this morning, let none go to work.

Let us take the blue sky by storm
and plunder space as we run.

Laughter floats in the air like foam
on the flood.

Brothers, let us squander our
morning in futile songs.

85

Who are you, reader, reading my poems an hundred years hence ?

I cannot send you one single flower from this wealth of the spring, one single streak of gold from yonder clouds.

Open your doors and look abroad.

From your blossoming garden gather fragrant memories of the vanished flowers of an hundred years before.

In the joy of your heart may you feel the living joy that sang one spring morning, sending its glad voice across an hundred years.

INDEX OF FIRST WORDS

	No.
A wandering madman was seeking the touch- stone	66
Ah me, why did they build my house . . .	4
Ah, poet, the evening draws near . . .	2
Amidst the rush and roar of life . . .	60
An unbelieving smile flits on your eyes .	40
At midnight the would-be ascetic announced	75
 Come as you are ; do not loiter over your toilet	 11
Come to us, youth, tell us truly . . .	25
 Day after day he comes and goes away .	 20
Do not go, my love, without asking my leave	34
Do not keep to yourself the secret of your heart, my friend	24
 Free me from the bonds of your sweetness, my love	 48
 Hands cling to hands and eyes linger on eyes	 16
Have mercy upon your servant, my queen .	1
He whispered, " My love, raise your eyes " .	36

	No.
I am restless	5
I asked nothing, only stood at the edge of the wood	13
I hold her hands and press her to my breast	49
I hunt for the golden stag	69
I long to speak the deepest words	41
I love you, beloved	38
I often wonder where lie hidden	76
I plucked your flower, O world	57
I remember a day in my childhood	70
I run as a musk-deer runs in the shadow of the forest	15
I spent my day on the scorching hot dust of the road	64
I try to weave a wreath all the morning	39
I was one among many women	56
I was walking by the road, I do not know why	14
If you would be busy and fill your pitcher, come	12
If you would have it so, I will end my singing	47
In the dusky path of a dream I went to seek the love	62
In the morning I cast my net into the sea	3
In the world's audience hall	74
Infinite wealth is not yours	73
Is that your call again?	65
It was in May	78
It was mid-day when you went away	55
Lest I should know you too easily, you play with me	35
Let your work be, bride	10
Love, my heart longs day and night	50

INDEX OF FIRST WORDS 149

	No.
My heart, the bird of the wilderness . . .	31
My love, once upon a time your poet launched a great epic in his mind	38
No, my friends, I shall never be an ascetic	43
None lives for ever, brother	68
O mad, superbly drunk	42
O mother, the young Prince is to pass by our door	7
O woman, you are not merely the handiwork of God	59
One morning in the flower garden a blind girl came	58
Over the green and yellow rice-fields . . .	84
Peace, my heart, let the time for the parting be sweet	61
Reverend sir, forgive this pair of sinners .	44
She dwelt on the hillside	83
Speak to me, my love	29
Tell me if this be all true, my lover . . .	82
The day is not yet done, the fair is not over	71
The fair was on before the temple	76
The tame bird was in a cage	6
The workman and his wife from the west country	77
The yellow bird sings in their tree . . .	17
Then finish the last song and let us leave .	51
Though the evening comes with slow steps	67
To the guests that must go bid God's speed	45
Traveller, must you go ?	63
Trust love even if it brings sorrow . . .	27

	No.
We are to play the game of death to-night .	82
What comes from your willing hands I take	26
When I go alone at night to my love-tryst	9
When she passed by me with quick steps .	22
When the lamp went out by my bed . . .	8
When the two sisters go to fetch water .	18
Where do you hurry with your basket .	54
Who are you, reader, reading my poems .	85
Why did he choose to come to my door .	21
Why did the lamp go out ?	52
Why do you put me to shame with a look ?	53
Why do you sit there and jingle your brace- lets	23
Why do you whisper so faintly in my ears .	81
With a glance of your eyes you could plunder	80
With days of hard travail I raised a temple	72
Would you put your wreath of fresh flowers on my neck, fair one ?	37
You are the evening cloud floating in the sky of my dreams	30
You left me and went on your way . .	46
You walked by the riverside path . .	19
Your questioning eyes are sad	28

THE END

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